

**From:** esthermanheimer@avlcouncil.com <esthermanheimer@avlcouncil.com>  
**Sent:** 2/28/2022 3:52:24 PM  
**To:** 'Don Kostelec' <don.kostelec@gmail.com>, 'Debra Campbell' <dcampbell@ashevillenc.gov>  
**Cc:**  
**Subject:** RE: Motorist bias baked into Merrimon Avenue Survey

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Don “ thanks for your feedback. I am not a subject area expert so your feedback is helpful. I took the survey this morning and the transportation professionals’ views bring a different perspective than mine.

Thank you,  
Esther

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**From:** Don Kostelec <don.kostelec@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 28, 2022 12:12 PM  
**To:** Debra Campbell <dcampbell@ashevillenc.gov>; Esther Manheimer <esthermanheimer@avlcouncil.com>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Motorist bias baked into Merrimon Avenue Survey

Ms. Campbell and Mayor Manheimer,  
Why is the City continuing to fail its citizens in these ways? It's really a disservice to what the City claims are its goals for climate, equity, and inclusiveness.

If you'll recall, Ken Putnam gave NCDOT the thumbs up on the original Merrimon proposal in 2018, despite it ignoring the many plans the City developed under Ken's own department. Add to that the many years of documented ADA violations that Cathy Ball allowed to persist under the departments she was leading. And now this.

What's the issue with the failures of leadership at the City to align its transportation actions with the rest of the City's stated goals and policies? I'd love your perspective on that. It's as if the City is playing into NCDOT's hands on Merrimon and designing it to fail.

Best regards,  
Don Kostelec

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Don Kostelec** <[don.kostelec@gmail.com](mailto:don.kostelec@gmail.com)>  
Date: Mon, Feb 28, 2022 at 9:45 AM  
Subject: Re: Motorist bias baked into Merrimon Avenue Survey  
To: Jessica Morriss <[jmorris@ashevillenc.gov](mailto:jmorris@ashevillenc.gov)>  
Cc: Tristan Winkler <[tristan@landofsky.org](mailto:tristan@landofsky.org)>, Vaidila Satvika <[vsatvika@ashevillenc.gov](mailto:vsatvika@ashevillenc.gov)>, Uchiyama, David <[duchiyama@ncdot.gov](mailto:duchiyama@ncdot.gov)>, Gibbs, Mark T <[mgibbs@ncdot.gov](mailto:mgibbs@ncdot.gov)>, Cannon, Steven L <[slcannon@ncdot.gov](mailto:slcannon@ncdot.gov)>, Henderson, Anna G <[aghenderson@ncdot.gov](mailto:aghenderson@ncdot.gov)>, Ken Putnam <[kputnam@ashevillenc.gov](mailto:kputnam@ashevillenc.gov)>, Mike Sule <[mike@ashevilleonbikes.com](mailto:mike@ashevilleonbikes.com)>, <[Merrimon-Asheville@publicinput.com](mailto:Merrimon-Asheville@publicinput.com)>, Debra Campbell <[dcampbell@ashevillenc.gov](mailto:dcampbell@ashevillenc.gov)>, Kim Roney <[kimroney@avlcouncil.com](mailto:kimroney@avlcouncil.com)>

Wow, Jessica. That's discouraging. Why is it then so biased toward gathering motorists' attitudes and against the value of time and experience for other road users?

On Mon, Feb 28, 2022 at 9:42 AM Jessica Morriss <[jmorris@ashevillenc.gov](mailto:jmorris@ashevillenc.gov)> wrote:

Thanks Don, the City wrote the survey.

Jessica Morriss, AICP, MPA  
Assistant Director  
Transportation Department

On Mon, Feb 28, 2022 at 11:40 AM Don Kostelec <[don.kostelec@gmail.com](mailto:don.kostelec@gmail.com)> wrote:

Hello - I sent the survey to other transportation professionals around the country to help gauge it for bias against the safety of people who walk and bike. Did the City and MPO have any input on this survey to help eliminate the bias within it?

These are some of the observations I received from them and in my review:

1. It gives you the Family Feud chart to let you know if you're going with or against the crowd, and gives you the opportunity to change your responses.
2. This is the sort of thing that makes newspaper click polls look downright scientific.
  - (Loved that one; that was from a colleague who does survey analysis and development for Cambridge Systematics).
3. Use of "vehicles drive too fast" and "left turning vehicles block the travel lanes." Unless these are autonomous vehicles, it is the drivers of vehicles who are doing this. Vehicles cannot do this without human intervention.
4. How would you rate the safety... This should say the "feeling of safety."
5. How much additional time...Why is this time issue directed only at motorists taking the survey? It only feeds the notion that motorists are somehow giving away something that is rightfully theirs and the entitlement mentality that only their time matters.
  - What about bicyclists and pedestrians who would want to spend less time waiting for a signal to change or don't like having NCDOT give them the MUTCD minimum time to cross the street?
  - What about the additional, out of direction, time bicyclists have to take to reach destinations on Merrimon because it lacks safe facilities to access businesses, schools, churches/synagogues?
  - What about pedestrians who have to make out of direction trips to reach traffic signals that are spaced so far apart?
  - What about transit riders who have to do the same as pedestrians given there isn't a safe crossing for their bus stops?
  - What about disabled users who have to take additional time to navigate non-compliant driveway cuts and curb ramps?
  - 
  - What about people in wheelchairs who can't access poorly-engineered push buttons and have to wait until someone else trips the signal or risk their lives crossing against the DON'T WALK signal?
  - What about the person who is blind or vision impaired and doesn't have access to basic access needs like APS, despite NCDOT spending millions to upgrade the traffic signal systems in Asheville but not addressing that issue in those upgrades?

A better framing to provide balance in questions would be:

- As a pedestrian or bicyclist, would you be willing to wait longer at signals to cross Merrimon during peak periods in order to help minimize congestion during those hours as a result of the road diet?
  - That's a valid discussion of tradeoffs to help avoid signal timing being the issue that could create additional peak hour delay and not the road diet itself. As someone who walks and bikes, I'm willing to give up some time during a peak hour while waiting to cross as a tradeoff of having safer infrastructure the other hours of the day.
- Would you be willing to walk 1,000 feet or more out of your way to reach a signalized crossing of Merrimon to help preserve traffic flow?
- As a transit rider, are you willing to walk up to 20 minutes out of your way to access the other side of the street from your bus stop?
- As a disabled person, does being forced to go 1,000 feet out of your way impact your freedom of mobility and take time away from your daily needs?
  - Again, NCDOT doesn't measure or value the time of other road users, as we saw in the AECOM study. Framing it this way helps everyone realize the unrealistic expectations we place on pedestrians to preserve motorist convenience and promotes the idea that other road users are already greatly-impacted when it comes to the time commitment they have in trying to use or access Merrimon.

Thanks,  
Don Kostelec