

U.S. 70 Improvements: Goldsboro Bypass to Princeton (R-5829)

Responses to Comments Received

Introduction

An open-house public meeting was held on Thursday, December 7, 2017, at Grace Baptist Church in Princeton, NC, to provide the public with information about the proposed upgrades to U.S. 70 from the Goldsboro Bypass in Wayne County to west of Pondfield Road (S.R. 2314) in Johnston County. The meeting was advertised in the local newspaper and on the project website (<https://ncdot.publicinput.com/2120/>), and postcard announcements were mailed to approximately 950 nearby property owners. In addition, meeting invitations were hand-delivered to residents of the Bridgemont mobile home park. The meeting was attended by 269 members of the public. A local officials meeting held earlier in the day was attended by 14 representatives of Johnston County, Wayne County, Town of Princeton, and the City of Goldsboro.

Three separate sets of large maps of the proposed project were on display at the public meeting, and NCDOT and consultant staff were in attendance to answer questions and listen to input from citizens. NCDOT Right of Way staff were also in attendance to answer questions about the NCDOT right of way acquisition process. Meeting attendees were invited to provide written comments at the meeting, through mail or email, or online via the NCDOT project website. A total of 49 comments were submitted to NCDOT prior to the meeting, at the meeting, or during the following 30-day public comment period.

The comment forms offered respondents the opportunity to indicate a preference for specific project alternatives presented at the meeting. Of the 49 comments received, 21 indicated a preference in the alternatives. The following are the results of preferences of alternatives:

Alternative	# of Favorable Responses
Prefer Dr. Donnie Jones W. Interchange-Alternative 1	8
Prefer U.S. 70-A Interchange - Alternative 2	10
Option A (U.S. 70 Over Rains)	14
Option B (U.S. 70 Under Rains)	5

Comments received at the public meeting will be considered and, if applicable, incorporated into the preliminary designs. A second public meeting that will show the preliminary designs is anticipated to take place in Spring 2019, in which specific property impacts will be shown, and citizens will be given another opportunity to provide comments.

Comment Summary and Responses

The comments received were categorized into ten different categories (below). Responses to these summarized comments are provided in this document.

- A. Businesses/Public Property Impacts**
- B. Residential Property Impacts**
- C. Place of Worship/Cemetery Impacts**
- D. Statements of Opposition to the Project**
- E. Statement of Support for the Project**
- F. Noise Concerns**
- G. EMS Concerns**
- H. Changes to Local Travel Patterns**
- I. Design Suggestion/Questions**
- J. Concerns about Level of Design Detail Shown at Meeting**

A. Impacts to Businesses/Public Properties

- 1) *Comment received that indicated (U.S. 70 over Rains Mill) and Alternative 1 (Interchange at Dr. Donnie Jones Blvd.) would be the best options for Princeton High School.*

Comment noted.

- 2) *Suggestion for additional space for tractor trailer turning radiuses in the roundabout proposed near Old Cornwallis Road (with Alternative 1); dedicated right turn lane for trucks heading east down Old Cornwallis into the roundabout; and upgrading Old Cornwallis Road*

Within the roundabout design, the central island will include a truck apron to allow a space for the back wheels of the truck to “ride” to assist with turning movements. The addition of a right turn lane will be further considered within the preliminary design.

The portion of Old Cornwallis Road that will be affected by the new intersection with the extension of Dr. Donnie H. Jones, Jr., Boulevard will be upgraded. The upgrade of the remainder of Old Cornwallis Road is not part of the scope of this project. However, the project team has shared this concern with the NCDOT Division 4 maintenance staff.

- 3) *Suggestion to add a roundabout at Rains Mill Road and Old Cornwallis Road*

This intersection is not proposed to be improved as part of this project. NCDOT will monitor traffic volumes after construction and assess whether intersection improvements are needed.

- 4) *Concerns from businesses about losing direct access to U.S. 70 and/or impacts from the proposed closure of Pearl Street and Edwards Road at U.S. 70*

The proposed changes will improve safety and mobility, and provide access to businesses and residences to the extent possible. While changes in access to U.S. 70 may have negative impacts to some businesses, it will also present new opportunities at proposed interchanges and service roads. NCDOT will continue to coordinate with property owners along the corridor throughout the design and right of way process regarding changes to property access and impacts.

- 5) *Requests to extend service roads shown on meeting maps to provide access/better access to commercial and agricultural properties*

Service road locations will be further reviewed during the development of the preliminary designs. Where service roads cannot be provided, impacts will be assessed during the right of way process.

- 6) *Requests to discuss property impacts/access change impacts with NCDOT*

To speak with an NCDOT right of way agent, please contact the NCDOT Division 4 Right of Way Office at (252) 640-6570.

- 7) *Concerns about drainage issues resulting from the project*

Drainage designs will be developed prior to construction that will ensure the project will not result in additional flooding to adjacent properties.

- 8) *Concerns about specific impacts to businesses along the proposed Ebenezer Church service road*

NCDOT will continue to use input from property owners in the further development of designs for the Ebenezer Church extension service road, with the goal of minimizing impacts to both properties and streams/wetlands.

B. Impacts to Residential Properties

- 1) *Requests to make access to a particular property easier*

NCDOT will continue to address access concerns as the designs develop. Please note that the designs presented at the public meeting did not show specific driveway locations as these will be worked out during the right of way phase of the project.

- 2) *Concerns about property impacts along Ebenezer Church Road; requests to shift proposed service road and interchange ramps toward open land to reduce impacts; request to shorten the service road; questions why two new roadways are presented in this location*

The new interchange of U.S. 70 with Ebenezer Church Road and Capps Bridge Road has been proposed west of Ebenezer Church to minimize impacts to the Evergreen Cemetery and the existing churches in the area. The proposed service road will be further reviewed during the design process to determine if impacts can be reduced to adjacent properties. Please note that the two roads presented on the meeting maps provide two different connections – one to U.S. 70 and one to an Ebenezer Church extension service road.

3) *Concern about impacts to a historic family farm house*

Impacts to properties will be minimized to the extent possible during the design process. In addition, surveys of properties older than 50 years of age will be performed in the coming months to determine if there are resources afforded protection by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. A summary of this regulation can be found at: <http://www.achp.gov/106summary.html>.

4) *Please minimize impacts to the Linwood Acres Subdivision*

The project team will continue to minimize impacts throughout the design process. Please note that the shaded area shown on the public meeting maps is larger than anticipated impacts.

5) *How are water lines and power lines going to be moved and how will that impact my house?*

A utility relocation report will be prepared as the design process progresses, and information will be shared with property owners as it becomes available.

6) *I work in Garner. How will this change my route to work and how will it affect my property value? How much more traffic will go past my house? When will the project be complete?*

Residents will be able to access U.S. 70 via one of the proposed new interchanges. A traffic analysis will be performed as the design process continues, which will include estimates of future traffic volumes throughout the project study area. This information will be available at the next public meeting.

It is difficult to forecast the potential changes in property value that may occur after the construction of a roadway project. NCDOT does not compensate property owners for speculative losses, which are considered non-compensable by law. For land that needs to be acquired for the project, NCDOT will compensate property owners for the purchase of real property based on fair market value. More information about the right of way process can be found at <https://connect.ncdot.gov/business/ROW/Pages/default.aspx>.

Segment A of the project, which extends from Edwards Road to the Goldsboro Bypass, is scheduled to begin right of way acquisition and construction in 2023. Segment B is scheduled to begin right of way acquisition and construction in future years (beyond 2023). It is uncertain how long the project will take to be constructed at this time. Please note that these dates are subject to change.

C. Place of Worship/Cemetery Impacts

1) Please minimize impacts to Evergreen Cemetery

The conceptual designs presented at the public meeting have tried to minimize impacts to the cemetery. NCDOT will continue to consider minimizing impacts to the cemetery as the designs progress. If impacts to the cemetery are unavoidable, graves will be moved in accordance with North Carolina General Statutes 65 and 70.

D. Statements of Opposition to the Project

Seventeen comments were received stating specific opposition of the project. The following statements summarize these comments.

1) The project is only being constructed to get people from Raleigh to the beach quicker/will only benefit those who want to get to the beach faster.

This project is one of several NCDOT projects to improve the U.S. 70 Corridor. It is intended to improve regional mobility and provide better connectivity between Raleigh and the port at Morehead City. This corridor is heavily used for moving freight, and is just a few miles south of the North Carolina Global TransPark. U.S. 70 provides vital connections in support of military operations, including two military bases located adjacent to U.S. 70 is a major hurricane evacuation route and is the route many travelers take to the Crystal Coast beaches during the summer. U.S. 70 between I-40 and Morehead City was designated a future interstate in the FAST Act (2015); the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, in May 2016, approved its designation as future I-42.

2) Concerns with limiting access to businesses and residents with direct access to U.S. 70. This will limit/eliminate growth of existing businesses. Devastating to local businesses and families.

As noted above, the proposed changes will improve safety and mobility, and provide access to businesses and residences to the extent possible. While changes in access to U.S. 70 may have negative impacts to some businesses, it will also present some opportunities at new interchanges and service roads.

E. Statement of Support for the Project

Ten comments received stating specific support of the project.

F. Noise Concerns

1) Concerns about additional traffic noise for residential properties.

NCDOT will complete a traffic noise study for the project, which will address these concerns. The results will be presented in the environmental document being prepared for the project.

- 2) *Requests for consideration of noise barriers.*
The noise study will address these concerns.

G. EMS Concerns

- 1) *The project will affect emergency response times for fire, EMS, and police department.*

Representatives from EMS and fire/rescue were invited to comment on the project and they also expressed concerns regarding emergency response times associated with the project. NCDOT is currently coordinating with these agencies to minimize impacts to response times.

H. Changes to local travel patterns

- 1) *Direct access to U.S. 70 for residents and businesses will be eliminated. This will affect the success of local businesses and inconvenience families.*

Service roads and interchanges have been included to minimize the inconvenience to local residents to the extent possible. As noted above, while changes in access to U.S. 70 may have negative impacts to some businesses, it will also present some opportunities at new interchanges and service roads.

I. Design Suggestions/Questions

- 1) *Leave U.S. 70 as-is, relocate highway/create a new interstate in a more rural location (farther north or south)*

Conceptual designs for a new location of U.S. 70 in the Wayne County segment of the project were evaluated during a feasibility study for this project. It was determined that improving the existing roadway would have the lowest overall impacts to both the human and natural environment, as well as the lowest cost. Property impacts would be of the same scale with a new location roadway (due to the need to connect or bridge cross streets) and impacts to streams and wetlands would be greater. In addition, removing vehicles from existing U.S. 70 would create similar concerns for businesses that rely on visibility to passing motorists.

- 2) *Why is Old Rock Quarry Road being closed off from town?*

The access from Old Rock Quarry Road into the Town of Princeton is proposed to be changed with this project in order to avoid the property impacts that would be associated with constructing a bridge over or under U.S. 70. Access is currently proposed to be provided into town by a new service road that will extend from Old Rock Quarry Road to Rains Mill Road. Motorists can then utilize Rains Mill Road to access the Town of Princeton.

3) *Fix access to Martin Livestock Road turn off coming from Smithfield*

Martin Livestock Road is located west of Holts Pond and falls outside of the limits for project R-5829.

4) *Request to shift Dr. Donnie Jones East Interchange to the west; commenter provided sketches for a suggested interchange design that would cross U.S. 70 west of the location shown on the meeting maps and connect with Edwards Road on the north side of U.S. 70 south of its intersection with Old Cornwallis Road*

The design team will evaluate this concept and compare its potential impacts to the Dr. Donnie Jones East Interchange presented at the public meeting. If the concept is feasible and reduces impacts, additional design work will be completed and presented at the next public meeting.

5) *Requests related to roundabouts*

- *Request for roundabout at Rains Mill Road and Cornwallis Road*
- *Suggest space to accommodate truck turning radius at roundabout (double lane roundabout)*
- *Commenter provided a sketch showing a revision to the Old Cornwallis Road intersection with the proposed roundabout at the Dr. Donnie Jones East Interchange*

At the current time, it does not appear that the improvements planned along U.S. 70 will necessitate any modifications of the intersection of Rains Mill Road and Cornwallis Road. Therefore, changes to these intersections would need to be reviewed under a separate study.

Within the roundabout design, the central island will include a truck apron to allow a space for the back wheels of the truck to “ride” to assist with turning movements.

The proposed roundabout on the north side of U.S. 70 at the Dr. Donnie Jones East Interchange will be further reviewed during the preliminary design.

6) *Please add a traffic signal at Pine Street & Donnie Jones*

NCDOT Division 4 is reviewing the need for traffic signals in the project area under a separate study.

7) *Requests related to service roads*

- *Ebenezer Church Road should not be upgraded to a service road. If it is upgraded, shift further to the west*
- *Please shift the proposed service road near Commercial Drive/Dr. Donnie H Jones Jr. Blvd so that it does not go through the small business park (associated with U.S. 70-A Interchange -Alternative 2)*
- *Commenter provided sketches showing changes to various proposed service roads at their intersections with existing Old Rock Quarry Road and New Barbour Road*

The relocation of Ebenezer Church Road will be further reviewed during the preliminary design with a goal to reduce impacts to the cemetery, surrounding churches, and community.

The relocation of the service road near Commercial Drive/Dr. Donnie H Jones Jr. Blvd will be further reviewed during the preliminary design process. Please note the proposed fill needed for the service road's bridge crossing at the railroad will be a factor in setting the location of the new intersection.

The orientation of the proposed service road intersections will be further reviewed during the development of the preliminary design with a goal to minimize impacts and to facilitate the major traffic movements to the extent possible.

J. Concerns about Level of Design Detail Shown at Meeting

- 1) *The comments in this category mentioned that the information provided was vague and did not show specific property impacts. One comment mentioned that they would like to see the final designs.*

The designs presented at the December 7, 2017, public meeting are conceptual. The next public meeting will present more detailed designs showing specific property impacts.