

DOT raises Chapel Hill, Triangle route speed limit

By JENNIFER BLACKWELL
Staff Writer

The N.C. Department of Transportation (DOT) raised the speed limit from 55 mph to 65 mph on the 10-mile stretch of Interstate 40 between Chapel Hill and Research Triangle Park last week.

The law went into effect when signs were posted Nov. 1.

The increase is the result of the change in the federal law concerning the speed limit, said Jim Lynch, the state traffic engineer for the DOT.

The Federal Highway Administration's (FHA) original law said the state could not use the 65 mph limit within an area defined by a 50,000 population density, he said. The FHA

defined this area using the urban planning boundary, which includes a large amount of area outside a population center to allow for future growth and development.

The law sparked complaints from motorists nationwide since many of the roads on the outskirts of the urban planning boundary, like the stretch of I-40, were rural in operation. The large amount of public pressure convinced the FHA to take a new look at the law and redefine it, Lynch said.

The new law redefines the 50,000 population density according to the U.S. census. This moves the boundary closer to the city limits, allowing for the speed limit increase on rural roads that were

formerly included in the urban planning area, he said.

"(The new law) allows us to do what we wanted to do all along," Lynch said. The DOT increased the speed limit along 70 miles of N.C. roads that met their requirements.

In determining if it should increase the speed limit, the DOT looks at the traffic density, accident rates, the design of the road and major construction activity, he said. All the roads that were

approved "checked out as being good candidates for raising the speed limit."

Col. W.D. King, patrol commander for the State Highway Patrol, said that although "we were opposed to increasing the speed limit to 65 mph in the first place...we plan to work with (the DOT)...and enforce the speed limit."

The Highway Patrol talked with the DOT before it decided to increase the speed limit. A survey showing that 65 mph was a safe speed convinced the

patrol to agree with the DOT's proposal, he said.

King said he thinks most drivers will probably stick to the 65 mph limit. But there are "always some who will flout on the speed limit," he said.

Raising the speed limit has resulted in a 20 percent increase in accidents nationwide, King said. Dr. Donald Reinfurt, a spokesman for the N.C. Highway Safety Research Center, said

fatalities on rural routes with the 65 mph speed limit have increased by 15 percent.

"People don't want to know that fatalities are going up because we all enjoy driving faster... (but) it was inevitable," he stated.

"There is absolutely no question that average speeds do increase" with the increase in the speed limit, Reinfurt said.

ECU students boycott city businesses

By ERIC LUSK
Staff Writer

Students at East Carolina University are being asked by student government officials to boycott Greenville businesses today because of what they call unfair noise ordinances passed by city officials and a lack of university voice within the community.

Today is being tabbed "Purple Monday" by student government officials, and will include the boycott and a rally on campus this afternoon.

"We want to let the city of Greenville know that ECU's students are valuable to the community and want to be heard," said Tripp Roakes, ECU student body president.

Today's on-campus rally will include three or four speakers, and then will move to an open forum to allow other students to express views on new noise

ordinances and on ways city and university relations can improve, he said.

Many ECU officials supported the students' boycott plans.

"Some people are saying that all this (Purple Monday) is going on just because downtown businesses closed on Halloween," said Ron Speier, dean of students at ECU. "Actually the protest stems from the fact that the city council made some decisions, especially those concerning the noise ordinances, without really consulting us."

The new ordinances, which went into effect a few weeks ago, prohibit fraternities or sororities from having live bands at outdoor parties, he said.

"Before, each fraternity or sorority was allowed to receive one permit to exceed the city noise limits per year," Speier said.

Roakes said that some students were

also upset by the way police handled events at a local party Halloween night and that some unfair arrests were made.

Police arrested about 140 people at the Tar River Estates apartment complex around 10:30 Halloween night.

"We were called by the manager and came in about 9:30," said Lt. David Bork of the Greenville city police. "Along with some university officials we tried to disperse the party for about 45 minutes. When that failed and students began moving on the street, we began making the arrests."

While some students disagreed with the arrests, school officials said they had ample police warning to disperse.

Brown and Speier said the Halloween incident was not the main reason for the boycott and rally, but the events did help to speed up student's efforts to organize some sort of protest.

Greenville city officials said that while relations between the university and the city need to improve, boycotting city businesses is an unfair protest.

"We've already had committees formed between students and city officials to deal with community problems," said Ron Kimball, assistant city manager of Greenville. "I don't think it's fair to punish businesses."

Hearing

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at the dental school while on duty and submitted a time sheet indicating he had worked a full eight hours.

When Capt. Jimmy Roberson, his superior, issued a written warning to Perry, Edwards said, the Employee Relations Division arbitrarily bumped the written warning down to an oral one. "Mike Lewis (employee relations officer) told him (Roberson), 'There's no need to send it over here. I'll give him an oral warning, because he forgot. He just forgot,'" Edwards testified.

Officer Steve Thornton, who is black, damaged his patrol car in an accident, causing less than \$100 in damage, she said, and was given an oral warning, which remained in his file for six months. But Capt. Ron Ashley, who is white, damaged his patrol car on several occasions without receiving a reprimand until he hit a car containing a mother and child.

Edwards said that she had received a written warning from Mauer for declining to work overtime at graduation on her day off although she had cleared the decision with her superior. Porreca, however, received no disciplinary action when he unexpectedly failed to show up for overtime duty.

Her long history of protesting departmental racism has made her a target of retaliation, Edwards said, citing an instance when she was forced to take a qualifying test on a firing range with an injured hand, causing further damage even though she had a note from her doctor.

"I was told in such a way that, if I did not do it, I would be fired. I was forced to go out to the firing range, but I was told the University would not be liable if something happened to me."

Edwards said her superiors saw her as the "ringleader" of the 15 officers who filed a grievance after the 1987 reorganization.

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partment. "The University's employment and training programs have been allowed to deteriorate. As the University has grown, experienced people had been reassigned away from training programs. It has been mostly the personnel function that has lost employees

Hazing

students because they could find no evidence that a crime had been committed.

"Fundamentally, a male police person seeing another male naked is not a crime. We need a female complainant," said Sgt. Ned Comar of the University police. "If there had been a female complainant there probably would have been an arrest."

Comar also said that although the student who was taken to the hospital had a blood-alcohol content of 0.27 percent, the fact that he was drunk in public was not enough to make an arrest.

Post

to other University functions."

Jane Trexler, a recent employee of the University, said she was tired of the University after five years, but better pay and benefits in the area made up her mind to change jobs. "Benefits have fallen, or actually they haven't kept up

Hazing

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N.C. state law identifies hazing as a criminal offense punishable by a maximum fine of \$500 or imprisonment for a period of up to six months or both.

AIM HIGH

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