



Transit and Rail Element

Introduction

As part of the Fuquay-Varina Community Transportation Plan, all elements of transportation were considered. Although passenger car is the dominant mode of choice, it is important to recognize the intragral role transit and rail play both in the current and future transportation networks. Fuquay-Varina and surrounding areas are expected to grow significantly in the future; with this growth, it will be even more important to provide the Fuquay-Varina community with real multimodal choices. Alternative transportation options will reduce congestion and provide more flexibility for all groups in the community. With this great potential in mind, existing transit and rail facilities were studied and discussed with the public to provide a feasible, adaptable plan for the future.

Public Involvement

On June 2 and 7, 2005, the Town of Fuquay-Varina held public workshops to elicit comments and ideas from the community. The community shared their ideas by completing surveys, marking up maps, and writing specific thoughts on Post-it notes.

Each participant was asked to fill out a survey based on personal transportation experiences in the area. As part of this survey, respondents were asked to rate the quality of transit and taxi service in the Fuquay-Varina area. Out of the 19 respondents, 8 reported the transit service to be "poor," 9 reported "don't know," 1 reported "fair," and 1 did not respond. The taxi service similarly received 7 "poor," 11 "don't know," and 1 "fair" response.



FVCTP Citizen Advisory Committee Meeting

The participants also identified additional transit services needed in Fuquay-Varina as the following:

- § Light rail/commuter service
- § Bus/van service to downtown Raleigh
- § Frequent shuttle services that would include stops at grocery stores, drug stores, etc.
- § Shuttle service to RDU airport, malls, RTP, and downtown Raleigh

In addition to the formal distributed surveys, the workshop participants and committee members discussed the railroad in the community. Concerns about each railroad crossing were

repeatedly identified. The most congested and dangerous intersections include the following:

- § N. Ennis Street and Broad Street
- § Judd Parkway and Broad Street
- § Sunset Lake and Broad Street

The community also expressed concern about the railroad dividing the two historic areas of Fuquay and Varina. The railroad causes separation between them, making it impractical to join the two separate town centers that were established before the community was united.



*N. Ennis Street and Broad Street
Source: Mike Cole (CAC Member)*

Transit

Public transportation includes everything from taxis and shuttles to intercity buses and trains, all of which can have a greater or lesser impact on the community members' lives on any given day. Public transit, on the other hand, is local and greatly affects the daily lives of those who rely on it to get to and from work, medical appointments, the grocery store, or any location that others might reach by private automobile.

As noted in the National Personal Transportation Survey, mobility constraints affect subgroups of the population, creating a mobility gap between those with access to jobs, services, recreation, etc., and those whose access is limited or non-existent. Improvements in public transportation can help bridge the mobility gap.

Good—not only adequate—public transportation bridges the gap between the mobility-constrained and those who move about freely and provides real travel choices. The hope is that in the future, public transportation will become a travel mode of choice for a greater proportion of the population and reduce reliance on the private automobile. For this to become a reality, continued investment needs to be made in public transportation to provide and improve service.

"The mobility of the majority of the American population is greater than ever, and we remain the most mobile nation on earth. However, there are subgroups within the population that have significant mobility constraints and the gap between these groups and the general population is growing. Unless these mobility issues are dealt with constructively, we will continue to have groups that are disenfranchised from the social, political, and economic benefits of this society."

Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey, 1995

Existing Fuquay-Varina Transit Services

Currently, Fuquay-Varina does not have a primary transit system. However, the town does have access to county-wide services and existing services in neighboring communities.

Wake Coordinated Transportation Services

Wake Coordinated Transportation Services (WCTS) is a County-run program that serves those residents of Wake County outside of Raleigh. This program is operated on a dial-a-ride system and is funded from an NCDOT grant and municipal aide (Fuquay-Varina



pays \$3,000 per year to be serviced by this program). Within the WCTS program is the TRACKS program. The TRACKS program serves an area, including Fuquay-Varina, which is divided into different zones. TRACKS operates 5 days a week from 7 am to 6 pm., with a fare based on \$2 within the same zone and \$4 to travel from one zone to another. The TRACKS program has experienced much success and more growth than expected since its inception.

Taxis

Currently, Fuquay-Varina has one taxicab company located within the town limits. However, the town has adopted a new taxi cab ordinance and there has recently been another request to provide taxi service. The existing taxicab company, Twin City Cab Company, presently operates one taxicab on a limited basis. The taxi operates with drop-off, per-mile, and waiting time rates consistent with a standard industry-wide range. The number of taxicabs in the town does not directly correlate to any level of anticipated ridership for transit; it simply supports the assumption that there are people in need of transportation in Fuquay-Varina.

Existing Neighboring Transit Services

Although Fuquay-Varina currently has limited existing transit service, neighboring communities such as Raleigh have transit services that link to some areas close within the region.

Triangle Transit Authority

Triangle Transit Authority (TTA) currently serves more than 1 million people each year. Currently, no TTA service runs in Fuquay-Varina. The closest existing TTA service runs to the Kmart parking lot on US 401 in Garner, to Highway 55 at South Hughes Street in Apex (closest to Fuquay-Varina). Should a Fuquay-Varina citizen be able to travel approximately 12 miles to the Apex TTA station/stop, an extensive transit network would be available within the TTA system.



Greyhound

All of the previously mentioned transit services provide transportation services to people traveling primarily within the region. However, the Greyhound services offer citizens more intercity, nation wide, and international destination options. The closest Greyhound bus stop is located at 314 West Jones Street in Raleigh and is approximately 18 miles from Fuquay-Varina. More information about Greyhound services can be found at www.greyhound.com.





Future Transit Services

Fuquay-Varina is in need of efficient, effective, and convenient transit services, especially as the area's population and congestion problems grow. Providing adequate transit services in the future will be important in order to address the needs of all residents of the community. Adequate transit service should provide additional convenient links to the Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill, and surrounding areas.

TTA Extension

As previously mentioned, TTA currently serves Fuquay-Varina's neighboring communities, including Apex, Cary, and Garner. As part of this study, TTA was contacted regarding any future plans for expansion of service in the Fuquay-Varina area. TTA indicated that in a previous study, service expansion was planned for the Fuquay-Varina area before 2030. Due to rising operating costs, however, the original schedule has been pushed back to an unspecified date. TTA suggested that if new funding sources could be used, implementation could occur much sooner.

Recommendation: It is recommended that additional funding sources be explored to extend express bus service along the NC 55 bypass in Holly Springs to a park-and-ride lot located between Holly Springs and Fuquay-Varina. Discussions with shopping center managers can help secure agreements for long-term parking. Figure 5.1 illustrates this bus service extension. The destination of this service would be the transit center along NC 54 in Research Triangle Park where connections could be made to other TTA routes.

- § Advantages – No need to limit demands; ability to link Fuquay-Varina with the rest of the TTA network; takes advantage of efficiencies of carrying more riders per trip; cost-per-rider is moderate; no need for complementary ADA paratransit
- § Disadvantages – Requires alternative funding sources

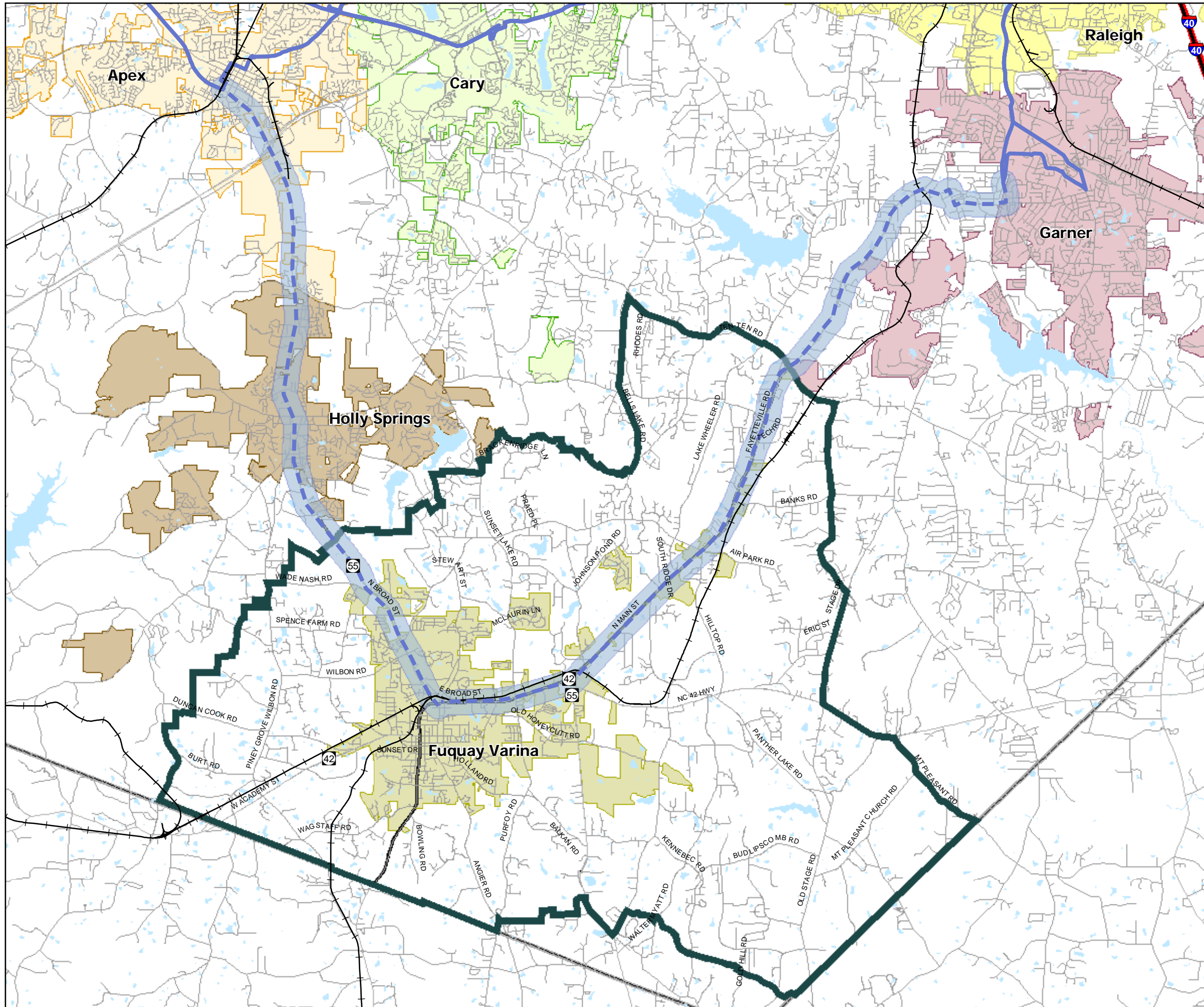











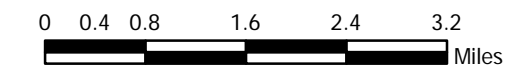


FIGURE 5.1
Proposed
TTA Extension
Corridor

-  Study Area
-  Town of Fuquay-Varina
-  County Boundary
-  TTA Routes
-  Proposed TTA Route
-  Proposed TTA Extension Corridor
-  Raleigh
-  Apex
-  Cary
-  Garner
-  Holly Springs



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Subsidized Taxi Program

Implementation of a subsidized taxi program would involve the use of the private taxi currently available in Fuquay-Varina. The program could offer subsidized rides to neighboring transit systems and local destinations. The program would be specifically intended to serve low-income populations, but would be available for the general public. The service would involve a rider paying a nominal fare for a one-way trip and the Town paying the difference between the nominal fare and the actual cost of the trip. As an example, a 7-mile trip would cost an average of \$9.90. The passenger would pay a nominal fee of \$0.70 and the remainder of the trip cost would be paid by the Town.

These types of programs can be offered viably, but have limitations on the number of trips that can be accommodated (due to financial constraints) and the population groups that are targeted. With a finite revenue stream and potentially large demand, the service might not be able to operate in a financially sustainable fashion and might not be able to provide transportation to all who request it.

Recommendation: It is recommended that a subsidized taxi program be considered for the Fuquay-Varina area. This program would allow those in the community in need of public transportation an opportunity to take advantage of services offered in Fuquay-Varina and surrounding areas. It would then be possible for these people to be linked with the extensive transit networks in the neighboring communities.

- § Advantages — Taxi is available; riders have service specifically tailored to their need
- § Disadvantages — Service can be difficult to administer; as the number of riders increases, cost increases; with a pre-payment (future reimbursement) for fares, service can be expensive for low-income people; and access to service might be inconsistent

Rail

The railroad has been a prominent facet of Fuquay-Varina since before the two communities were joined. The original center of Varina was developed around the junction of the Cape Fear, Northern, Norfolk, and Southern railroads. These railroads were vital to the success of early business ventures in both Fuquay and Varina, providing distribution for many of the main exports of the communities. Several businesses were developed around the railroad junction, such as tobacco warehouses. The railways were even used for the growing tourist industry in Fuquay Springs, as people traveled to see the mineral springs. The Varina Union Station is the center of a growing community and symbol of prosperity to come for the Fuquay-Varina.



Historic Varina Station

Existing Rail Conditions

The railroad currently runs through the heart of downtown Fuquay-Varina. Crossing these tracks is part of the local citizens' everyday life. Norfolk-Southern owns and operates the railroad within the *Fuquay-Varina Community Transportation Plan* study area boundary. CSX sold the abandoned track located to the northeast of downtown Fuquay and to the northwest of downtown Varina in 1997. Figure 5.2 illustrates the location of these rail lines.



Today, the railroad connects Fuquay-Varina with Raleigh to the northeast and Fayetteville to the south. The current services are limited to freight. One train goes to and from each of these destinations each day, making a total of four trains passing through Fuquay-Varina every day. Another track goes to Sanford along NC 42 and on to Charlotte.

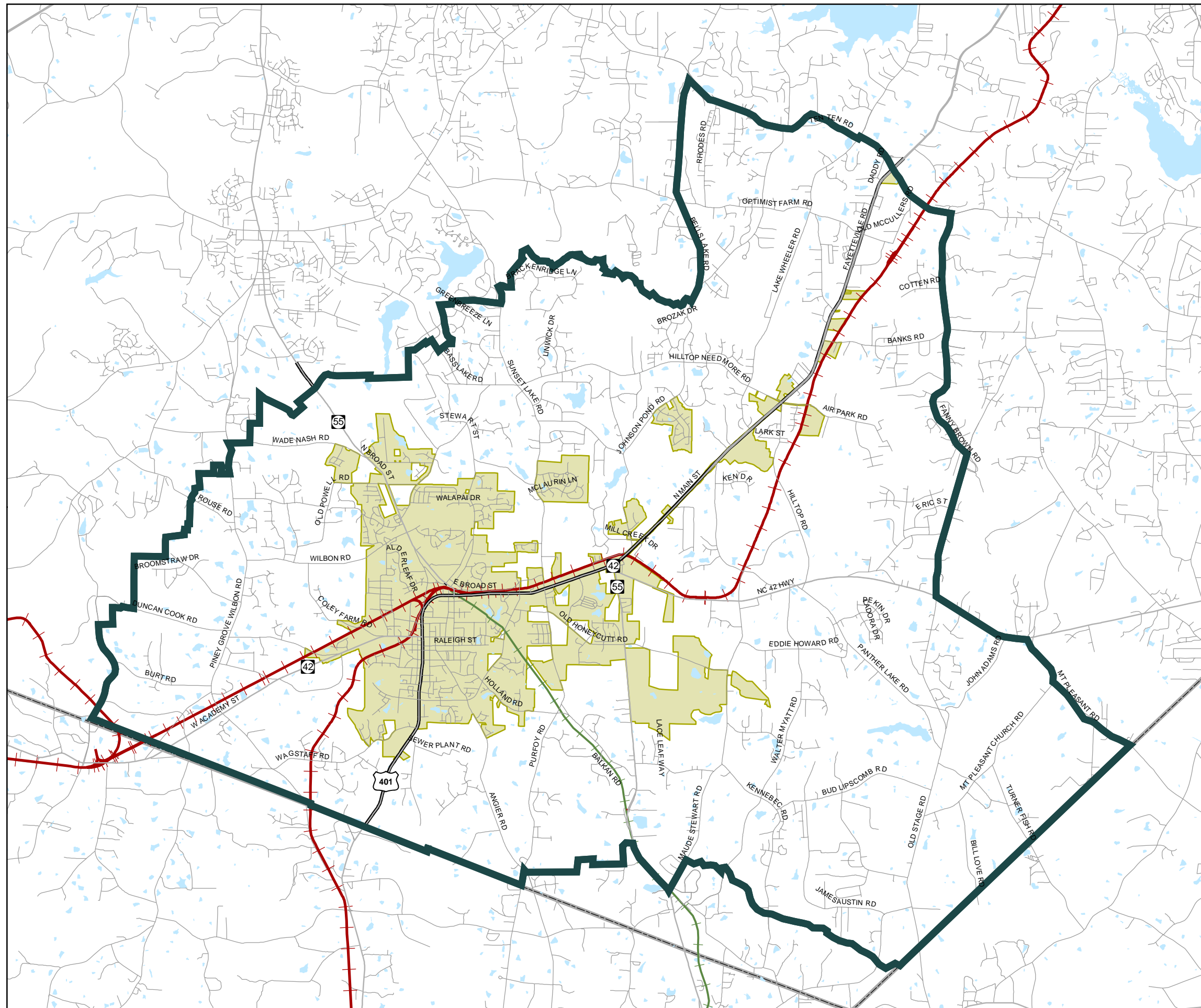







*Judd Parkway at Railroad Crossing
Source: Tom Tate (CAC Member)*

Future Rail Conditions

Private railroad companies are in the business of moving freight so that businesses and their customers have products — raw as well as finished consumer goods — when they need them. Just-in-time delivery is now the norm in the rail traffic business, where businesses and industries rely on materials being delivered by rail (and truck) just-in-time to be used. Delays critically affect the ability of railroads to compete for business. The nature of rail freight business makes it difficult to project future changes in train frequencies and routes.

FIGURE 5.2
Existing Railroads



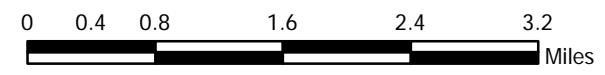
-  Railroads
-  Abandoned Railroads
-  Study Area
-  Town of Fuquay-Varina
-  County Boundary



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As part of this plan, Lydia White of Norfolk-Southern was contacted regarding any planned or expected rail service growth in the Fuquay-Varina area. She explained that although potential for growth in the Fuquay-Varina area exists, no study or plans have been made for service expansion in this area.

Potential Rail Realignment

As mentioned previously, the existing rail line divides the historic cities of Fuquay and Varina. Multiple active railroad crossings exist that cause driver delay and potential safety hazards. Nationwide, railroads are focusing efforts and investment in consolidation (and closure) of some street crossings of private railroad tracks in an effort to improve safety and save lives.

One idea proposed at a Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting was to realign the Norfolk-Southern tracks that run parallel to US 401/South Main Street, as shown on Figure 5.3.

In this scenario, trains would follow new tracks laid farther west of downtown Fuquay, using the same corridor as the planned Judd Parkway, just south of Academy Street. The new tracks would tie into the existing tracks that run parallel to Academy Street. Freight trains could avoid traveling through downtown Fuquay and would bypass the most urban portions of the community. This also would eliminate several high-volume crossings and could open up land parcels for an expansion of the downtown.

Paul Worley of NCDOT Rail Division was contacted during the development of the *Fuquay-Varina Community Transportation Plan*. Offering insight into the potential realignment, he noted that the proposed crossing at W. Academy Street would probably need to be grade separated for safety concerns. He pointed out the potential advantage of using the abandoned track for commuter rail, thereby separating it from the freight. Mr. Worley indicated an interest in this possible scenario, suggested the potential project merited further study.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the idea of rail realignment be considered. It would then be necessary to further study the project to determine cost and feasibility. Additional funding sources would then need to be identified.

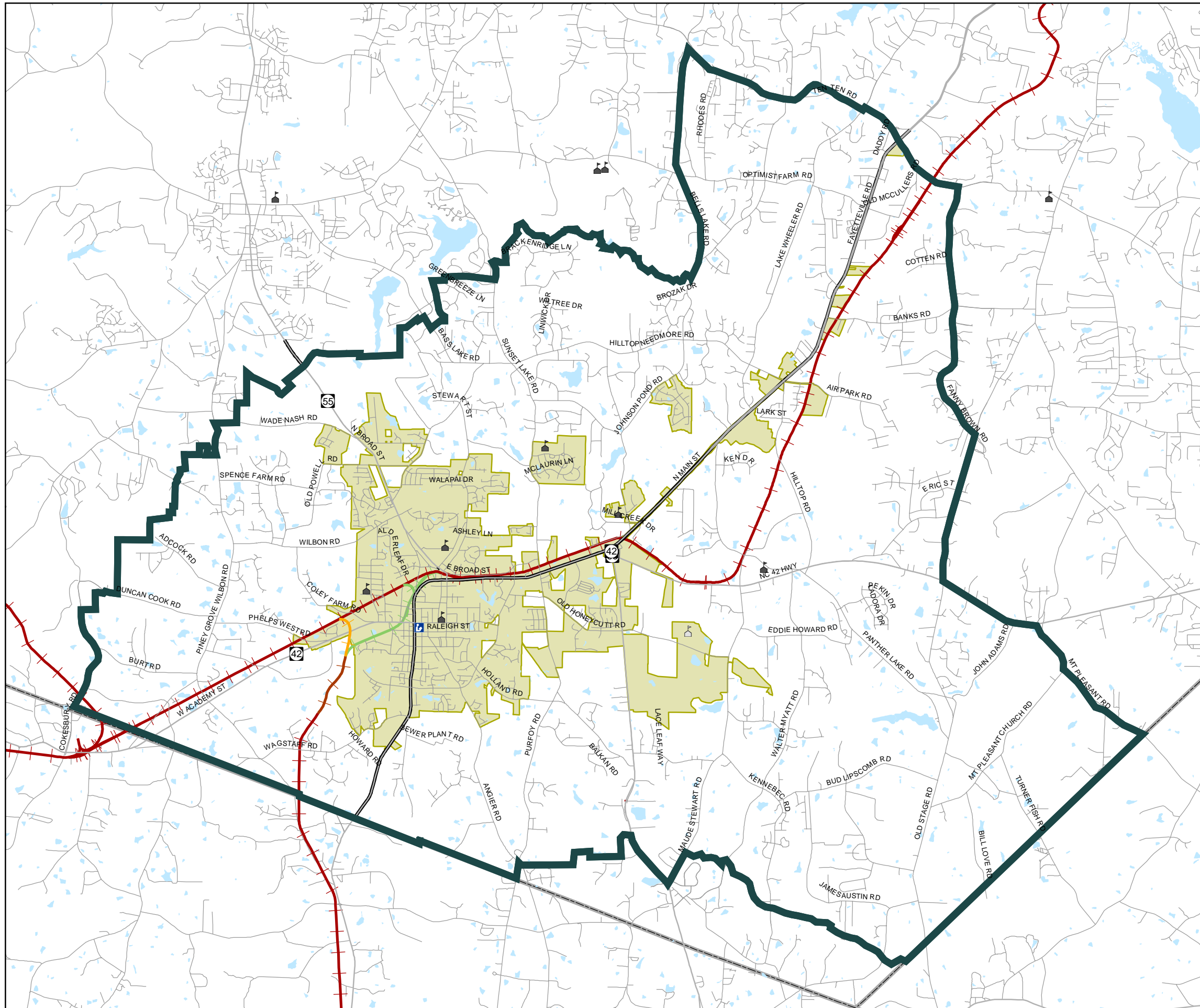
§ Advantages










- The potential realignment could help consolidate the historic towns of Fuquay and Varina into one town center.
- Realigning the existing rail line would allow for fewer rail crossings, helping to relieve congestion at these intersections and increase safety.



- Because the track switching would need to be relocated, the wait time for a train passing at the N. Ennis Street crossing would be significantly decreased.
- The abandoned portion of the rail line could potentially be purchased and used for a multiuse path through the heart of Fuquay-Varina. This would provide a safe and pleasant link between the historic towns of Fuquay and Varina.

FIGURE 5.3
Proposed Railroad Relocation



-  Railroads
-  Proposed Abandoned Railroad
-  Proposed Relocated Railroad
-  Study Area
-  Town of Fuquay-Varina
-  County Boundary
-  Existing School
-  Future School
-  Library



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