



Orange Barrels are on the Way!

Anyone who travels on North Tryon Street between Old Concord Road and UNC Charlotte has probably noticed the early stages of construction work for the LYNX Blue Line Extension. The first four contract packages included demolition work and an array of utility relocations. Uptown pedestrians and motorists have also observed a variety of work locations, beginning at the current Seventh Street Station and continuing north along the extension to the University City area. Some additional work areas have included parts of NoDa and near the Norfolk Southern railroad tracks under Eastway Boulevard.



Watch for lane closures as construction gears up.

During the last seven months, crews worked on installing new waterlines, storm sewers, sanitary sewers, multiple utility duct banks and retaining walls farther back from the current shoulders along North Tryon Street. This work is needed to move the utilities out of the way for the light rail tracks. This work also cleared the way for private companies to move their utilities away from the future light rail alignment.

In the first few months of 2014, CATS is awarding two major civil construction contracts, for Segment A from Seventh Street to Old Concord Road, and Segment B/C from Old Concord Road to UNC Charlotte. Civil is a term used to refer to the design, construction and maintenance of the physical and naturally built environment, including works like roads, bridges and buildings. The civil construction contracts will construct the new roadways for North Tryon Street traffic generally on the outer edges of the widened corridor, leaving room for the new light rail tracks in the median of North Tryon Street. These contracts will also be responsible for the bridges that will carry the light rail trains over 36th Street, Craighead Road, Old Concord Road, I-85 Connector, University City Boulevard, WT Harris Boulevard and Toby Creek onto the UNC Charlotte campus. As you might imagine, there's more to these contracts than just roadways and bridges, but those elements will be the most obvious changes that will become visible to passers-by.

When the new roadway work begins, motorists will encounter lane shifts and traffic detours. CATS Construction Managers will coordinate these traffic changes so motorists have advanced notice and can plan alternate routes or allow extra time for their trips. The project team will ensure access for all of the business and residential properties along the alignment.

One of the first impacts residents and commuters will notice with the start of the civil construction is the lengthening of the Eastway Drive bridge. The bridge is being lengthened to accommodate the light rail tracks underneath, along with the Norfolk Southern rail line. This work is scheduled to start in March. The bridge will be closed to vehicular and pedestrian traffic between Howie Circle and Curtiswood Drive. Once closed, this section of Eastway Drive is expected to be closed for a year.

You can always check for up-to-date information by checking the project website: www.charlottefuture.com; liking the project on Facebook at facebook.com/CATSBlueLineExtensionUpdates; or following us on Twitter at [@BLEupdates](https://twitter.com/BLEupdates).

Congratulations to the Planning Department for Receiving NCAPA's Outstanding Planning Award



Blue Line Extension Urban and Suburban Stations Transit Station Area Plan

The City of Charlotte received an Outstanding Planning Award for the Blue Line Extension (BLE) Transit Station Area Plans in the 2013 North Carolina Marvin Collins Planning Awards Program of the North Carolina Chapter of the American Planning Association (NCAPA). The planning process for the transit station area plans was led by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Department. The Plans were recognized in the Comprehensive Planning – Large Community category which recognizes plans, programs or processes of unusually high merit adopted or enacted in the current or past two calendar years.

The Awards Committee found the Blue Line Extension (BLE) Transit Station Area Plans to be well-written documents showing innovation in theory and practice as well as significant advances in the Planning field. The Committee was impressed with efforts to protect existing neighborhoods while realizing transit benefits. Effective public outreach strategies and policy development was a result of interdepartmental collaboration committed to comprehensiveness and efficiency.



Tom Hunter Transit Station Area Plan Concept

The award was presented during the North Carolina Annual Planning Conference in September, 2013, in Winston-Salem, NC.

Kathy Cornett, AICP, Senior Planning Coordinator and Alysia Osborne, AICP, Planning Coordinator with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Department were the project managers for the interdepartmental City and County staff team.

To review the document and other plan information, please visit www.charlotteplanning.org.

Calico: The North Tryon Retaining Walls



Pre-cast concrete panels are placed between steel H-piles creating a decorative wall.

Sculptor Carolyn Braaskma of Denver, Colorado is designing the visible retaining walls, piers and bridges for the BLE. You can already see some of her wall design fabrications in the current advanced utility relocation work in Segments B and C. The walls will face businesses along North Tryon Street between University City Boulevard and the Charlotte Research Institute. The artist carved the original patterns for the pictured design, which she calls "Calico," while in residence at the McColl Center for Visual Art in Charlotte. Further designs incorporate insects and vegetation indigenous to the Carolinas, including orchids and carnivorous plants. As construction continues, Braaskma's plans for piers and bridge railings will become even more visible.



Let's Do Business!

As construction continues in Segment C and begins in Segment B, more business owners are seeking information on how to benefit from the LYNX Blue Line Extension.

They understand the challenges with construction, but also realize that it presents

an opportunity to capture a broader customer market. The mission of numerous nonprofit organizations is to help businesses start, grow, finance and leverage contract opportunities.

The City of Charlotte Neighborhood & Business Services Department convened a community to develop a web portal that features resources, events and news for the business community. This portal provides a network of organizations committed to working together to provide businesses with information and skills to start and run a successful business. CATS and Neighborhood & Business Services reached out to partners such as CPCC Small Business Center and Small Business Technology and Development Center to provide information on the BLE project and share concerns from the businesses along the alignment. These partners are knowledgeable and eager to help. If you are a business owner, or know a business owner seeking information on how to elevate their business to the next level, I encourage you to visit www.charlottebusinessresources.com, and of course, let me know about your experience!

Lastly, we've conducted dozens of site visits and experienced an outpouring of interest in Economic Development grants and art projects in progress for the BLE at the public meetings held in December. A number of business owners were excited to hear that Neighborhood & Business Services offers a Façade Grant Program for business owners or commercial property owners interested in improving building appearance and updating grandfathered signs, parking and landscaping into conformance with current codes. The program provides 50 percent reimbursement for commercial or industrial businesses or property owners for eligible architectural renovation expenses. This program, along with our Security Grant Program, is location sensitive so please visit our website at www.nbs.charlottenc.gov for eligibility requirements. If you are a business near a transit station, check out the Art-in-Transit link on www.charlottefuture.com to get a sneak peek at the art incorporated into each transit station.



Jennifer Duru
Neighborhood & Business Services
LYNX Blue Line Extension Business Liaison

Stay Connected

Construction will cause some disruptions, so CATS will share information about how to stay informed and who to contact when you have questions. The use of social media will also help in providing additional outreach avenues to keep residents and business owners informed throughout the construction of the BLE. The two new social media sites dedicated to BLE information are ready for your use to give you the most up to date information and answer your questions.

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter

 www.facebook.com/CATSBlueLineExtensionUpdates

 [@BLEupdates](https://twitter.com/BLEupdates)

Register to Receive Updates



If you prefer to go online, please visit www.charlottefuture.com or www.ridetransit.org to connect with BLE project information, rapid transit planning and future construction information. You may register to receive electronic public meeting updates by clicking the Notify Me icon at the top of the web page. You can also call CATS customer service at 704-336-RIDE (7433).

Community Feedback

Adolf Aghogah, owner of Safarique African Decor and Crafts enjoys sharing information on the Blue Line Extension. "It has led to lively conversation," he says.



Join Us at the Transit Station Area Plan Workshops

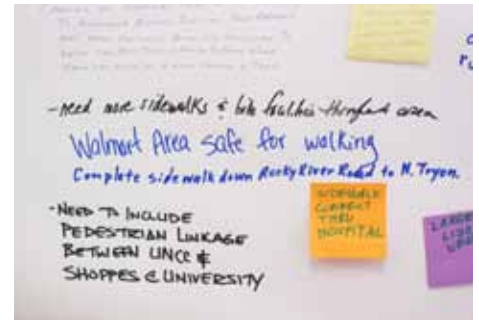


CATS and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Department hosted a workshop and open house on Tuesday, December 10, 2013 at the Oasis Shriners Center in the University City area. It was an opportunity for members of the community to hear an update on the BLE's construction and the University City Area Plan (UCAP) update. The workshop allowed residents, business owners and other interested attendees to see preliminary land use proposals and express concerns, questions or interests related to land use, transportation and design of the study area. Staff from multiple departments within the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County and the State was in attendance to provide information about specific topics of interest.

We want to hear from you.

The Planning Department gathered a wide array of comments, questions and concerns related to the study area within University City. This part of Charlotte has experienced a considerable amount of growth and changes over the past couple of decades and will continue to do so, especially with the addition of the light rail down the center of a major road and an expanding university campus.

The plan aims to guide future development around the light rail corridor and supporting areas to achieve the vision of a distinct, vibrant, people-oriented destination within Charlotte. Comments heard from the community at the last workshop in December will drive the conversation for the next workshop on Tuesday, February 11 with a focus on transportation (pedestrians, bicycles, transit, automobiles) and community design (character, form). For example, multiple remarks were related to sidewalks and pedestrian connections between greenways and other destinations in the area and the provision of safe, convenient transportation options for residents and visitors.



Share your thought for the University area stations.

Your participation is encouraged in upcoming workshops for the University City Area Plan update. You can also visit the project website at <http://UCAP.charlotteplanning.org> and utilize the online Land Use Public Comment tool!

Community Workshop II

(Transportation and Community Design)

Tuesday, February 11, 2014

4:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

Oasis Shriner's Center

604 Doug Mayes Place

Charlotte, NC 28262

Community Workshop III

(Presentation of DRAFT University City Area Plan Update recommendations)

Tuesday, March 11, 2014

4:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

Oasis Shriner's Center

604 Doug Mayes Place

Charlotte, NC 28262

SAFETY TIP

Pedestrians walking near work zone areas should be alert, cautious and allow extra traveling time. Please cross at signalized intersections, use pedestrian walk signals where available and abide by detour signage.

Motorists traveling through work zone areas should be alert and extra cautious. Drivers should get in the correct lane well in advance and constantly be on the lookout for vehicles merging into the travel lanes as they approach a work zone. Drivers should double their following distance in work zones.