

SUMMARY OF R-5814 PUBLIC MEETING

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) conducted an open-house public meeting on July 10, 2018, at North Lenoir High School, 2400 Institute Road near La Grange, North Carolina. The purpose of the meeting was to provide information and gather comments on project R-5814, the proposed widening of US 258 in Greene and Lenoir Counties. Project design alternatives were displayed and discussed with public meeting attendees.

The informal public meeting was conducted from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., during which the public had the opportunity to review project maps and displays, ask questions, provide comments, and discuss the project informally with project representatives. 61 citizens registered their attendance at the public meeting. A total of 28 comments were received as of August 24, 2018.

A summary of all comments received and responses to them by the R-5814 project team are listed below.

RIGHT-OF-WAY IMPACT CONCERNS

Comment: There are concerns about the close proximity of the proposed right-of-way to homes and businesses. Some homes and land have been in the same family for several generations.

Response: While impacts to properties located within the project area are unavoidable, the project will be developed so that impacts to homes and businesses are minimized to the extent possible. During the design of the preferred alternative, the project team will look for ways to reduce right-of-way impacts along the length of the project.

Comment: A few residents asked about the right-of-way acquisition process.

Response: Those seeking information about the right-of-way acquisition process were provided contact information for the NCDOT Division 2 Right-of-Way office (252-364-9030).

SAFETY CONCERNS

Comment: Concern was expressed about the safety of transitioning from a four-lane divided roadway to the existing three-lane roadway near the Browntown community because people will speed along the four-lane section, then cause wrecks when the road ties back into the three-lane section.

Response: The primary purpose of the project is to improve safety along US 258, which has higher crash rates than the statewide average. Without improvements to the roadway, increased traffic volumes in the future would likely lead to even higher crash rates. The proposed synchronized street design has been shown to reduce the number and severity of crashes. Appropriate safety features will also be included in the design where it ties into the existing three-lane section just south of Browntown Road.

Comment: A few people expressed concerns that the existing center turn lane was being used by some drivers as a passing lane when people living in the area are trying to turn.

Response: The existing three-lane roadway is outside of the project limits. The proposed project consists of providing a four-lane median-divided facility with turn lanes where needed, which will allow for safer passing of turning vehicles. The proposed median will significantly reduce the existing conflict of through and turning vehicles. Additionally, median crossovers will be provided, which will separate U-turning traffic from through traffic.

Comment: Numerous commenters expressed concern about the safety of the existing road, which is frequently traveled by both inexperienced drivers and elderly drivers. It was noted that the US 258/ Institute Road intersection is a dangerous intersection in the area.

Response: The primary purpose of the project is to improve safety along US 258, which has higher crash rates than the statewide average. The proposed synchronized street design has been shown to reduce the number and severity of crashes because of the reduction in vehicular conflict points, especially at intersections.

Comment: A number of people stated that the traffic on US 258 south of C.F. Harvey Parkway is worse than it is north of the parkway. They are concerned about the safety of the US 258 signalized intersections with Daly Waldrop Road and Hull Road/Pauls Path.

Response: The section of US 258 south of C.F. Harvey Parkway is outside the scope of this project. NCDOT will need to evaluate the safety of that area separately to determine if improvements are warranted.

REQUESTS FOR OTHER DESIGN OPTIONS

Comment: Numerous commenters suggested constructing a five-lane facility, rather than a four-lane median-divided.

Response: Research has shown that five-lane facilities generally have higher crash rates than four-lane median-divided facilities; therefore, NCDOT has significantly reduced the number of five-lane facilities constructed in recent years.

Comment: Several people expressed opposition to the proposed synchronized street design and the U-turns that would be required.

Response: Implementation of synchronized streets has been shown to reduce the number and severity of crashes, including in rural areas. The proposed synchronized street U-turns would be designed to accommodate school buses, emergency vehicles, large trucks, and farm equipment.

Comment: One commenter asked if a new location road through farmland and wooded areas could be considered, rather than widening US 258 through residences and businesses.

Response: A new location roadway is not a feasible alternative for this project, due to significantly higher costs, environmental impacts, and lack of a need for a new road.

Comment: One commenter suggested that a turn lane at intersections is all that is needed.

Response: The project is being developed to not only improve conditions for current traffic, but to also address anticipated future traffic issues. The proposed 4-lane facility will improve traffic flow and provide a better level of service along US 258.

Comment: A citizen requested that a multiuse trail parallel to the project corridor be included in the project.

Response: US 258 is not a current or proposed bicycle or pedestrian facility, and local transportation plans do not identify the corridor as needing bicycle or pedestrian accommodations in the future.

Comment: A few commenters suggested the project should extend all the way to Snow Hill.

Response: Local transportation plans identify US 258 as needing future improvements from C.F. Harvey Parkway to north of Snow Hill. As funding becomes available and transportation needs are prioritized, local planners will work with NCDOT to develop additional US 258 improvement projects as needed.

Comment: There was a request to retain the right turn lane onto Country Squire Lane.

Response: Although the project does not include a dedicated right turn lane onto Country Squire Lane, the two northbound lanes will allow through vehicles to safely pass turning vehicles.

OTHER CONCERNS AND COMMENTS

Comment: Several people stated that project is not needed.

Response: The primary purpose of the project is to improve safety for the traveling public along US 258, as well as to improve connectivity to medical and shopping facilities in Greenville. The project is being developed to not only improve conditions for current traffic, but to also address anticipated future traffic issues. US 258 has higher crash rates than the statewide average. Without improvements to the roadway, increased traffic volumes in the future would likely lead to even higher crash rates. The proposed synchronized street design has been shown to reduce the number and severity of crashes, including in rural areas. Widening from a two-lane facility to a four-lane facility has also been shown to reduce the likelihood of rear-end crashes, which comprise a majority of the crashes along US 258 in the project area.

Comment: Numerous people expressed opposition to the proposed control-of-access fencing because it would not be aesthetically pleasing.

Response: The purpose of the proposed fencing is to protect the integrity of the partial control of access, which will allow each property one access point along US 258. The proposed fence would be a woven wire fence. Each parcel will be evaluated based on NCDOT's control-of-access fence policy prior to right-of-way acquisition.

Comment: Several people asked about the right-of-way and construction schedule.

Response: If funding becomes available, NCDOT would prefer to begin right-of-way and construction earlier than the project schedule currently shows. However, there have not yet been changes to the project schedule, which shows right-of-way in 2023 and construction in 2025.

Comment: Some citizens noted that the maps did not clearly show all residences along the project corridor.

Response: Future designs and mapping will correctly show all residences in the project area.