



US 321 Improvement Alternatives

WATAUGA AND CALDWELL COUNTIES, NORTH CAROLINA

North Carolina Department of Transportation

TIP No. R-2237C

Key Characteristics and Impacts



No-Build Alternative

- No changes or improvements to US 321 at Blowing Rock at this time
- Traffic on US 321 congested at more times of the year as traffic grows
- Existing road features that contribute to the high accident rate on US 321 remain unchanged



Widening Alternative

- Adequate capacity to serve US 321 traffic at least through 2025
- \$45.9 million combined construction and right-of-way cost
- 769,000 cubic yards of excavation (removing rock and soil)
- 16 homes and 8 businesses displaced
- Changes the appearance of the existing roadway
- Displaces two contributing structures and associated low stone walls in the Green Park Historic District; Green Park Inn not directly affected
- Landscape and construction management plans for reducing impacts

Bypass Alternative 1A

Bypass Alternatives 1A and 1B

- Generally provides adequate capacity to serve US 321 traffic through 2025; however, before 2025 improvements to existing US 321 may be needed south of Green Hill Road and north of Sunset Drive to serve local traffic growth
- \$75.1 million (1A) to \$92.2 million (1B) combined construction and right-of-way cost
- 1.5 million (1A) to 2.1 million (1B) cubic yards of excavation with deep cuts (excavation) and tall fills (placing excavated soil and rock in low areas to create a roadbed); substantial transport of excavated soil and rock from the northern part of the project to the southern part for use in expected tall fills
- With 1B, 1.4 million cubic yards of excess excavated soil and rock (not needed for use as fill elsewhere on the project); 1.4 million cubic yards of soil and rock would fill 21 football fields to the top of the goal posts; one likely disposal site adjacent to the alternative is the Gideon Ridge/Green Hill area; if disposed at a remote location, approximately 155,000 truck trips on area roads required
- 24 residences and one business displaced
- Passes through existing and developing residential areas with substantial noise and visual impacts; divides neighborhoods in the Wonderland Drive area
- Two sharp curves remain along existing US 321 with 1A; these curves are improved with 1B but with additional community impacts
- Revegetation and construction management plans for reducing impacts





Key Characteristics and Impacts

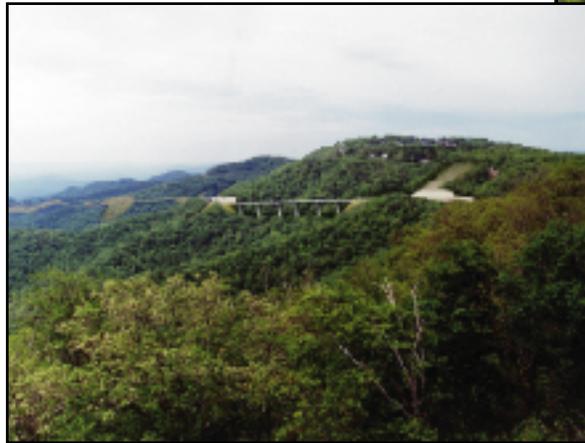
Bypass Alternatives 4A and 4B

- ☐ Completely bypasses the Town of Blowing Rock
- ☐ Generally provides adequate capacity to serve US 321 traffic through 2025, however before 2025 improvements to existing US 321 may be needed south of Green Hill Road, between Goforth Road and US 321 Business, and north of Sunset Drive to serve local traffic growth
- ☐ \$170.5 million (1A) to \$250.3 million (1B) combined construction and right-of-way cost
- ☐ 3.0 million cubic yards of excavation for 4A with deep cuts and tall fills; greater use of bridges results in only 976,000 cubic yards of excavation with 4B
- ☐ 6 to 8 homes and 1 business displaced
- ☐ Affects two rural communities by introducing a thoroughfare to an area of mostly isolated homes
- ☐ Visual changes would adversely effect views from the Blue Ridge Parkway, with 4A and its greater use of excavation and fills having the greater effect
- ☐ Substantial effect on ecological resources, with the 4A having the greater effect
- ☐ Revegetation and construction management plans for reducing impacts

Bypass Alternative 4A



Bypass Alternative 4B



NCDOT Study Chronology

DATES	TASK	OUTCOME
1989 to 1994	Assessment of widening US 321 from NC 168 at Patterson to US 221 in Blowing Rock. NCDOT hosted two Citizens Informational Workshops and a Public Hearing.	Decision to compare widening US 321 at Blowing Rock with one or more bypass alternatives.
1995 to 1999	Blowing Rock bypass alternatives study. NCDOT hosted seven meetings of a Citizens Advisory Committee and two Citizens Informational Workshops and examined numerous alternatives suggested by citizens.	Decision to assess two bypass corridors, including one corridor outside the town limits of Blowing Rock.
1999 to 2002	Preliminary design and environmental impact assessment. NCDOT met with groups represented on the Citizens Advisory Committee. Special studies that included strategies for minimizing historic resource impacts, landscape and revegetation plans, procedures for construction management and impact mitigation, a fog impact assessment, and an economic impact assessment.	Draft Environmental Impact Statement released for public review and comment that assesses the community, historic resource, and natural resource impacts of widening US 321, as well as four bypass designs in two corridors.
2002	<i>Citizens Informational Workshops August 19, 20, and 22; Public Hearing on August 26.</i>	
2002 and beyond	Selection of a preferred alternative and additional design studies and mitigation planning that will include public involvement.	Final Environmental Impact Statement.

