



# Patton Boulevard Comes Out on Top!

NCDOT Redesign of Alternative 4b Benefits West Asheville, Emma and Hillcrest

*For immediate release 10-15-09:*

*Concerned citizens and city officials in cooperation with NCDOT Engineers have developed a revised design for Alternative 4b that runs under Patton Avenue. This is a significant revision to the new highway plan that will allow Patton Avenue to become a multi-modal boulevard with sidewalks, bike paths, and bus lanes that link the downtown directly to West Asheville and Emma neighborhoods.*

Asheville, NC October 16, 2009 – Concerned citizens working with members of the Technical Review Committee (TRC) that represent the City of Asheville, Buncombe County and the Asheville Design Center, recently met with NCDOT Engineers to hammer out further improvements to the most recent design for the I-26 connector, Alternative 4b. This Alternative was recently developed with input from the community as an urban response to the important highway link that crosses the French Broad River at Asheville's western gateway. NCDOT representative Derrick Weaver, PE confirmed that the interstate could be constructed under Patton Avenue with no additional cost to the 4b alternative. Weaver offered a guarded comment that the revision could end up costing less than going over Patton, but the design will need further study. *"The results and tone of this meeting signal a growing spirit of cooperation with NCDOT that is certainly welcomed by our community"* said Cathy Ball, PE– Director of Public Works.

*"I left the meeting thinking, NCDOT gets it; they understand the importance of creating a direct multi-modal link to West Asheville with the creation of Patton Boulevard...It's key to future city growth",* said Alan McGuinn, a local architect and TRC representative. He is referring to the opportunities for pedestrian walks, bicycle paths and mass transit lanes that are envisioned for

the Smokey Park Bridge once the interstate traffic can be removed and the road converted to a local boulevard. *“These opportunities are not possible in Alternative 3, currently supported by the Chamber of Commerce, where the massive intersection will require interstate traffic to remain merged with local traffic on Patton Avenue”* said McGuinn.

There were other significant items presented in the meeting by the TRC that are important to advocates of 4b that include:

- Redesign of the I -240 ramp along Hill Street in Montford to save five houses.
- Minimize noise impacts on the Montford Community
- Reducing the length of the elevated highway over 19/23 along Riverside Drive
- Provide direct access from the Hillcrest Community to the proposed Patton Boulevard.
- Improved aesthetics for the design of the French Broad River bridge and elevated portions of the highway.

John Legerton, an Architect and resident of Asheville, that attended the meeting said, *“The beauty of the redesign for Alternative 4b is the potential to end fifty years of isolation of the Hillcrest Community from the rest of our city, save five houses in Montford and provide a local road connection from downtown directly to West Asheville.”*

As a result of the meeting, NCDOT Engineers agreed to further study the design of the I-240 ramp along Hill Street and the length of elevated highway running over 19/23. They also told the TRC that a sound study for Alternative 4b will be completed by the end of the year, but they explained that the Hillcrest connection to Patton will require additional cooperation between multiple federal agencies and will take more time to address.

NCDOT plans to have the alternatives and the draft supplemental Environmental Impact Study (ESI) completed by May 2010. A public hearing is currently scheduled for the summer of 2010, with the preferred alternative selected in the fall following the hearing. NCDOT representatives agreed that community support for a preferred alternative will be a key factor in the final selection. After the preferred alternative is selected, project engineers will work to refine and complete the final connector design. NCDOT officials said these refinements could include further consideration of the bridge aesthetic.

Stephanie Pankiewicz a landscape architect and TRC member says *“We greatly appreciate the collaborative spirit of this meeting with NCDOT and their willingness to continue to improve the design. This is an on-going process and we are steadily working down the list of community concerns together.”*

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