

MANDATORY REFERRAL-REPORT NO. MR03-31
Proposed Acquisition of Property to serve as University Area CATS Park & Ride Lot

PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:

Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) is seeking to acquire approximately three (3) acres of land in the University area of Charlotte for a Park & Ride facility. This proposed facility will replace the current temporary location located at the Verbatim Corporation parking lot located in the Research Park (1200 E. W.T. Harris Boulevard). The facility will serve commuters in the University area and those from areas north on I-85.

Agents from the City of Charlotte Real Estate Division have identified a parcel meeting requirements set forth by CATS and an Option to Purchase has been submitted to the seller. The parcel is a portion of Westbrook Business Park located off of Mallard Creek Road. It is bounded by Mallard Creek Road on the west and J.N. Pease Place on the east. The parcel number is 047-131-07 and is zoned O-1 (CD). The property is owned by Queens Properties, LLC. Approximately 3 acres will be subdivided from a parent tract consisting of approximately 30 acres.

The Park & Ride facility is conveniently situated near residential developments, while also having proximity to major thoroughfares, such as Mallard Creek Road, W.T. Harris Blvd., Mallard Creek Church Rd., I-85, I-485, as well as U.S. Hwy 29 and 49. The location can serve as a central point of transportation for area travel as well as commuter travel from the University Area to Uptown.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:

CATS has an ambitious capital program to serve existing passengers and to attract new riders. Owning commuter parking as opposed to short-term use agreements on property owned by others, provides stability and reliability for riders, and allows marketing of innovative express and custom bus services. There is high demand for park and ride in the subject area.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED PUBLIC POLICIES:

CATS' adopted capital budget and strategic plan includes a specific Park and Ride line-item.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE PLANS:

The 1996 Northeast District Plan recommends a research land use for this parcel recognizing it as part of the University Research Park campus. However, a park and ride location within the research park and in close proximity to single-family land uses would be appropriate in these locations.

The property is zoned O-1(CD), and a park and ride use is consistent with the conditions of this district.

PROJECT IMPACT:

With a convenient location along Mallard Creek Road, near the W.T. Harris intersection, the proposed site is well situated to attract bus commuters in the Northeast/University City corridor. Increased ridership will serve to provide transportation options in a rapidly growing part of the county.

The Park & Ride location itself will be a parking area and transportation hub, which will mesh seamlessly with the surrounding commercial development.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS:

We are not currently aware of any other public projects in this vicinity. There are numerous single-family and multi-family residential developments in this general area. There is also a large office and retail development under construction at Mallard Creek and Mallard Creek Church Road. The Park & Ride facility will serve commuters and shoppers in this region.

ESTIMATED PROJECT COMPLETION DATE:

If approved, the property should be acquired within the next 120 to 150 days.

JOINT USE TASK FORCE REVIEW COMMENTS:

The Joint Use Task Force discussed this matter at their December 3, 2003 meeting and no joint use comments were received.

CMPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval with the condition that in the development of the site, CATS consider providing long-term parking facilities for bicycles as well as automobiles. Long-term bicycle parking provides employees, students, residents, commuters and others who generally stay at a site for several hours a secure and weather-protected place to park bicycles. Transit studies from across the nation have shown that the bicycle is one of the most cost effective and efficient ways to access transit.

CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

The Planning Committee considered this matter at their December 16, 2003 meeting, and recommended approval of the staff recommendation by a 6-0 vote.

Staff resource: Kathy Cornett

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