

GoTriangle's DOLRT misinformation


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DOLRT (Durham-Orange County Light Rail project) is a proposed light rail line than plans to run from UNC Hospital in Chapel Hill to the NCCU campus in Durham. Along the way it will pass by Duke Hospital.

The following chart lists misinformation that GoTriangle (GoT) has made about DOLRT. GoT is the driver of the DOLRT.

#	Topic	Details
1	Grade separation	<p>Here's a screen shot of the latest GoTriangle website:</p> <p>The D-O LRT Project is a 17.7-mile project that will provide over 26,000 trips to residents and commuters taking advantage of employment, healthcare and educational opportunities in Durham and Chapel Hill. The rail project will connect three of the top ten employers in the state (Duke University, UN- Chapel Hill and UNC Health Care).</p> <p>The light rail will provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10-minute frequency during peak times, 20-minute frequency during off-peak times • Operate in a dedicated guideway, separate from traffic This is FALSE!! • Offer 18 stations, nine park-and-ride locations and connections to other transit services • Provide relief to 17 bus routes that currently serve portions of the corridor, allowing them to be rerouted to serve other areas of the community <p>This project will help control growth; foster compact development; create vibrant, walkable communities; and connect residents to jobs, healthcare and education opportunities. The light rail project will connect current and future transit services, including the Commuter Rail project and the Bus Rapid Transit project in Chapel Hill.</p> <p>The statement about being separate from traffic is absolutely false! There will be over 40 sections where the rail and cars share the same road. [details]</p>
2	Projected trips/day = 27,000 day	<p>This equates to 13,000 riders/day. This number is grossly inflated, because considerably fewer than this number currently use public transportation at UNC and Duke. This number was inflated by GoT so that they could qualify for Federal funding. One of the absurd assumptions that GoT made was that in the year 2040, 40% of all households wouldn't have a car.</p>
3	Why doesn't DOLRT go down 15-501?	<p>On February 23, 2017 Mr. Eric (?) Green of GoT said they chose NC 54 because:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. They did a study of traffic and there is more traffic coming from Durham to Chapel Hill on NC 54 than coming into Chapel Hill from NC 15-501. 2. He also said they don't like to have to remove any structures if possible. 3. There was land set aside behind East 54 for light rail transit 15-20 years ago, and there is land where the Friday center is.
4	Why doesn't DOLRT go to RTP and then to RDU airport?	<p>They did a study of ridership of Go Triangle buses to RTP & to RDU Airport and the buses are nearly empty, so that's why they will NOT serving those destinations with Light Rail.</p> <p>RTP is very spread out and hard to have a light rail "stop" there and RTP has massive parking lots spread throughout RTP. RTP does have transit issues but Light Rail Transit can't solve them at this time and especially with the campus being spread out and having so many massive parking lots.</p>

		People are not riding GO-triangle buses to the airport, so they don't believe they will ride Light Rail to the airport.
5	Transit deserts in Orange County	GoT claims that Chapel Hill-Carrboro has more buses running more miles and providing more service than Wake County.
6	Omission in financial plan submitted to FTA	Bonnie Hauser has found out that there will be annual operating costs of about \$30 million plus debt service of about \$20 million later in the project, after 2036 or so going until 2062. This is not in the plan submitted to FTA because their documentation goes only until 2035. This staggering annual cost will be paid by Durham and Orange without federal or state help.
7	Inflated sales tax revenue	The project plan assumes constant annual growth of sales tax revenue of 4 percent over the 40 or so year period. This is highly unlikely. DOLRT is a huge financial risk and burden to taxpayers, especially in Orange County where we get minimal benefits from the project.
8	Missing At-Grade info	<p>If you search the GoTriangle website for “at grade crossing”, you won’t find anything:</p> 
9	False information about the length of an at-grade crossing	At a station design meeting, a GoTriangle person claimed that an at-grade crossing only took 20 seconds. This is false. See this video of an at-grade crossing in Denver: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ebhw2HbfUU Traffic is blocked from 0:19 to 1:09. That’s 50 seconds.
10	False information about how often a train has to be overhauled.	At a November 15, 2017 GoTriangle presentation on the ROMF I asked how frequently trains have to be shipped to Siemens in California to be completely overhauled. A GoTriangle representative said once every 12 years. This is false information. It’s once every 5 years. The cost is \$ 400K per train. [details]

Orange County has commissioned an independent review of the finances of the DOLRT by the Davenport firm. The Davenport report will be ready in early April to be presented to individual County Commissioners during the period April 3-10.

We have seen the letter that the FTA sent to GoTriangle on February 16, pointing out that GoTriangle needs to get renewed assurances from Orange and Durham that they accept the current costs of the LRT. We learned that GoTriangle drafted a letter for the Orange County Manager to send in reply to make these assurances, thus committing the County with no public knowledge or formal action by the Commissioners. Fortunately the County did not send the letter, which will be on the agenda for the March 7 meeting of the Commissioners.

At the April 18 meeting, the results of the financial analysis of the LRT project by the Davenport firm will be presented. The commissioners will be asked to instruct GoTriangle whether to proceed with the large engineering costs for LRT, but this is somehow to happen without formal Board action. It is highly improper that the go ahead for big expenditures for LRT would be given without a vote by the Commissioners and before the public has had an opportunity to review and understand the Davenport report.

The Davenport report be made public as soon as possible, and the Commissioners should hold a public hearing on the report and on the financial impact of LRT on Orange County. Also, no assurances of any kind should be made on the DOLRT project, including any response to the FTA letter of February 16, until after the public hearing.

-John Morris