



Chatham County Emergency Management

297 West Street • Pittsboro, NC 27312

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www.chathamcountync.gov

DATE: June 16, 2022
TO: Dan LaMontagne, County Manager
FR: Steve Newton, Emergency Management
RE: REQUEST FOR GUIDANCE ON GEORGE MOSES HORTON HONORARY DESIGNATION

As instructed, Emergency Management is taking action on the Chatham County Board of Commissioners' Resolution to honor George Moses Horton adopted December 20, 2021 and amended on February 21, 2022. The first step in the process is to submit a complete **Road, Bridge, Ferry Naming or Designation Application** to NCDOT, which requires the applicant to describe a preferred section of roadway for the designation. It also specifies three requirements which create obstacles to implementation:

1. The maximum distance for the designated road is 5 road miles. *The Resolution from the Chatham Board of Commissioners identified the entire length of US 15-501 from Orange County to Lee County, which would be 22.5 road miles.*
2. The individual to be honored, if deceased, must have died within the last 75 years.
3. The County must have the family's support for the designation, including agreement with the requested location of the dedication.

My recommendation is for the Board to consider one of two alternatives:

Alternative 1 - Preferred

Consider modifying one or more of the NCDOT "Welcome to Chatham" signs to display a slogan in honor of George Moses Horton, for instance:

"Home of George Moses Horton, Bard of Chatham County"

Specifically, the NCDOT Welcome to Chatham County signs along US 15-501 at the Lee County and Orange County lines could be modified.

Alternative 1 would require:

1. The Board would need to amend or reissue the Resolution to:
 - a. Reflect the desire of the County to include a custom slogan on one or more of the Welcome to Chatham County signs;
 - b. Identify which signs to be modified; and
 - c. Provide the desired slogan.
2. A formal request would be submitted by Emergency Management to the NCDOT Division Engineer (Section VII.c of NCDOT Policy).
3. All costs associated with administration, designing, fabricating, erecting, inspecting, and maintaining the signs would be the responsibility of Chatham County.

Alternative 2

Consider requesting NCDOT assign an honorary designation of US 15-501 N between Mount Gilead Church Rd and the Orange County line as the "George Moses Horton Highway." This 5-mile portion of road has the following significance:

- Southern point of origin coincides with George Moses Horton Historical Marker (H-108) placed along the shoulder of the northbound lane of US 15-501 N, north of the intersection with Mount Gilead Church Rd. The marker bears the following on both faces:



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*GEORGE MOSES HORTON ca. 1798-1883. Slave poet. His *The Hope of Liberty* (1829) was first book by a black author in South. Lived on farm 2 mi. SE.*

- US 15-501 N leads to Chapel Hill and the University of North Carolina, both which are intertwined with the life and history of George Moses Horton.

Alternative 2 would require:

1. Would need NCDOT to allow a variance with regards to a requirement that the individual to be honored “must be either living or be deceased longer than one year but fewer than 75 years” (Section II.a.(1) in NCDOT Policy).
2. Would need to be able to satisfy the NCDOT’s requirement of Family Support for the honorary designation, specifically that “The requesting party shall have the family’s support for the road ... naming or designation request including agreement with the requested location of the dedication.” (Section II.a.(8) & Section IV.e. in NCDOT Policy).

Attached is a copy of the NCDOT’s Standard Practice for Optional “Welcome To” Signs that was referred to in addition to the NCDOT Honorary Naming and Designations of State Transportation Assets Program.

Respectfully,

Steve Newton