GoTriangle – Durham Orange Light Rail



How Do I Submit Comments?

- Written Comments: Complete and submit this form.
- Electronic Comments: Submit comments by visiting www.lightrailonline.com.

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Date: Name: Street Address: City, State, Zip: Phone: Email:	We object to the planned Durham/Chapel Hill Light Rail project on the grounds that it will likely attract far fewer riders than GoTriangle projects. This will make the rail system (estimated by GoTriangle to cost more than \$130m per mile) economically non-viable. GoTriangle projects 24,000 riders per day or about 9m riders per year. The combined population of Durham and Chapel Hill is about 350,000. There are 42 light rail lines (including trolleys) in North America. All of them are located in far larger cities. Buffalo, NY may be the exception, but it attracts only 4.5m riders per year. Ridership levels similar to what GoTriangle projects for Durham/Chapel Hill are achieved by San Jose, CA (42 miles of track), Pittsburgh, PA (26 miles), Baltimore, MD (33 miles), New Orleans (22 miles; a tourist destination). All of these serve far larger populations than the proposed Durham/Chapel Hill line.	
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Comments.	
We object to the planned Durham/Chapel Hill Light Rail project on the grounds that it is economically absurd. GoTriangle has not calculated (or made public) an estimate of the cost per rider. Here is a simple calculation, based entirely on the numbers provided by GoTriangle (likely optimistic):	
1. Capital cost: \$2.45b 2. Assumed interest rate: 5% (our assumption) 3. Interest cost per year: \$122m 2. Daily number of riders: 24,000 3. Annual number of round-trips: 4.4m 4. Interest cost per round-trip: \$28	
This calculation does not account for operating costs (about \$7 per round-trip based onGoTriangle's estimate of \$30m in annual operating costs). It also does not account for the fact that operation does not start until 10 years after the start of construction (capitalcosts accrue).	
A more likely scenario: Capital costs double (the typically cost overrun for public transit projects in the U.S. is over 100%) and ridership is about half of GoTriangle's projection (GoTriangle estimates 60% more riders than Charlotte's Blue Line which is 60% longer and runs through an area with 3 times the population of Durham and Chapel Hill). In that case, the cost per round-trip would quadruple to over \$100.	
In other words, each daily commuter would cost between \$8,400 (\$28x300) and \$30,000—(\$100x300) per year.	
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Comments:
We object to the planned Durham/Chapel Hill Light Rail project on the grounds that it is inappropriate for the proposed location. For a light rail project, Durham/Chapel Hill pose a worst case scenario. The area has a far smaller population than comparable projects (about 330,000 persons). The proposed rail does not run through or connect major population centers. Instead, it connects UNC hospitals (but not Chapel Hill or UNC's main campus) with Durham and Duke University. Because the entire area is built up, rail construction is unusally expensive (GoTriangle projects \$2.45b for an 18 mile track or \$136m per mile). A useful comparison is Phoenix, AZ. Construction costs were less than half of GoTriangle's projection (\$65m per mile). The rail line runs through an area with more than 10 times the population of Durham and Chapel Hill. It connects two major population centers (Tempe and ASU with Phoenix). There is enough space to build the rail away from residential areas. It makes sense to build rail in a location like Phoenix, but not in a location like Durham/Chapel Hill where it connects to mid-size towns, but excludes the major population center (Raleigh).
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	Please fold, fasten with tape	and mail. No envelope	necessary. Do not stap	ole.	
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	Research	GoTriangle PO Box 13787 Triangle Park, N	C 27709		