

Tel: 828-295-9393
September 11, 2002

Ms. Missy Dickens, PE
Project Development and
Environmental Analysis Branch
NC DOT
1548 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1548

Dear Ms. Dickens,

Presumably you have access to the "Letters to the Editor" that are published in the Blowing Rocket here in Blowing Rock, but in case you don't, I've enclosed the letters from the last three editions. Most are in favor of widening the existing bypass.

The highway continues to receive considerable attention here in Blowing Rock. A couple of observations:

When the block of 12 Concerned Citizens speakers (at the public hearing) all, apparently, changed their remarks and none pushed forward with their choice of bypass 4, it certainly appeared as if the tide had turned. When they realized that public sentiment was overwhelmingly against the bypass routes, they could only ask for "something else" or the "do nothing" alternative.

Following the public hearing, two key members of the Concerned Citizens were reported to have defected, recognizing that the only logical alternative is the widening of the existing bypass. **Key Members!** Later, these same members appeared to be waffling, so it's not clear where they now stand. Two other members, Carolyn Ewing and Carolyn Baucom, are reported to be out as CC representatives.

The Concerned Citizens held a meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 3. One of the **key members** chaired the meeting and reportedly recommended abandoning their quest in favor of "working with DOT to obtain the best possible widening of the existing bypass". Not surprising that some CC members were reluctant to give up. They have planned another meeting in one week. Apparently, Concerned Citizens have also visited Raleigh, but I have no insight into that visit.

The Concerned Citizens are reported to be well short of their monetary goals. Key contributors have indicated that they will not provide the considerable funding required for a lawsuit so the idea of a lawsuit appears to be dead.

The Town Council has not acted to consider/reconsider their position. I addressed the Mayor and The Town Council on Tuesday, 10 September, and advised them that the Neighborhood Coalition is still around and will continue to oppose any bypass on the East and North sides of Town. I recommended that they consider the options that are available to them and then act in concert with DOT to obtain what is in

the best interest of the Town. I wound up my remarks with the following: "Remember, crowd, properly prepared and eaten quickly in small bites, goes down rather easily and the after-taste may actually subside before it is necessary for any of you to run for reelection. Swallow hard and do what is the right thing for the Town."

It's tough to tell where we go from here, but the opposition to the widening alternative appears to be waning and the logic and acceptability of the widening is being recognized.

I will continue to provide the "Letters" that are published.

Sincerely,



Paul A. Peterson

Copy to (w/o enclosures)

Mr. Sam Erby
NC DOT

→ Mr. John Page
Parsons Brinckerhoff

B-181

B-182

Paul A. Peterson
370 Fairway Court
Blowing Rock, NC 28605

Tel: 828-295-9393
October 7, 2002

Ms. Missy Dickens, PE
Project Development and
Environmental Analysis Branch
NC DOT
1548 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1548

Dear Ms. Dickens,

Things have been almost too quiet for the last few weeks. The Mountain Times article (copy enclosed) tended to stir the pot a little but was almost of no consequence (see below). The only Letter To The Editor in The Blowing Rocket over the past three or four weeks was Al and Carol Rapp's letter (also enclosed) in which they cited intolerance for opposing views and then went on to say, effectively, "if you would just see it our way".

I've enclosed a copy of the remarks that I made to the Town Council on 9/10. When I read these remarks at the Council meeting, Bobby Ball winced when I stated that the Concerned Citizens had, at one time, recommended a bypass that crossed Green Hill Road. Later, she called me to ask about that statement. I grabbed the opportunity to send her copies of three different documents, two written and signed by Carolyn Baucom, talking about the Concerned Citizen's recommendations to cross Green Hill Road. I also wrote a rather long memo citing some of my other problems with the Concerned Citizen's campaign of misinformation. I'm hoping that memo to Bobby Ball will get circulated, as I constantly hope that some of the Concerned Citizens will wake up to see that their campaign of misinformation is detrimental to open debate. (I should be so lucky).

Enough. You have better things to do than read my ramblings, but I will continue the fight up here as I can only play golf for so many hours each day.

Sincerely,



Paul A. Peterson

- Encl: (1) Mountain Times article dated 10/3/02
(2) Al and Carol Rapp letter from 9/19 issue of The Blowing Rocket
(3) Remarks to Town Council of 9/10/02
(4) Memo to Bobby Ball dated 10/3/02

Paul A. Peterson
370 Fairway Court
Blowing Rock, NC 28605

Tel: 828-295-9393
September 9, 2002

Remarks for Town Council 9/10/02

Regarding highway 321 through or around Blowing Rock:

You all listened to the remarks made by numerous personnel, mostly residents of Blowing Rock, at the public hearing on August 26. Those remarks made it clear that most residents oppose a new bypass around Blowing Rock. Perhaps because there is no other acceptable alternative, they believe, overwhelmingly, that widening of the existing bypass is necessary and inevitable.

After listening to the overwhelming opposition to bypass alternatives 1 and 4, a bloc of 12 speakers representing The Concerned Citizens all altered their remarks, deleting their support for Bypass Alternative 4. Perhaps by now they recognize that there is not another suitable bypass alternative.

Despite the overwhelming support by the majority of residents of Blowing Rock, and despite the waning opposition by the Concerned Citizens, you, the elected officials of Blowing Rock, are still on record opposing the widening or any other four-lane road through Blowing Rock. It is time to recognize that you represent residents who don't want a new bypass and who support the widening of the existing bypass. I strongly recommend that you withdraw your opposition and adopt a new position that will allow you to work with DOT to ensure the construction of the best possible widened bypass through Blowing Rock.

Remember, crow, eaten quickly and in large bites, goes down rather easily and the after-taste may actually subside before it is necessary for any of you to run for reelection. Swallow hard and do what is the right thing for our Town.

Paul A. Peterson
370 Fairway Court
Blowing Rock, NC 28605

Tel: 828-295-9393
October 3, 2002

Memorandum for Bobby Ball

Attached are copies of the letters you requested. Both clearly indicate that the Concerned Citizens recommended bypass alternatives that would cross Green Hill Road and reconnect with 321 north of Opposum (sic) Hollow Road. But it's really irrelevant, anyway. See below.

Let me give you a little background on our disagreements with the "Concerned Citizens".

In the '95-'96 time frame, we had heard Carolyn Ewing recommending bypass alternatives that would come around the East/North side of the town, crossing Green Hill Road. We didn't like her recommendations so we formed our little group, The Neighborhood Coalition, to look out for the property owners whose property had been volunteered.

Once we were recognized, Carolyn Ewing asked for a meeting so that she, and the CC, would better understand our group. We met with her and with other representatives of the Concerned Citizens on 8/21/96. We asked a single question at the start of the meeting and Carolyn and Ron Oberle commenced to talk for two hours. They weren't interested in our position and we never presented our position. When we walked out, one of our members remarked; "She's a god-damned liar." Yes, I agreed, but we needed proof. It wasn't long before we had that proof.

At the meeting, CE stated (and I quote from a rather detailed memorandum that I wrote up immediately after the meeting) "We have never recommended and would never recommend an alternative bypass that would cross Green Hill Road." Carolyn Baucom was present; she had signed out the two letters (within the previous six months) that directly contradicted CE's remarks, but she remained silent. (I note in the latest article in The Mountain Times that the Concerned Citizens still deny ever making their recommendation, but it's a fact. They did make that recommendation, and, with Carolyn Baucom's letters, they confirmed it in writing.)

At the same meeting, Ron Oberle made a statement as follows: "The next time you drive past the Green Park Inn, look at the Green Horse and understand that that's where a widened road will go. It will go through the Green Park Inn parking area and down through the golf course." At the end of the meeting I cautioned Ron, advising him that if he continued with such remarks, he would only hurt his cause. I told him that his statement was incorrect, that there had never been a proposal to go beyond the existing

roadway on the east side of the highway in the vicinity of the Green Park Inn and the Country Club. Ron agreed, but said he could make such a statement because DOT had, at one time, put out a drawing that showed a construction easement extending into the Green Park Inn parking lot. By then the drawing had been corrected, but Ron carried on, repeating his statement at the next public meeting of the Concerned Citizens.

CE and RO went on to state, regarding safety, that there had never been auto accidents resulting in death in the south part of town or south of the town. Either an ignorant statement or an outright mis-statement. Talk to members of the rescue squad.

RO and Dr. Gaul have stated over and over that a bypass on the flank of Green Hill would not be seen nor heard. Wrong!! Ron has said several times that "sound travels as sight travels". Ron has apparently forgotten some of his engineering principles.

The Concerned Citizens have continued with their bum dope, to a degree that must be somewhat embarrassing to at least a few of you. In the slick Black-covered brochure, CC indicates that DOT designed a highway with a 25% grade. I don't think so! The brochure also indicates that the highway estimate has grown from "\$35.4 million to \$117,740 million". That's 117 billion dollars. Wow! Were we expected to believe such a statement? Maybe they thought we'd be impressed with a big number but wouldn't question it? Did they proofread it?

I have kept rather detailed notes over the past six years. I have an extensive list of other statements that are either incorrect or are gross exaggerations. I don't want to be a crusader, but I continue to believe that it would be wrong to allow the CC to persist with their campaign which is so dependent on bum dope. They've got a legitimate cause. They are concerned about the future of Blowing Rock. Why not address their concerns honestly and with integrity? And if they are going to recommend a new bypass on property that is not theirs, stand up and say so. I note that every one of the block of 12 Concerned Citizens speakers at the public hearing backed down when it came time to speak to bypass alternatives 4A/B. They (you) passed out the pretty black brochure but not one had the fortitude to face those property owners and say that they thought it would be necessary for those property owners to sacrifice their property for the good of Blowing Rock.

Let me clear up one issue. Yes, early on CC recommended bypass alternatives that would cross Green Hill Road. When the Neighborhood Coalition came into existence and objected, they changed their tune and fixated on the tunnel alternative. Please understand that bypass alternative 1A/B, through Green Hill/Wonderland Woods/Wonderland Drive/Poosum Hollow, didn't come into existence because of the recommendation by the Concerned Citizens. Bypass Alternative 1A/B came into existence because of the designation of the Green Park Inn as a Historic structure. Once we had an Historic building and an Historic district, it was necessary, as a result of Federal Law, that NCDOT develop an alternative with no historic impact. So they invented Bypass Alternative 1A/B. It's a terrible alternative, but it was necessary to

include it in the DEIS. That's how it got there.

The Concerned Citizens, in all of their letters and other literature have continuously painted the DOT and Parsons Brinckerhoff personnel as being less than honorable. I have dealt with representatives of both of these outfits, DOT and PB, for six years and they have been honest and professional in every instance. There is just no comparison between the integrity of the CC and that of DOT and PB. Let me give you one example and it goes back to the highway in front of the Green Park Inn. I once wanted to make a statement that a widened highway would not impact the property of the Inn. I was corrected by a representative of PB. I was advised that the small gravel parking area across from the Green Park Inn is owned by the Inn. This small gravel parking area would be lost to a widening, so, technically, property would be taken from the Green Park Inn. A minor point but technically necessary to be fully honest. Regarding CC integrity, see comments above.

The Neighborhood Coalition continues to be concerned and we will continue to pay attention. The possibility of a tunnel alternative may not be dead, but, realistically, it is very very highly unlikely. That leaves the "no Historical Impact" alternative and the widening alternative. On our side of town, we continue to feel that a decision between these alternatives might wind up in front of a judge and that judge might frivolously select the "no Historical Impact" alternative, based, of course, on the designation of the Green Park Inn as a Historical site. That would be a terrible decision, both for the East side of town as well as for property values and the tax base of our town. We, on our side of town, don't intend to let that happen.

If I were to develop a priority list for the preservation of Blowing Rock, I would place our residential neighborhoods at the top of the list. We don't need another highway through a residential neighborhood in this town. (You would be screaming bloody murder if a bypass was proposed through Mayview. I feel the same about my neighborhood.) Next, I would look at the natural area surrounding the town; the environment, the view from Thunder Hill, from Green Hill, etc. These attributes all contribute to the character of Blowing Rock. Next, I would look at the existing bypass. It's a travesty. We have the opportunity to clean it up, but it will never be cleaned up as long as we drag out the discussion on the highway. And remember, even if a highway were built around the town, the existing bypass will still require widening, so the existing mess that is now our bypass will continue until that widening finally occurs. Last, I suppose we must consider the tourist industry that contributes to our tax base. Somehow, we have to keep our tourist industry running. But if that is really a concern, I can't imagine why we would recommend a bypass around our town. You have only to look at the towns that have been bypassed along highways 321 and 421. They are now ghost towns. Dead and buried.

Bobby, we've got a bypass. It may not be the ultimate bypass, but it is a bypass. When the road through town was moved from Ransom street to Valley Boulevard, and when a 100 foot right of way was laid out back in 1951, it must have been recognized that

the Town would gravitate to this new corridor. It must now be recognized that a new bypass around the East side of town might result in a similar move. Restricted access or not, a new economic corridor would be generated and a lot of business might move to that corridor. If our shop owners move out due to loss of business within the town, would Blowing Rock still be the attraction that it is now? I guess it might, but it might not. With a widened bypass in town, the tourism industry stays. Again, let me relate a previous experience. I asked an earlier manager of the Green Park Inn what would happen if a bypass were built around the town. He said a bypass would put him out of business, but he went on to say he was not willing to face the Historic Society with that statement.

Enough. I also am a concerned citizen, concerned about the future of Blowing Rock, but still trying to be honest in my discussions about the bypass alternatives. I'm afraid we have entered a phase where the Concerned Citizens are afraid they will lose face if they give up, thus, they have to fight no matter what the outcome. As I have said before, it's time for the Council, independent of the Concerned Citizens, to figure out the remaining available options and then, from those options, work to get the best for the town.

Sincerely,

Paul A. Peterson
370 Fairway Court
Blowing Rock, NC 28605

Tel: 828-295-9393
September 11, 2002

Ms. Missy Dickens, PE
Project Development and
Environmental Analysis Branch
NC DOT
1548 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1548

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Paul A. Peterson

Copy to (w/o enclosures)

Mr. Sam Erby
NC DOT

Mr. John Page
Parsons Brinckerhoff

B-185

Paul A. Peterson
370 Fairway Court
Blowing Rock, NC 28605

Tel: 828-295-9393
August 22, 2002

Comments for Public Hearing on Highway 321,

I want to make two points just as strongly as I can make them: First, we need a safer highway in and just south of Blowing Rock. There have been a large number of serious accidents on this highway and a number of deaths. We need a safer highway. Second, we don't need either of the proposed alternate bypasses. Either one would take a great deal of private property, both have a devastating impact on the environment, and both would have a devastating impact on neighborhoods on the East side of Blowing Rock.

Now some general remarks:

First, I want to thank and compliment the Department of Transportation and Parsons Brinckerhoff. You have done an excellent job of preparing a very detailed and thorough DEIS. I also want to thank you for listening to both sides of the argument tonight. You have given the residents of Blowing Rock more consideration than our own Town Council. For some reason, four of the members of the council felt it necessary to pass a resolution after listening to only a small number of our citizens. We'll talk to the Council members separately on that subject.

I'm sure you have confirmed that the Town is essentially split on the subject of the highway. Those in favor of a new bypass claim a majority. Those opposed to a new bypass also claim a majority. You have heard from few businessmen. Even the Merchants Association is divided down the middle and can't arrive at a consensus.

Those opposed to the widening claim that even if the existing highway is widened, another bypass will be required at a later date. They claim that a new bypass will enhance the town and help tourism. Those in favor of widening claim that even if a bypass is built the existing highway will still have to be widened at a later date and they claim that the widening will enhance the town and help tourism. Essentially, it's a standoff.

If we continue down the present course, we will wind up in court. Both sides will hire a gaggle of lawyers and "experts" and we will let them argue for awhile. In the end, the lawyers and the experts will be richer and the rest of us will be a whole lot poorer and we will still be equally divided. Then some judge will make the decision and the only good thing you can say about that is that the judge will at least have had the common decency to listen to both sides of the argument.

I only ask that when you make your decision you at least look at all the options and then provide us, the citizens of Blowing Rock, with a comprehensive analysis of how you arrived at your decision: opposition from the Federal Parks Service, from the Federal Highway Administration or from the North Carolina Department of Transportation. Environmental considerations, the impact on private property, financial considerations. Destruction of Blowing Rock neighborhoods, overall loss in Blowing Rock Property values and loss of the tax base in Blowing Rock, or just because of citizen sentiment or of safety considerations.

A comprehensive analysis will make it easier to understand your reasoning and it may make it easier for us to accept the decision and to avoid lengthy and expensive lawsuits following receipt of the decision.

Let me end where I started. We don't need another bypass. We do need a safer highway and we need it as soon as possible.

I support the widening of the existing highway!!



COMMENT SHEET

Corridor Public Hearing

R-2237C Project 6.739001T Caldwell and Watauga Counties

August 26, 2002

NAME: JOHN A. PFEIFER
ADDRESS: 403 LAUREL PARK RD. P.O. BOX 2085
BLOWING ROCK, NC 28609
COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:

As a property owner and long-time resident of Blowing Rock, I am writing to support the construction of a "true bypass" around our village. It would be detrimental to our way of life and our sense of community to widen the existing Highway 321 or adopt Proposals 1-A or 1-B. I do not want a four-lane divided highway through Blowing Rock. I am truly concerned about increased traffic congestion and noise, the destruction and compromise of our historic properties, the integrity of our small town character, and the long-term harms associated with a project through the town limits. My personal experiences with the widening of Highway 321 north of Lenoir, also make me dread the traffic nightmares and construction problems associated with this widening project. Please do not be penny wise and pound foolish in making your decisions about a bypass around Blowing Rock. The historical importance of Blowing Rock and the future demands of the high country warrant the adoption of a "true bypass." My vote and my financial support will be used to defeat any politician or government official who supports the destruction of Blowing Rock as we know it.

Comments may be mailed to:
C. B. Goode, Jr., P. E.
Manager of the Office of Human Environment
1583 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1599 Phone: (919) 250-4092 Fax: (919) 250-4208
E-mail: cgoode@dot.state.nc.us

EDWARD PHIFER

August 27, '02

Dear Mr. Graf,

This is to express my opposition to routing 321, enhanced, through Blowing Rock. As a part time 45 year resident I prefer less traffic coming through town rather than more - the upheaval of the property and general environment notwithstanding. Furthermore, as a motorist traveling on to Boone and beyond, I would rather circumvent the entire metropolitan area by taking a "new" road beginning on down the mountain.

I trust you will give this matter very serious consideration.

Very truly yours,
Edward Phifer

B-187

ONE CALL MAINTENANCE

August 20, 2002



Mr. William Gilmore
Manager
PDEA Branch, NCDOT
1548 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1548

Dear Mr. Gilmore;

I am writing this letter as a Concerned Citizen of Blowing Rock. I have followed the idea of widening HWY 321 for a number of years. I would like to save us both some time and spare you all the details.

The reasons for not widening Hwy 321 and building a by-pass are very simple. Every town on 321 is by passed and Blowing Rock deserves one as well. The surveys revealed that over 80% of the vehicles traveling on 321 through Blowing Rock were going to some other destination. Even if you widen you will eventually be forced to build a by-pass.

What will happen to Blowing Rock will be similar to what happened to Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge Tenn. Instead of it being the treasure that is it will become a tee shirt and commercial development eye sore.

I know governments catch a lot of flack, but doing the right thing with this decision would go along way in improving things. The vision and courage that it will take to make the right decision is what we need from you.

I'm sure that the important issue of money will enter the decision and I want to make sure that you know that we as taxpayers of NC will pay for this.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Dan".

Dan Phillips
President/CEO
Concerned Citizen of Blowing Rock

RECEIVED
AUG 27 2002

B-188

149 Rambling Road
Blowing Rock, NC 28605

August 19, 2002

Mr. Nicholas Graf, Div. Administrator
FHWA
310 New Bern Ave. #410
Raleigh, NC 27601

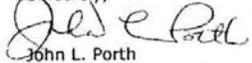
We join hundreds of other citizens and the Town Council of Blowing Rock in protesting DOT proposals to widen 321 through Blowing Rock or to proceed with any plan that would disrupt the current quality of life in our town. Widening 321 is not only totally disruptive, it is totally inadequate to provide a transport avenue which will be sufficient for any length of time.

DOT must look at providing a true route to carry by-pass traffic around and away from Blowing Rock. It has been determined that the majority of those using a by-pass are **not** destined for Blowing Rock and the town must not be victimized by DOT's inability to develop an acceptable alternative.

We believe that Alternative 4-A most closely approximates an acceptable alternative. Despite the greater cost involved initially, this alternative would prevent the need for an additional, and even more costly, by-pass route in the future.

Thank you for considering our concerns.

Sincerely,



John L. Porth



Mahala B. Porth

B-189

149 Rambling Road
Blowing Rock, NC 28605

August 19, 2002

Mr. William Gilmore, Manager
PDEA Branch, NCDOT
1546 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1548

We join hundreds of other citizens and the Town Council of Blowing Rock in protesting DOT proposals to widen 321 through Blowing Rock or to proceed with any plan that would disrupt the current quality of life in our town. Widening 321 is not only totally disruptive, it is totally inadequate to provide a transport avenue which will be sufficient for any length of time.

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We believe that Alternative 4-A most closely approximates an acceptable alternative. Despite the greater cost involved initially, this alternative would prevent the need for an additional, and even more costly, by-pass route in the future.

Thank you for considering our concerns.

Sincerely,



John L. Porth



Mahala B. Porth



RECEIVED
AUG 27 2002

Scales, Reggie

From: K. Potter [kpotter@preferred.com]
Sent: Thursday, August 29, 2002 9:10 PM
To: Scales, Reggie
Subject: The Alternate Routes

My concern is that both alternate routes that have been the question at the last couple of meetings, effect property that My family, and extended family own. Both routes either take some or all of the property. Also it needs to be noted that the maps showing the property owners and where their houses are located, doesn't show the Frances M. Ford house (Green Hill Road/ Heather Ridge Lane) or other structures on the property. In which it is in the area that is marked to be taken for the new road if the alternate is chosen. It also concerns me that at Thunder Hill Overlook, not only will the view be destroyed, but the graveyard that is near the overlook will be disturbed. By using the alternate routes, more lifetime residents will lose their homes, and property. And many of those residents still live in the homes that they were born in, making some being residents of Blowing Rock for over 80 or more years. For these residents who would lose their homes, it would be even harder for them to adjust to having to move to a new area, considering that some of these homes/land has been passed down from one generation to the next. It would also split up communities, destroy farmland, and would be more noise pollution than there is now. It would also destroy the breathtaking views from many area homes in the Green Hill/ Thunder Hill / Blackberry areas. The alternate would also destroy many historic homes in these areas. Please consider some of the things that I've said. I hope and pray that those who will decide the fate of the road will chose the way the road runs now, for it seems to be the cheapest route that you have. The alternates would cost the state much more then what has been the proposed cost. Due to the fact that many of the cuts and fill ins are much deeper then what you would expect. It would also destroy many springs and streams, and the commercial divide area that Blowing Rock/ Green Hill area and Green Park Inn is famous for. If you have any questions or responses you can email me at kpotter@preferred.com. Thank you for your time. Yours Truly Andrea Ford Potter

9/4/2002

COMMENT SHEET

US 321 Improvements
Corridor Public Hearing

R-2237C Project 6.739001T Caldwell and Watauga Counties

August 26, 2002

NAME: Shawn A. Fettlethwait
ADDRESS: 7033 123rd St. N. Seminole, FL 33772

COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:

B-190

I would like to know why the proposed bypass alternative(s) presented by members of Concerned Citizen of Blowing Rock, Inc. are not being offered to the public - I believe they were preferred in 1993 - and I would like to know if "Do Nothing" is an alternative.

Furthermore, if state projections say that their proposed widening of 321 will not be adequate to handle projected traffic growth in the (near?) future why delay the building of a bypass now when it would be cheaper and, factoring in the lack of traffic signals/stops, more beneficial to all concerned immediately upon completion.

Comments may be mailed to: C. B. Goode, Jr., P. E.
Manager of the Office of Human Environment
1583 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1599 Phone: (919) 250-4092 Fax: (919) 250-4208
E-mail: cgoode@dot.state.nc.us