

DRAFT

March XX, 2023



Dear Mayor and Council members,

I am writing on behalf of the Orange-Chatham Group of the North Carolina Sierra Club. We are enthusiastic to support construction of the Bolin Creek Greenway in Carrboro. This support is in accordance with the national Sierra Club infill and smart growth policy adopted in 2019 -- the latest tool in our longstanding fight against sprawl and climate change. <https://www.sierraclub.org/smart-growth-urban-infill> In addition, the national Sierra Club launched a guidance for the policy, meant to assist Sierra Club activists who are interested in making a difference in their community. For these purposes, as well as for a more vibrant, resilient and equitable Carrboro, we enthusiastically support the construction of the Bolin Creek Greenway.

The Sierra Club's infill policy states:

Sierra Club's mission in combination with growing threats to our environment require a renewed emphasis on cities and towns where people can live, work, and thrive while protecting and restoring our natural environment and fighting the causes and impacts of climate change. Our resilience to the threat of climate change begins with our social, cultural and economic resilience, which depends upon inclusive and fair communities.

Therefore, the Sierra Club supports transformative strategies that build communities that feature:

- Affordable housing accessible to all;
- **Transit, bike, and pedestrian first approaches to transportation;** *[emphasis ours]*
- Expanded opportunities for all residents to participate in the local economy and civic decisions;
- Living wage jobs;
- A balance between employment opportunities and housing;
- Access to education, services, amenities, and recreation that improve overall quality of life; and
- Measures and policies that increase climate resilience

Accompanying the policy document, Sierra Club has issued its [Smart Growth and Urban Infill Guidance](#). The guidance contains a chapter called **Active Transportation and Transit**. The very first sentence says,

One of the Sierra Club transformative strategies for building communities included in the National Sierra Club Urban Infill Policy is: “Transit, bike, and pedestrian first approaches to transportation.”

It further says that:

To fix the rising rates of emissions from transportation we have to change both the physical layout of our communities and transportation infrastructure.

As it explains, changing our transportation infrastructure includes stressing what it calls *Active Transportation*, using as examples *walking, bicycling, and/or rolling*, including *wheelchairs, walkers, baby strollers, skateboards, scooters, etc.*

The guidance notes that:

[Active transportation] can be designed for urban, suburban, and rural areas without extraordinary expense if properly planned.

Finally, the chapter goes on to recommend a set of active transportation (and transit) policies, practices and strategies for which members should advocate, along with links to further resources on these recommendations. Here are some of them (emphasis ours):

- **Safe routes to schools plan and implementation strategy**
- Non-motorized transport strategy or policy
- **Policies that equalize access to micro-mobility**
- Policies that require infrastructure for active transportation modes to support the “first and last mile” and that are complementary with a community-wide mass transit strategy
- **Constructing connected network of multiuse trails**
- Providing safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian connections to public parks and recreation areas.

As Sierra Club members, we want to make sure all members of our community have access to active transportation routes, such as a greenway that connects different parts of town to downtown, and which provide children with safe routes to school. In addition to the considerable quality of life and [equity benefits](#) this would provide to Carrboro’s citizens, it is also an extremely important strategy to help us reach our carbon reduction goals.

As you may have seen, according to the Town of Carrboro's most recent (2019) [greenhouse gas emissions inventory](#), motor vehicles contribute 38% of the carbon emitted in town. The greenway is intended, in part, to help get folks out of cars, and getting people out of cars is one big thing we need to do to lower our carbon emissions.

For example, given the long drop-off and pick-up lines every school day of the year, giving kids a safe walking and biking route to Seawall Elementary, Smith Middle, and Chapel Hill High schools will likely prevent a significant amount of family driving and idling, which costs time and money in addition to both carbon emissions and toxic pollution. This is a necessary step to significantly reducing our community's carbon footprint.

Further, the additional benefits of access to active transportation, for all citizens, are myriad. They include greater access to nature, to jobs, and to downtown amenities for young people, other folks without access to cars, folks in wheelchairs, and older people who may not drive. People who use active transportation are also healthier, both physically and mentally.

While there is no one solution to climate change and community health and sustainability, it is clear that getting our citizens out of cars, as much as possible, is critical. Even the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has stressed the importance of lowering "vehicle miles traveled".

For all these reasons, we hope that you will finally take this important step and approve the Bolin Creek Greenway.

With thanks,

Kathy Kaufman, Executive Committee member (and greater Carrboro resident)

For the Orange-Chatham Group of the NC Sierra Club

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