

DAVID PRICE
4TH DISTRICT
NORTH CAROLINA



2108 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-1784

436 N. HARRINGTON STREET, SUITE 100
RALEIGH, NC 27603
(919) 859-5999

1777 FORDHAM BLVD., SUITE 204
CHAPEL HILL, NC 27514
(919) 967-7924

301 GREEN STREET, SUITE 315
FAYETTEVILLE, NC 28301
(910) 323-0260

www.price.house.gov

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MILITARY CONSTRUCTION &
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CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

December 5, 2016

Orange County Board of Commissioners
Whitted Building
300 W. Tryon Street
Hillsborough, NC 27278

Dear Commissioners McKee, Dorosin, Burroughs, Jacobs, Pelissier, Price, and Rich:

I write regarding the Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit (D-O LRT) project, which must enter into the Engineering phase of the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) New Starts program by February 2017. To do so, GoTriangle must submit their application to proceed to the new phase by the end of this calendar year.

As you know, the North Carolina General Assembly's decision to renege on its prior funding commitment and cap its contribution to the D-O LRT project at only 10 percent of the project's total cost has forced GoTriangle and other project supporters to seek additional funding from local sources and the private sector. This development has understandably generated a number of urgent questions from local officials in Orange and Durham Counties, and GoTriangle must continue working to answer these questions in the weeks and months ahead.

As the Ranking Member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee with jurisdiction over FTA and the New Starts program, I want to make clear the implications if D-O LRT were to "pause" or "drop out" of the New Starts pipeline, even temporarily. When this occurs, it significantly hampers a project's ability to compete with other transit proposals for limited federal funding. Even though federal funding for New Starts has modestly increased in recent years, FTA's evaluation process is stringent and nationwide demand for the New Starts program remains high.

For these reasons, I respectfully discourage you from taking any course of action that could jeopardize D-O LRT's standing within the New Starts pipeline. Even if D-O LRT proceeds to the Engineering phase, my understanding is that additional sources of local funding would not need to be committed for many months. This delay would allow time for local officials to adequately review updated planning and financial information from GoTriangle and make an informed decision on how best to proceed.

Thank you for consideration, and I look forward to continuing to work with each of you to advance transit options for Orange County residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Price".

DAVID E. PRICE
Member of Congress