



Meeting Summary

August 29, 2023

**Longleaf Community Meeting for
Knoll Road Multi-Use Trail**

OVERVIEW

Gary Carroll, on behalf of the Longleaf community, invited Town Council and staff to a community meeting on Tuesday, August 29, 2023 at 9:30 am. The meeting was held at the Longleaf Golf & Family Club and ended around 11:30 am.

Councilmembers Taylor Clement and Bill Pate attended, along with Assistant Town Manager Jessica Roth and Planning Director BJ Grieve. Approximately 70 community members attended.

Mr. Carroll opened the meeting with a brief history of the project. Hugh Miner & Doug Hedges shared a survey completed by 216 Longleaf residents. The survey asked, "What action would you like the town of Southern Pines to take regarding extending greenways along Knoll Road?" The responses were as follows:

- 79% responded: "Leave Knoll Road as is with the center turn lane and two traffic lanes. Connect to the greenway system by installing sidewalks along the grassy shoulder on the west side of Knoll Road.
- 17% responded: "Leave Knoll Road as is and don't complete sidewalks or greenway."
- 4% responded: "Leave the existing northbound travel lane as is, but eliminate the center turn lane and move the southbound travel lane to the center lane location. Construct a multi-use greenway path and buffer in the space where the current southbound lane is located."

Mr. Grieve provided a history of the project, which was initially identified in the Town's 2010 Bicycle Transportation Plan. The Knoll Rd project was first submitted to NCDOT for funding in 2014. After a long delay, the Knoll Rd project was placed on DOT's 2024-2033 STIP, designating \$1.672 million toward a multi-modal project, with the Town funding the remaining 20%.

To date, the Town has 1) allocated the funds for the 20% match and 2) reviewed a rendering to visualize what a road diet might look like based on the three current lanes of Knoll Rd. Town staff is currently finalizing an engineering/design contract, to be forwarded to NCDOT for final approval. The design phase will begin with collecting data and assessing existing conditions to help inform a "30% design" concept. In accordance with DOT requirements, public input will be requested for the 30% design.

Ms. Roth shared that the 30% design public input meeting is a minimum requirement and the Town intends to do additional outreach. She committed to informing the Longleaf community regarding opportunities for public input.

The meeting was then opened up to the attendees to voice concerns and ideas and to ask questions of Town Council and staff.

LONGLEAF CONCERNS, IDEAS, AND QUESTIONS

CENTER TURN LANE: Treatment of the existing center turn lane was raised by multiple residents, who stated their preference to leave it as is. More specifically, some points included:

- The current center turn lane allows vehicles to pass bicyclists on the left.
- Residents are concerned about how vehicles will move out of travel lanes for emergency vehicles or how traffic will be impeded if a vehicle breaks down, there is an accident, or similar condition. There is currently no shoulder on Knoll Rd.
- Traffic bottlenecks currently occur at Talamore, Hunters Trail, and the clubhouse, making the center lane important.
- The turn lane is critical for those who use Starland Ln.
- Landscaping trucks park in the center turn lane when they are performing maintenance. Where will they park if this is removed?
- The center turn lane is essential; a bike/ped lane should be secondary.

VEHICULAR SAFETY: Residents want to ensure that Knoll Road is safe for motorists.

- One resident shared data obtained from the police. There have been 13 accidents on Knoll Rd over the past 5 years, so it is a safe road currently.
- What type of public education will be done to inform drivers of new stop signs or other traffic controls that might result from a re-design?
- Residents do not want to encounter bikers/walkers where their streets intersect with Knoll Rd. For drivers using Paddock Lane, they also have to manage cart paths.
- Visibility challenges currently exist on Knoll Rd for drivers.

SPEED LIMIT/SPEEDING: Residents voiced concerns about the current 40 MPH speed limit and speeding.

- Residents do not feel that narrower travel lanes/roadway would decrease speeding.
- Residents see little police presence or speeding enforcement on Knoll Rd.
- It was requested that the Town evaluate the viability of lowering the speed limit to 35 MPH; staff committed to look into this and communicate back.

SIDEWALK PREFERENCE: 79% of residents who responded to the survey request that a sidewalk be installed along Knoll Rd, instead of changing the road treatment.

- Several residents requested that the Town complete a cost analysis to be fully informed of the expense to install a sidewalk.
- Surface material is important and walkers prefer a sidewalk over a soft-surface trail.
- Hugh Miner, a retired engineer, wanted to be on record that “a sidewalk along Knoll Road seems very doable” [from an engineering perspective].
- Sidewalks would increase walking more so than a trail in the existing roadway.

BIKE/PED USERS: Residents generally feel that the project is unwarranted due to the existing/potential number of users.

- Many residents stated they rarely see bikers or walkers on Knoll Rd. now.
- The Pinecrest track & cross country teams would prefer to use the roadway instead of a designated path.
- Bikers would not use a path and instead ride on the roadway.
- Has the Town completed surveys to confirm the number of people who use existing bike/ped trails?

CORRIDOR MAINTENANCE: There were several comments/questions around responsibility for future maintenance.

- A question was raised about how the landscaping in the corridor will be maintained if the project is completed. Staff stated that the preliminary assumption and hope is that the current arrangement continues, where Longleaf HOA maintains the landscaping within the ROW and the Town maintains the roadway and any multi-use trail improvements.
- Concern was expressed that the HOA's irrigation system will be damaged. Mr. Carroll confirmed that the HOA was informed that it was installing its irrigation within the ROW, at the risk that it could be removed for future work in the ROW. The expense to replace/repair the irrigation in this situation would be the HOA's responsibility.
- Residents want to ensure that the current aesthetics (landscaping, monument signs, and similar) are maintained.

COMMENTS ABOUT INTERSECTIONS: Residents shared specific concerns related to various intersections with Knoll Rd.

- A blinking pedestrian light is needed on Airport Road to connect to the trails.
- How will trail users safely cross Midland Rd?
- Knoll Rd. at the intersection with Midland Rd. used to have a brick treatment, which was removed when the traffic light was installed. Please replace this.
- The crosswalk sign near Airport Road needs to be repaired/replaced.
- Residents expressed concern that the current sidewalk at the north end of Knoll Road doesn't connect to anything and should be extended south using cash-in-lieu money from the Saddlebrook development project.

DO NOT ADVANCE PROJECT: Multiple residents suggested that the Town either do nothing or pursue connections in other areas.

- Leave Knoll Road as is and have a "northern greenway" and a "southern greenway" that are not connected.
- Can the trail be routed on Dr. Neal Road instead? Staff clarified that the DOT funding is specific for Knoll Road and could not be used elsewhere.
- What other routes is the Town evaluating instead of doing this project?
- Based on the demographics of people who live in Longleaf, this community will not bike or walk.

GENERAL COMMENTS: The following are other comments that were shared:

- Can trucks be restricted from using Knoll Rd?
- The community is interested in learning further details related to the project management: timeline; cost of the design/engineering phase.
- Who will make the final decision to actually construct the project? Staff confirmed that Council would authorize the construction to move forward.
- Why was this specific corridor identified in the 2010 plan?
- Residents understood that Knoll Rd is maintained by NCDOT; James Michel confirmed by text during the meeting that the Town maintains it. Residents would like confirmation of when this change occurred.

Ms. Roth committed to creating a project page on the Town's website to communicate details about the project - data, opportunities for input, and similar.

It was agreed that Doug Hedges will be the e-mail liaison between the Town and the Longleaf community.