

## Triangle Parkway public hearing - 3/25/2008

My name is David McDowell. I'm a Raleigh native and founder of No Tolls on 540.org.

We are all here tonight because the NCTA (North Carolina Turnpike Authority) wants to show you the Triangle Parkway portion of the Triangle Expressway, which includes the Western Wake Parkway and try to sell you on the idea of this stretch of road should be built as a toll road. The NCTA wants the Triangle Expressway to lead them forward as the State's first toll road. The currently open portion of I-540 is toll free, however, south of I-40 to NC 55 in RTP was renamed to NC 540 avoid conflicts with Federal Tolling Agreements on Interstate Highways so that one day you could wake up and suddenly find this section of road tolled, a road you are able to drive without tolls today.

We also have Governor Easley's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Transportation Commission wanting to determine where our future transit needs are focused, this group containing NC Legislators that support the NCTA. And, there may be proper places to implement toll roads in NC but part of our I-540 loop along with the 147 extension does not fit that model. In 2007, NC Legislators could not agree on a way to fill the GAP funding the NCTA is asking for. Keep in mind that 2008 is the last year for Governor Easley's administration. Let the new Governor's administration decide the fate of our tolls. That said, I hope this trend continues in 2008, not only to not fill the GAP, but to NOT allow the NCTA to use a public-private partnership for funding for this project. Private investors want only 1 thing, Return on Investment. This means higher tolls over a longer period of time. Not only that, we lose public control of our transportation infrastructure.

On another note, you may have heard of STAC (Special Transit Advisory Commission). How many more groups or commissions will it take to confuse the public on our transit future? In a nutshell, STAC's basic charge is to determine goals and objectives for regional transit investments and make recommendations, ultimately to come up with a Regional Transit Vision Plan for the Triangle. So far their draft plan does NOT address the issue of toll roads. It primarily focuses on rail and bus only, with a tiny provision to work with a road's owner on how to best use it for their bus routes. Their draft plan proposes a HALF CENT sales tax increase as one way to fund their projects.

Everyone knows the challenges this area faces for the future of our regional transit. STAC wants you to pay higher taxes for rail and bus systems, and the NCTA wants you to pay tolls to drive on PARTS of 540 and the 147 extension. So let me shorten that... pay higher taxes AND pay tolls?? It is clear to me that the organizations charged with making our transit future brighter continue to be reading from 2 completely different books. They are disconnected and not working together towards one common goal.

Atlanta has their 285, Charlotte their 485, and Raleigh shall have its 540 loop. The NCTA says "toll road or no road" yet there are many alternative ways to fund the road. Using STAC as an example, why not make this section of 540 and the 147 extension part of their plan? Let their proposed tax increase not only be used to fund their regional rail and bus projects, but also for this road need. Let's have ONE plan directing our regional transit, not many. Let's make 147 and ALL of 540 without tolls.

Thank you!