

Transit forum provides outlet for local worries

BY GREGG FOUNO
STAFF WRITER

Citizens with concerns about public transportation had the chance to air their feelings Thursday — and local officials were there to hear them.

A lack of money for proposals, the effectiveness of a program for the impaired and a proposed transit transfer center all came up as points of concern at a forum put on by the Carrboro Transportation Advisory Board and the Chapel Hill Transportation Board at Carrboro Town Hall.

The most common complaint: Board members and citizens alike were frustrated that a lack of funds has halted many proposals. "There's always been a desire but not the funding," said Carrboro board Chairman Chris van Hasselt. "Our board desires to move beyond that."

Many citizens also questioned the effectiveness of the EZ Rider program, which provides free transportation for the physically impaired.

Estelle Mabry, a frequent user of EZ Rider, was frustrated with the program's new software, which gives riders a 20-minute window for their

pickup instead of an exact time. "The 20-minute window makes me feel like my time is not valuable to them," Mabry said.

She was also worried that the new software puts van drivers on a stricter time schedule, which causes them to drive more recklessly.

Resident James Carnahan spoke about a proposed transit transfer facility underneath parking lot 2 — part of the planned redevelopment of downtown parking lots 2 and 5 — where most of Chapel Hill's buses would stop to allow transfers.

He expressed concern that the additional stop could add five to eight minutes to a bus ride.

"The riders, who are stakeholders in this ordeal, have not been brought into this process," he added.

Other voiced concerns included adding speed bumps to Hillsborough Street, designating one lane of South Columbia Street as bus-only and adding bike lanes to Estes Drive.

Van Hasselt said the goal of the forum was to allow direct communication between citizens and board members. Comment was allowed by those who attended the meeting, as well as those who phoned in or sent

e-mails ahead of time.

Also at the forum, Chapel Hill Transportation Director Mary Lou Kuschatka updated the public on Chapel Hill Transit.

"Before we introduced free fares we had about 3 million riders per year, but since free fares we've had over 5 million, and that will keep going," she said.

Kuschatka said that EZ Rider saw growth in ridership, which led to some of its constraints, and that the software is a work in progress.

Patrick McDonough, transit service planner for Triangle Transit Authority, mentioned TTA's efforts to appeal to the UNC community by providing staff, faculty and non-resident students riding passes for \$10 a month or \$50 a semester.

McDonough said there is a necessary overlap between his agency and Chapel Hill Transit.

"Our goal is to provide urban-to-urban trips," he said. "There is a large area of land that we cover, but we also require other transportation services to fill in the gaps."

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

CANDIDATES

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signed petitions to the BOE by Jan. 20. Public campaigning with materials and resources can begin Jan. 25.

The elections will be held Feb. 8. Run-off elections will occur Feb. 15 if candidates in selected offices fail to obtain a majority of the votes.

The BOE also made revisions to the dorm-storming policy. Candidates now are only permitted to campaign door-to-door Sunday through Thursday from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Campaign workers must wear badges identifying for whom they are campaigning.

But before bombarding residence halls, candidates must establish a student organization bearing the name of their campaigns. After establishing a president and a treasurer of their organizations, candidates will be given space for a campaign Web site.

Sidden said she believes that the student elections are off to a good start with excellent candidates.

"We're looking for a nice clean campaign this year, which has kind of become our theme."

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MLK DAY

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believe that (King) was an extraordinary leader, that he gave leadership to a national movement that raised the conscience of America," she said. "Even young people who were not born yet understand the magnitude of his life."

Some might even remember that King has local ties.

King visited the University's Hill Hall, as well as the black community center, now called the

Hargraves Community Center, in May of 1960 as part of his tour of Southern college campuses.

Chapel Hill has been celebrating King as an advocate for integration and breaking down the walls of segregation for about 30 years, Battle said.

"(Martin Luther King Day) means a celebration ... of contributions of one of the greatest Americans ever," Hatley said.

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TUITION

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committee also reviewed a report that stated how UNC-system schools spent the total \$112 million brought in by campus-based tuition increases and enrollment growth.

Jeff Davies, UNC-system vice president for finance, said the campuses used the revenue to address the board's concerns, such as class size and faculty retention.

BOG members are expected to use the report as a guide during the next few months while discussing campus-initiated tuition increases.

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FOOTBALL

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finished with a 6-10 record last year. "It shows when teams really work together and stick behind each other in all phases of the game, they can be really successful."

But Reed, who has been the Steelers' starting kicker for the past two seasons, didn't even have a football scholarship entering his third season of eligibility in 2000.

But he earned a scholarship and second-team all-ACC honors that season, and after a senior year in which he connected on 12 of 16 field-goal attempts, UNC coach John Bunting recommended Reed for a tryout with the New Orleans Saints during the preseason of 2002.

"We were able to work that deal out so Jeff was able to get exposure and work with (Saints special teams coordinator) Al Everest," Bunting said. "And we knew based on Jeff's talent level that he would be able to get much more exposure. It was seen by both me and Al Everest that this kid had talent to kick in the NFL. It's just a matter of being in the right place."

That place, after a handful of tryouts in the early part of the 2002 season, ended up being Pittsburgh, where Reed won the kicking job in a four-man tryout in what he called the "worst conditions that I ever kicked in."

Two years later, including a 28-for-33 field-goal season, Reed has morphed from an NFL hopeful to one of the league's top placekickers.

"Nobody can get in my head," Reed said. "You're only as good as your last kick. If you miss one, you suck. If you make one, you're back in with everybody. ... If you don't produce, (the fans) let you know about it. It's all about confidence and being mentally tough, especially as a kicker."

But while Reed's transition from college walk-on to starting NFL kicker in less than three years is atypical, his former and current teammate might have an even more improbable story.

At the Peach Bowl in 2001, then-sophomore Willie Parker rushed for 131 yards and a touchdown against a stingy Auburn defense.

It looked as though Bunting's team had found an explosive weapon to complement quarterback Darian Durant for the next two years.

"I thought after that game it was going to be real good — it was going to be a real good next year for me," Parker said. "I thought it was basically the start of my career at UNC."

Instead, he started just five games in his final two seasons, being passed by Jacque Lewis on the depth chart in 2002. The next season, Lewis and freshman Ronnie McGill each more than doubled Parker's rushing total; Parker accrued 181, the lowest total of his collegiate career.

"It felt real bad," Parker said. "It was real difficult for me and my family not playing that much, knowing I should have been out there playing. I learned from that, being on the sidelines looking at the other guys playing. I learned a great deal."

Bunting said that a number of factors contributed to Parker's reduced playing time but that his improved strength is what helped him earn a place on the Steelers' 53-man roster.

And with Pittsburgh having already sealed home-field advantage in the playoffs along with injuries to top backs Jerome Bettis and Duce Staley, Parker took advantage of his opportunity to succeed against the Bills.

"When he gets in the secondary, he has another gear," Pittsburgh coach Bill Cowher said at a press conference after the Buffalo game. "He's the fastest back we have."

High compliments for a player sharing the backfield with two household names.

But with the veteran stars set to return for the playoffs, it's doubtful that Parker will play a role in the Pittsburgh running game. He said, however, that he has been practicing as a kick returner and on special teams, so expect to see his number 39 on Heinz Field at some point Saturday.

And as for number 3? Depending on how the playoffs play out, it could be Reed appearing in SportsCenter highlights along with the team's rookie quarterback.

"Guys on this team are bound and determined to win," Reed said. "I don't care what it takes."

Contact the Sports Editor at sports@unc.edu.

Easley to keep cabinet whole

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH — Gov. Mike Easley said Thursday his 10-member cabinet will remain in their posts to begin his second term.

Easley made the announcement two days before his inauguration for another four-year term. A week ago, he started sitting down with cabinet secretaries to determine whether they wanted to stay on the job.

"I am proud of the work of my entire cabinet," Easley said in a news release.

"They know the agenda and are committed to building on the progress we have made over the past four years. I am pleased to have the opportunity to continue to work with them."

The return of Easley's cabinet contrasts to shuffling by the state's previous two-term governors — Jim


Hunt and Jim Martin — as their new terms began.

In an interview last week, Easley said he didn't know at the time of any impending changes. He said he had started meeting with secretaries to find out "whether what they want to do is consistent with what I want to do."

"Frankly, I want to find out and make them talk about how long they want to stay," he said. "If you do want to stay two years and not four years, then I know we need to get a strong assistant (secretary) in there."

Easley said learning about each cabinet member goes a long way toward keeping them.

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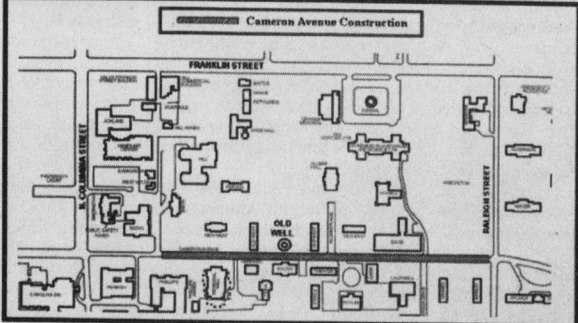
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(below East End)

Cameron Avenue Closed to Through Traffic

Cameron Avenue between Raleigh Road and South Columbia Street on the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill campus will close temporarily to through traffic starting Monday, January 17, 2005, and reopen in May, 2005. Local motorists should be alert to traffic routing changes during this period.


The work will be done in short sections, starting at the intersection with Raleigh Road and progress toward Columbia. Local traffic and emergency vehicles will have access to driveways. As each section is completed the work will move westward down Cameron Avenue.

This work is part of a utility infrastructure upgrade to support UNC's Northeast Chiller Plant and Parking Deck to be constructed behind the Center for Dramatic Art, Paul Green Theater and Cobb Residence Hall.



For more information:
Project information: "www.constructionwatch.unc.edu"
Maps and further information: "www.dps.unc.edu/dps"
Chapel Hill Transit route changes: "www.chtransit.org"

Further Questions?
Email JTS@dps.psafety.unc.edu
Daytime: (919) 962-5028 Emergencies: 911



THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA at CHAPEL HILL

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