





**Community Outreach** – A continuous community outreach process is integrated into every step of the project to ensure that the corridor residents, businesses, the traveling public and other interested parties have meaningful participation in the process. NOTE: Phases of the project beyond the study process described above are not funded or scheduled.

## How the NEPA Process Works

The US 401 Corridor Study will follow a process outlined by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NEPA is a law that requires federally funded projects to consider the environmental impacts of their proposals. A major part of the NEPA process is the preparation of an environmental document. An environmental impact statement will be prepared for this project.

The document is an essential part of NEPA because it provides complete disclosure to the public, allows others to provide input and provides the proper information for a decision-maker to make a reasonable and practical choice among alternatives. Preparing a NEPA document is a process that typically takes between four and six-years to complete. Phases of the US 401 project beyond this study (including right-of-way acquisition, design and construction) are not currently funded.

The following is a summary of the major tasks that will be completed as part of the US 401 Corridor Study. These are also shown graphically on **Figure 2**:

1. **Scoping** | A process that helps identify why the project is needed and the environmental issues that need to be studied.
2. **Purpose and Need** | A statement that defines the problem that the project is trying to fix and why the problem exists. This study is currently in this phase of the process.
3. **Development of Alternatives** | A phase in the process that looks at various alternatives that can fix the problem and ways to compare them. Preliminary alternatives will be presented to the public for comment prior to the selection of alternatives to be studied in detail.
4. **Evaluation of Alternatives** | A major part of the Environmental document that analyses and compares the different environmental, social and economic impacts from the various alternatives.

5. **Draft EIS** | Documents the need for the project, alternatives studied, impacts the alternatives may have on the environment, and ways to avoid or minimize the impacts.
6. **Public Hearings** | Meetings that give the public a chance to discuss the project and provide comments on the DEIS.
7. **Final EIS** | Documents the preferred alternative and provides responses to comments that were made on the DEIS.
8. **Record of Decision (ROD)** | A final report that documents the final decision.

## NEPA/404 Merger Process

In addition to the provisions of NEPA, NCDOT will follow a formalized agency participation program that merges the requirements of NEPA with the permit requirements of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Section 404 requires NCDOT to obtain a permit for impacts to wetlands and streams.

The merger process streamlines the development of a project. Agencies who issue permits required to build the project or who comment on the permits participate in a “merger team.” The merger team concurs on the project at various stages. Agencies represented may include but not be limited to:

- NC Department of Transportation
- Federal Highway Administration
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- State Historic Preservation Office
- NC Department of Wildlife Resources Commission
- NC Division of Water Quality

## Topics to be Analyzed in the Study

The study will consider environmental impacts including (but not limited to) the following areas:

- Air Quality
- Cultural Resources
- Fish and Wildlife
- Floodplains and Floodways
- Hazardous Materials
- Land Use
- Noise
- Parks and Recreation Areas
- Other major actions in the study area
- Indirect Impacts
- Homes, Communities and businesses
- Local Economy
- Water Quality, and
- Wetlands




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**TO: Jay McInnis, PE  
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## Your Input is Essential

We encourage you to give us your opinions and comments on the US 401 Corridor project. At this Purpose and Need stage, we are especially interested in hearing from residents, business owners and motorists that drive US 401 regarding the need for improvements in the corridor. Your input helps guide our planners and engineers to develop solutions that work with the community’s goals and visions. We are also soliciting input from local officials, planners and agency representatives having an interest.

A variety of methods will be used in the future to inform you about the project including a project website, newsletters, and regular updates through the media and community organizations. The goal is to make sure that everyone has a chance to ask questions and provide input on this very important project. Please feel free to direct your comments to:

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**The US 401 Project Team will meet with your organization and conduct a presentation upon request.**