

Following the I-2513 B&D Public Meeting on April 24, 2025, there were 2,374 people providing 8,776 comments received through September 2025. Over half the commenters were participants of the I-26 Coalition and American Institute of Architects, Western NC. Since the public meeting, NCDOT has met with the Coalition/AIA leadership to further explore these topics, and the responses below reflect that coordination.

Responses to the comments are organized into the following overarching topics:

1. I-26 over Patton Avenue
2. Too Many Lanes/I-240/Traffic Related Comments
3. Hill Street Area
4. Haywood Road Area
5. Bikability/Walkability
6. Safety
7. Property Impact Inquiries
8. Hazel Mill Road
9. Additional Public Input Needed
10. Noise
11. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Compliance
12. General Opposition to the Proposed Project
13. General Support for the Proposed Project
14. Health Concerns
15. Landscaping
16. Homeless Encampments
17. Montford Hills
18. Website
19. General Questions



1) I-26 over Patton Avenue

2,231 comments fitting one or more of the following categories:

- How/Why did NCDOT withdraw from the plan to put I-26 under Patton Avenue
 - Bait and Switch/Lack of Transparency
 - DOT went back on their promise
 - Public Input was too late to affect design
- Safety, aesthetics and noise concerns
- Request for Security cameras/police pull boxes/plantings
- Walkability/bikability
- What plans are there for bus shelters?
- The project blocks rebuilding downtown Asheville
- Do not add lanes to Patton Avenue
- Patton Avenue, a city street, should not be a divided highway
- Eliminate Resort Drive
- Welcome to Asheville signage
- Daylighting streams along Patton Avenue, Saratoga Street and Edgar Street
- Add left turn out of Regent Park Blvd.
- Can you estimate the total cost savings from all the low hanging fruit you have described related to limiting lanes, reducing lane widths, 6 lanes only, eliminating unneeded shoulders, etc.?
- Westgate Plaza access

NCDOT Response

How/Why did NCDOT withdraw from the plan to put I-26 under Patton Avenue?

The Department shortlisted three Design-Build teams to pursue this project following a comprehensive process outlined in the Department's Request for Proposal (RFP) guidelines. Each team submitted a proposal that included their design, cost estimate, and all other required documentation. These proposals were evaluated in accordance with the RFP criteria which include quality and price, with Archer Wright Joint Venture (AWJV) Design-Build Team selected as the winning team.

As with all Design-Build project pursuits, the AWJV Design-Build Team evaluated multiple alternatives for the entire project in accordance with the Department's RFP and supporting materials. After considering several options for the I-26/Patton Avenue interchange, AWJV determined that realigning I-26 over Patton Avenue would provide several key advantages. These included reduced utility impacts, enhanced public safety, a shorter construction schedule, and a lower risk of project delays. This innovative realignment became a central feature of AWJV's design and significantly minimized traffic phasing compared to the original concept of routing I-26 beneath Patton Avenue. As allowed under the RFP guidelines during procurement, AWJV submitted this realignment as an Alternative Technical Concept (ATC) for the Department's review. Upon recognizing the benefits of the ATC, the Department approved this ATC, and AWJV incorporated the concept into their final proposal. Due to the shift in design and the long-standing support for the I-26 under Patton Avenue configuration outlined in the 2018 preliminary plans, the inclusion of this ATC (Alternative Technical

Concept) in AWJV's final proposal negatively affected its technical score in the quality evaluation. However, AWJV's proposal also included several strengths—most notably, a lower bridge profile over the French Broad River and a significantly lower overall cost (approximately \$190 million less than the next lowest bid). These advantages ultimately led to AWJV being selected as the winning team.

It is important to note that NCDOT procurement guidelines require strict confidentiality regarding the designs and communications of all shortlisted teams. This confidentiality is a critical component of maintaining the integrity of the competitive bidding process. All teams' creative concepts and preliminary designs, including Alternative Technical Concepts (ATCs), are kept confidential throughout the process.

Even with the cost savings associated with the I-26 over Patton Avenue ATC, AWJV's winning bid still exceeded the available project funding. This prompted an optimization and refinement process that reduced the overall cost by approximately \$125 million. Key changes included narrowing shoulder widths, eliminating an interchange on the east side of the French Broad River, and redesigning the Hill Street area. In addition to lowering costs, these modifications also helped minimize impacts and better aligned the project with the City of Asheville's long-term redevelopment vision for Patton Avenue.

Safety, aesthetics, and noise comments associated with I-26 over Patton Avenue

- The underside of proposed highway underpasses invites crime and homelessness, creating safety concerns for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Lighting

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) is working closely with local stakeholders to address key concerns raised during the 2025 Public Meeting. Current efforts are focused on refining the proposed I-26 overpass design. Priorities include enhancements to safety, aesthetics, and feasible and reasonable noise abatement, while also exploring economic and community-friendly features such as lighting, public-use spaces for art and recreation, and other contextual improvements. NCDOT remains committed to continued collaboration with the community throughout the project.

In line with that commitment, the Department has undertaken several initiatives in response to a May 22, 2025, letter from the Mayor of the City of Asheville and the Chair of the Buncombe County Commissioners. These efforts have included multiple community engagement activities as the project continues to move forward.

The Aesthetic Advisory Committee was reconvened—under the coordination of the City of Asheville—to evaluate proposed aesthetic improvements to the I-26 overpass. The committee included the original members who developed the aesthetic guidelines for the project. Meetings were open to the public, and opportunities for public comment were provided throughout.

As a result of these discussions, NCDOT committed funding for several design enhancements at the interchange. The estimated total cost for these improvements is **\$1,159,000**.

<u>Aesthetic Enhancement</u>	<u>Cost to the Department</u>
Additional pedestrian lighting under the I-26 Overpass to be installed and maintained by NCDOT	\$74,000
Conduit installed for future decorative lighting to be installed and maintained by City of Asheville (COA)	\$32,000
Vertical abutment for the I-26 Overpass Bridge	\$593,000
Cost of standard form liner with Multi-Color Stain for bridge barrier wall	\$235,000
Installation of sleeved attachment points in outside girders to allow for future public art installation on the bridge	\$25,000
NCDOT will investigate and install alternative bridge joints on the Patton Avenue Overpass to attempt to reduce noise under the bridge.	\$200,000
Total:	\$1,159,000

In addition to NCDOT's contributions, cost savings from the reduced project footprint allowed the City of Asheville to repurpose previously committed aesthetic funds toward additional improvements.

<u>Aesthetic Enhancement</u>	<u>Reallocated Funds from COA</u>
Upgrade to custom form liner design	\$74,100
Widening of the MUP form the Bowen Bridges to under the I-26 Overpass to 18'	\$277,000
Total:	\$351,100

All enhancements to the proposed I-26 Overpass at Patton Avenue were formally approved by the AAC. These will be presented to Asheville City Council and incorporated into the construction contract with the Archer-Wright Joint Venture as an amendment to the previously approved aesthetic guidelines via a supplemental agreement.

Request for Security cameras/police pull boxes/plantings that avoid hiding places

Additional measures such as security cameras, police pull boxes and plantings that avoid hiding places are items that could be addressed by the City of Asheville following completion of construction.

Walkability/bikability

The proposed design includes a multi-use path (MUP) along the south side of Patton Avenue and a sidewalk/MUP along the north side. Based on the city's preference, bus shelters are being placed next to the road in front of the MUP.

What plans are there for bus shelters?

NCDOT is currently working with the City of Asheville on designs to replace all bus shelters impacted by the footprint of the project.

The project blocks rebuilding downtown Asheville

During Optimization and Refinement at the request of the City of Asheville the I-240/Patton Avenue interchange was eliminated to reduce right of way impacts compared with the previous design, potentially allowing more right of way to be disposed of or activated for other purposes. Recent coordination with the Asheville Aesthetics Committee, American Institute of Architects, I-26 Coalition, FBRMPO, and elected officials, identified the future activation of retained right of way, such as through lease agreements, and the disposal of surplus right of way, as potential mitigation.

Do not add lanes to Patton Avenue

The current proposed design has the same number of through lanes as Patton Avenue currently has. Merging lanes and turn lanes have been added where required. There are ongoing discussions with the City of Asheville regarding the typical section of Patton Avenue east of the Bowen Bridges.

Patton Avenue, a city street, should not be a divided highway

Because the Bowen Bridges are being retained, the space between them requires a median. The median is eliminated on both sides as quickly as safe design allows.

Eliminate Resort Drive

Resort Drive provides the primary access to multiple businesses. The access will be retained.

Welcome to Asheville signage

The City of Asheville can discuss the possibility of signing with NCDOT after completion of the project through encroachment.

Daylight creeks near Patton Avenue, Saratoga Street and Edgar Street

Saratoga Street and Edgar Street are both beyond the limits of this project. Decisions regarding impacts to all streams are coordinated with the appropriate environmental agencies.

Add left turn out of Regent Park Boulevard

Access traveling east on Patton Avenue is offered through the turnaround bulb. Safety/traffic implications led to prohibiting left turns out of Regent Park Boulevard.

Can you estimate the total cost savings from all the low hanging fruit you have described related to limiting lanes, reducing lane widths, 6 lanes only, eliminating unneeded shoulders, etc.?

The total cost savings is \$124 million.



Maintain Westgate Plaza access

The proposed ramp for the Patton Avenue/ I-26 interchange is too close to Cliff Street to leave it open. Cliff Street is part of a loop around the plaza needed for tractor trailer ingress and egress. Since the April 2025 Public Meeting, NCDOT explored multiple design variations to re-create the tractor trailer access without taking any businesses. Unfortunately, to achieve the turning radii needed for the tractor trailers, the relocation of the business at the front of the plaza was not avoidable.



2) Too Many Lanes/I-240/Traffic Related

1,929 Comments fitting one or more of the following categories:

- Concern that the number of lanes is unnecessary
- The originally proposed 6 lanes ballooned to 14 total lanes
- Emphasis needs to be shifted away from highway users and toward desires of the community, incentivize less car use through bike and strong public transit
- Induced travel demand
- Pursue Travel Demand Management (TDM) options instead of additional lanes
- Lower the speeds on I-240
- Desire to reconnect Clingman Avenue to I-240
- Reduce the number of interchanges and associated weaving problems to reduce congestion
- Can traffic counts be released to the public with an explanation
- Were the most accurate, updated traffic estimates used?
- Opposition to adding more lanes to I-240. We are facing a climate crisis and need to incentivize less car use through greater use of bicycles and public transit.
- The new plan underestimates the amount of local traffic that uses I-240 to access west Asheville via Patton Avenue.

NCDOT Response

Number of lanes

I-26 has a basic 6-lane cross section (three lanes in each direction) between I-40 and the new I-240 interchange north of Patton Avenue. It then reduces to a basic 4-lane cross section (two lanes in each direction) across the French Broad River, where it connects to the planned 8-lane cross section approved by the FBRMPO in their 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). Throughout much of the project each direction exceeds the basic number of lanes due to ramps, merges and tapers. The design was developed to safely and efficiently accommodate the projected traffic volumes and allow for adequate signing of the corridor in accordance with the requirements of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).

Reduce car use

I-2513B & D is building a parallel Multi-Use Path (MUP) along every major route in the project and dedicated bike lane in addition to the MUP in select areas while restoring any transit options impacted. This will provide enhanced pedestrian and bike access downtown and throughout the project area and maintain strong transit options.

Induced travel demand

The French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization (FBRMPO) travel demand model was utilized to develop future year traffic volumes based on the planned growth with future land use as approved by the City of Asheville and the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization (FBRMPO). The 2045 Build forecast does show higher volumes of traffic on I-26 compared with the no-build scenario due to the improved operations provided by the project.



Pursue Travel Demand Management (TDM) options

TDM is a valuable component of transportation planning in Asheville, but TDM measures alone would not meet the purpose of and need for the project. TDM measures would not substantially reduce peak hour traffic and would not provide adequate relief of congestion along the project facilities. Additionally, the TDM alternative would not provide the system linkage along the I-26 Corridor that meet the project purpose and need. Therefore, TDM was not considered reasonable and feasible for this project.

Lower the speeds on I-240, remove interstate designation from I-240

This is possible but it is a long process. To lower the speeds and remove interstate designation on I-240, the City of Asheville would have to submit a request for NCDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to consider.

Reduce the number of interchanges

The Interchange Access Report was produced based on industry and FHWA standards for interchange access. The Optimization and Refinement process has reduced the total number of interchanges by one. Further reductions would reduce the effectiveness of the remaining interchanges and the Interstate system to move external traffic through Asheville.

Can traffic counts be released to the public with an explanation?

NCDOT maintains a publicly available GIS map with traffic counts that can be found below:

[Interactive Traffic Volume Map](#)

Were the most accurate, updated traffic estimates used?

The traffic forecast was determined based on industry and FHWA standards for traffic demand. The traffic forecast utilized existing traffic counts and the FRBMPO travel demand model to develop future year traffic volumes based on the planned growth with future land use approved by the City of Asheville and the FRBMPO.

Opposition to adding more lanes to I-240. We are facing a climate crisis and need to incentivize less car use through greater use of bicycles and public transit.

The through lanes match the existing through lanes, two in each direction. The remaining lanes shown on the plans are auxiliary lanes connecting ramps. The project proposes building sidewalks and multiuse paths on every major route throughout the project. NCDOT is in coordination with the City of Asheville to replace or maintain bus shelters along Patton Avenue.



The new plan underestimates the amount of local traffic that uses I-240 to access west Asheville via Patton Avenue.

The traffic forecast was based on existing traffic counts, the FBRMPO travel demand model and planned growth with future land use as coordinated with the City of Asheville and the FBRMPO. The 2045 build year forecast projects that greater than 60 percent of the traffic on westbound I-240 is destined for I-26 eastbound towards West Asheville and points further east/south, with less than 40 percent heading north/west on I-26. The daily volumes from I-240 Westbound to Patton Avenue are projected to be 8,900 vehicles per day and can be served adequately by the single lane ramp.



3) Hill Street Area

2,004 comments fitting one or more of the following categories:

- Roundabout at Atkinson Street and Courtland Avenue
 - Heavy right of way impacts to Courtland Avenue
 - Revert to previous design
 - Is there still a plan to build a bridge connecting Hillcrest Apartments to Atkinson Street?
 - Reduce traffic circle impact on Courtland Avenue
 - Shift the proposed bridge to connect with Issac Dickson Elementary School entrance
- Roundabout at Riverside Drive and Atkinson Street
- Elimination of existing I-240/Patton Avenue interchange will force traffic onto local roads like Montford Avenue with negative impacts.
- The design is hostile to Hill Street community

NCDOT Response

Roundabout at Atkinson Street and Courtland Avenue

The City of Asheville requested a roundabout at the intersection of Atkinson Street and Hill Street.

During coordination with the I-26 Coalition, other possible crossing locations were considered but there is elevation difference making maintenance of traffic difficult and impacts and construction costs higher whereas the location proposed in the design has nearly uniform elevation.

Following feedback from the I-26 Coalition/AIA-WNC, NCDOT evaluated three alternatives: A four-way stop in place of the roundabout.

- A modified roundabout at the originally planned location with reduced impact on adjacent properties.
- A realigned structure with the roundabout located at Isaac Dickson School Road was evaluated in addition to the problems described above. This location had safety concerns for pedestrians and concerns about queuing at the roundabout.

The I-26 Coalition/AIA-WNC expressed a preference for the modified roundabout design. This alternative preserves connections to the Hillcrest community and retains pedestrian and vehicle safety benefits of the roundabout, while reducing impacts to properties along Courtland Avenue compared to the original design.

Roundabout at Riverside Drive and Hillcrest Connector

The team has explored a roundabout at this location. Due to right of way constraints with Hillcrest Apartments and the Norfolk Southern Railroad the concept was not pursued.

Elimination of existing I-240/Patton Avenue interchange will force traffic onto local roads like Montford Avenue with negative impacts.

The design increases the storage on the Montford Avenue ramp to accommodate additional traffic from the removal of the interchange. During the Optimization and Refinement period, these tradeoffs were made clear during local government coordination and resulted in local government preference for the current design.

The design is hostile to the Hill Street community

The design presented at the 2018 Public Meeting resulted in more direct impacts to Hill Street and multiple residential relocations. The current design presented at the April 2025 Public Meeting results in minimizing those direct impacts and eliminating the relocations.



4) Haywood Road Area

1,988 comments fitting one or more of the following categories:

- Burton Street intersection – allow left onto Haywood Road
- Restore Hanover Street ramp access
- Reduce the footprint of the proposed interchange
- Impacts on businesses/local economy
- Can we extend bike/pedestrian route across the bridge to Burton Street
- Extend MUP's through Burton Street/Haywood Road intersection
- A left turn is needed at the intersection of Haywood Road and Burton Street. Could a traffic circle be used at intersection of Haywood Road and Burton Street?
- Keep the existing exit onto Hanover Street instead of widening and existing directly onto Haywood Road
- Eliminate the Haywood Road interchange
- What will the end of Hanover Street look like
- Haywood Road interchange suburban design isn't needed. It's hostile to bikes/peds. It should be less car friendly.
- Keep I-26/240 at lower grade through East/West Asheville and Burton Street Communities to minimize visual and sound impacts on residents.
- Are there still plans to build a new bridge for Atkinson Street from Hillcrest Apartments to Hill Street?
- Will there still be access into the interstate at the bottom of Hill Street where Hill and Riverside Drive connect?
- Keep Houston Street and Courtland Avenue traffic slow and the community walkable to the RAD and school
- Request NCDOT to direct Duke Energy to explore other options for the tower and power line relocation at the end of Courtland Place.
- Request NCDOT to direct Duke Energy to explore other options for the tower and power line relocation at the end of Courtland Place
- Connect new Hillcrest perimeter road from Patton Avenue to Trade Street, connect Park Avenue, North Street and Jefferson Drive to Patton Avenue.

NCDOT Response

Burton Street Intersection/ Allow left onto Haywood Road

The Design-Build Team evaluated the possibility of allowing a left turn onto Haywood Road. Due to its proximity to the planned interstate ramp signal and associated safety concerns, the intersection will remain a right-in/right-out configuration, as proposed in both the 2018 plans and current design.

Restore Hanover Street ramp access

In both the 2018 and current designs, the connection from Hanover Street to Haywood Road is removed. This portion of the work is tied to the I-2513AC project, scheduled for bid in November 2026. NCDOT has committed to exploring options to retain limited connectivity in the I-2513AC design and will continue discussions with AIA and the I-26 Coalition.



Reduce the footprint of the proposed interchange

The Design Build Team confirmed that the current bridge length is necessary to maintain I-26/I-240 traffic during construction. Traffic modeling confirmed that reducing to one lane in each direction would result in delays and compromise emergency response times.

Impacts on businesses/local economy

See Response 11, NEPA Compliance/Environmental Analysis, Effects on Economy and Urban Planning

Can we extend bike/pedestrian route across the bridge to Burton Street?

The bridge includes sidewalks and bicycle lanes on both sides.

Extend MUP's through Burton Street/Haywood Road Intersection

The design will have 5-foot bike lanes on Haywood Road in each direction as well as sidewalks on either side of Haywood Road. An additional MUP footprint would have greater right of way impacts.

A left turn is needed at the intersection of Haywood Road and Burton Street. Could a traffic circle be used at intersection of Haywood Road and Burton Street?

Traffic analysis and safety required extending the median to prevent left turns. Because the businesses are close to the road, there is not enough space to introduce a traffic circle without additional relocations.

Keep the existing exit onto Hanover Street instead of widening and exiting directly onto Haywood Road

The design of the existing ramp is substandard. The decision to remove the exit ramp connection to Hanover Street was based on improving safety and would take traffic directly to Haywood Road and from the neighborhood street.

Eliminate the Haywood Road Interchange

The Haywood Road interchange serves thousands of homes and businesses. Permanent removal of the interchange would result in difficult access to the same homes and businesses, clogging adjoining routes and interchanges.

What will the end of Hanover Street look like

The connection of Hanover Street to Haywood Road will be disconnected as part of I-2513AC, with a dead end introduced just short of Haywood Road. NCDOT has committed to exploring options to retain limited connectivity in the I-2513AC design and will continue discussions with AIA and the I-26 Coalition.

Haywood Road interchange suburban design isn't needed. It is hostile to bikes/peds. It should be less car friendly.

The design choices must be consistent with both vehicular and bicycle/pedestrian needs. Both bicycle and pedestrian accommodations will be included through the interchange area.

Keep I-26/240 at a lower grade through East/West Asheville and Burton Street Communities to minimize visual and sound impacts on residents.

The grades on the proposed design are at or slightly below the existing elevations near Haywood Avenue.

Are there still plans to build a new bridge for Atkinson Street from Hillcrest Apartments to Hill Street?

A new bridge is being constructed at this location accommodating pedestrians and vehicles.

Will there still be access into the interstate at the bottom of Hill Street where Hill Street and Riverside Drive connect?

There is no longer a direct connection. Interstate Access will be provided at the reconstructed interchange for I-26 and Patton Avenue and the existing interchange at Montford Avenue.

Keep Houston Street and Courtland Avenue traffic slow and walkable to the River Arts District and school

The posted speed limits for the network of streets around the Hillcrest connector from Patton Avenue to Riverside Drive will have a posted speed limit of 25 mph including connecting streets. In addition, pedestrian and bike connectivity are being provided by bike lanes and multi-use paths.

Request NCDOT to direct Duke Energy to explore other options for the tower and power line relocation at the end of Courtland Place.

NCDOT and the adjoining utilities are seeking every reasonable measure to avoid and minimize impacts. Unfortunately, some relocations are unavoidable.

Connect new Hillcrest perimeter road from Patton Avenue to Trade Street, connect Park Avenue, North Street, and Jefferson Drive to Patton Avenue.

These proposed connections are outside the scope of the project.



5) Bikability/Walkability

104 comments fitting one or more of the following categories:

- Where are Bike/Ped accommodations included?
- Overall Bike/Ped Considerations
 - Incorporate pedestrian and bicycle accommodations throughout the project
 - Integrate barriers lighting and rails for safety
 - Incorporate traffic calming along Patton Avenue to promote more walkable/bikeable conditions
 - 14-foot multi use paths
 - Slower speeds on road
 - Recommend striped bike lanes
 - Improve crosswalks with pedestrian islands
 - Incorporate bike lanes/protected bike infrastructure
- E-bikes are too fast for bike facilities
- Continued Bike/Ped connection to the River Arts District
- Will there be access to the greenway (MUP) near old FedEx building?
- Why is the way the Clingman Avenue foot bridge connects into Montford Community being changed?

NCDOT Response

Where are Bike/Ped accommodations included?

Either sidewalks or multiuse paths (MUP's) or both are included along every segment of the project as decided upon in collaboration with NCDOT and the City of Asheville. There are MUP's along I-26 Riverside Drive, the Hillcrest Connector, and Patton Avenue that range from 10 to 18 feet wide. The locations of these facilities are illustrated in the public meeting maps viewable on the project website.

The funding for the project is only available within the limits or scope of the project. Requests for additional Bike/Ped facilities outside the limits of the project cannot be addressed by the project.

Overall Bike/Ped Considerations

All decisions about widths, speeds, bike lanes vs. bike paths, location, limits, etc. are made in collaboration with the City of Asheville. This is reflected in the form of the proposed sidewalks, multiuse paths, high visibility crosswalks and pedestrian refuges that are currently incorporated throughout the project. The Department is currently engaged in an additional City-coordinated meeting to review intersection designs throughout the corridor, with a focus on pedestrian and multimodal connectivity.

E-bikes are too fast for bike facilities

The regulation of e-bikes along bicycle and pedestrian facilities would fall to the City of Asheville.

Continued Bike/Ped connection to the River Arts District?

Yes, the bike/ped connectivity has been maintained in the current design.



Will there be access to the greenway (MUP) near the old FedEx Building

There will be multiple access points along the multiuse paths (MUP's) included in the project as coordinated with the City of Asheville.

Why is the way the Clingman Avenue foot bridge connects into Montford Community being changed?

The existing bridge is substandard due to deficient vertical clearance over I-240.



6) Safety

40 comments fitting one or more of the following categories:

- Lower speeds and reduce merging to improve safety of vehicular traffic
- Lighting
- Suicide protection on proposed bridges
- Westwood Place - less of a drastic/blind curve on

NCDOT Response

Lower speeds and reduce merging to improve safety for vehicular traffic

The design as it relates to both speed and merging, was developed to safely and efficiently accommodate the projected traffic volumes for each facility.

Speeds limits appropriate to the facility types have been applied. Most speeds match the existing. The new Hillcrest Connector from Patton Avenue to Riverside Drive will have a posted speed limit of 25 miles per hour.

As it relates to interstate speeds, to lower the speeds and remove interstate designation on I-240, the City of Asheville would have to submit a request for NCDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to consider.

Lighting

Additional lighting is being evaluated for the I-26 bridge over Patton Avenue. Overall lighting has been addressed based on feedback from the City of Asheville.

Suicide protection on proposed bridges

Regarding concerns of preventing suicides off the proposed bridges, NCDOT has followed the preferences of the City of Asheville in the design of the bridges and specifically regarding the rail designs.

Westwood Place - less of a drastic/blind curve

Westwood place is outside the scope of this project.



7) Property Impact Inquiries

38 right of way inquiries were received during public involvement.

NCDOT Response

All individual inquiries have been forwarded to the NCDOT's Right of Way representatives to be addressed directly with the property holders.



8) Hazel Mill Road

39 comments received on the following topics:

- Something should be done about the “dangerous” connection between Craven Connector to Hazel Mill Road.
- The access from Hazel Mill Road to Patton Avenue should be maintained.

NCDOT Response

Something should be done about the “dangerous” connection between Craven Connector to Hazel Mill Road.

The referenced intersection is beyond the scope of the project. It is a city street and would need to be addressed by the City of Asheville.

The access from Hazel Mill Road to Patton Avenue should be maintained.

The design of existing connections from Hazel Mill Road to Patton Avenue are currently in discussions with the City of Asheville, I-26 Coalition and AIA.



9) Additional Public Input Desired

4 comments were received specifically about the need for additional public input:

- There need to be more public meeting opportunities
- Conduct comprehensive community outreach into impacted communities
- Extend the public comment period

NCDOT Response

Public involvement for this project extends back for the last 30 years. Comments following the 2025 Public Meeting addressed as part of this summary were through early September 2025 and NCDOT continues to receive comments on the public input website.

Over 1,900 of the 2,374 received were from the I-26 Coalition in collaboration with AIA Western, N.C. NCDOT met twice with representatives of this group in June 2025 and then again in July to discuss concerns that have been raised. The results of the coordination are reflected in the responses of this summary.



10) Noise

23 comments were received on the topic of noise fitting into one of the following categories:

- Noise wall requests/balloting
- Reducing traffic speed to reduce noise
- Post Hurricane Helene conditions
- Notification of property owners prior to noise studies

NCDOT Response

Noise walls are constructed where they meet feasibility and reasonableness criteria as defined in the NCDOT Traffic Noise Policy. Feasible and reasonable noise wall locations will be determined by noise modeling and engineering considerations as part of the development of the Design Noise Report (DNR). Once the DNR is complete (currently scheduled for Summer 2026), recommended noise wall locations will be communicated on the project website. At that time, property owners and tenants benefited by a noise wall recommended in the DNR will be balloted to determine if they support construction of the wall. Recommended noise walls that are supported by the benefited owners and tenants (that pass the balloting process) will be constructed.

Reducing traffic speed to reduce noise

Reducing the speed limit is not an effective way to reduce traffic noise. Even if a lower speed limit were consistently enforced, a 10-mph drop in speed limit, for example, would be expected to result in only a 1-2 decibel reduction in noise level, which is not perceptible to the human ear.

Post Hurricane Helene conditions

There are restaurants with exterior seating areas immediately adjacent to the French Broad River which were affected by Hurricane Helene. Noise modeling points were placed in those locations under the assumption that they will be rebuilt. There were no Hurricane Helene related impacts to residential areas that would affect noise modeling.



11) National Environment Policy Act (NEPA) Compliance

22 comments were received specifically on this topic in one or more of the following categories:

- The current design is not consistent with the NEPA report. What assessments were made of the effects of the current design?
- Not following NEPA
- Effects on economy and urban planning
- Request for Life Cycle Assessment

NCDOT Response

NEPA Compliance

All FHWA Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) NEPA Class of Action projects proceed to final design after the Record of Decision (ROD) is approved. For this project, final design is integrated into the Design-Build process.

Due to the amount of design changes that have occurred after the ROD was approved in May 2023, a reevaluation of the January 2020 Final EIS (FEIS) is being done. The reevaluation will identify and assess design changes and will document the determination of whether the changes would result in any significant impacts not previously disclosed in the FEIS and ROD. A supplemental EIS is required if FHWA determines that the design changes would result in any new significant impacts; if not, a supplemental EIS is not required.

NCDOT is currently documenting differences in project impacts, including concerns raised through public involvement as part of the reevaluation. This will be submitted to FHWA, which will determine whether a supplemental EIS is required.

Effects on economy and urban planning

Commenters inquired whether economic impacts were considered, particularly focused on effects to development potential in the Patton Avenue area. The ROD noted that the Selected Alternative had a low to moderate potential to indirectly cause land use changes or accelerate previously planned development throughout the identified probable development areas in the Future Land Use Study Area. Design changes since the publication of the ROD are consistent with this determination. Under the No-Build and Build scenarios, the pace and intensity of commercial and infill development along the corridor would be similar.

Alternative Technical Concept (ATC) Modifications to the I-26/Patton Avenue interchange reduced right of way impacts, potentially allowing more right of way to be disposed of or activated for other purposes. Recent coordination with the Asheville Aesthetics Committee, American Institute of Architects, I-26 Coalition, FBRMPO, and elected officials, identified the future activation of retained right of way, such as through lease agreements, and the disposal of surplus right of way, as potential mitigation. There are agreements for these measures for Patton Avenue east of the river where an interchange with I-26 was previously planned. In the area of the I-26/Patton Avenue interchange west of the river, NCDOT is committed to entering into municipal agreements with the city to activate available spaces wherever feasible. Potential uses include public art installations, green spaces, parking, skate parks, and other public amenities. This is consistent with a

recommendation contained in the Living Asheville Comprehensive Plan that underutilized rights-of-way are repurposed for urban redevelopment.

The various types of large-scale development are defined in the City of Asheville's Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). Review of the City of Asheville development tracker indicates there are no recently submitted or pending Level I, Level II, Major Subdivision, Conditional Zoning, or Conditional Use development projects along Patton Avenue west of the river or in the vicinity of the I-26/Patton Avenue interchange.

Review of existing land use and topography along Patton Avenue suggests there are challenges to creating a contiguous urban fabric of development along and adjacent to the Patton Avenue corridor west of the French Broad River. Higher intensity, transit-oriented development is more likely to develop or redevelop around existing nodes where relatively flat land and connectivity with adjacent residential areas makes dense development more feasible and cost-effective, instead of a more contiguous pattern of mixed-use development served by frequent transit stops.

Life Cycle Assessment

Although Life Cycle Assessments (LCA) are utilized to some extent within the European Union, they are not mandated, and therefore not widely used in the United States. Consequently, the use of LCA is not currently being considered for this project.



12) Opposition to the proposed design

There are 26 comments generally opposing the overall project. There are nearly 2,000 comments received opposing specific elements of the project addressed in topics 1 through 4.

NCDOT Response

Comments noted.



13) Support for the proposed design

There are 24 comments supporting the overall project.

NCDOT Response

Comments noted.



14) Health Concerns

19 comments were received on this topic in one or more of the following categories:

The proposed design will lead to:

- Noise pollution
- Air pollution
- Light pollution
- Increased runoff

NCDOT Response

Noise pollution

Noise abatement typically in the form of noise walls will be provided for impacts as required by the NCDOT Traffic Noise Policy where it is feasible and reasonable to do so.

Air pollution

The project is in Buncombe County, which has been determined to comply with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). The proposed project is in an attainment area; therefore, 40 CFR Parts 51 and 93 are not applicable. This project is not anticipated to create any adverse effects on the air quality of this attainment area. This is consistent with the assessment presented in the ROD.

Light pollution

The lighting decisions are based on FHWA (and AASHTO?) interstate standards but are also based on coordination with the City of Asheville. Additionally, through formal consultation for federally protected species with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, FHWA and NCDOT committed to specific avoidance and minimization measures to reduce the effects of both temporary construction lighting and permanent post-construction lighting on federally protected bat species.

Increased runoff

As drainage leaves the project, all outfall locations must be evaluated to determine that the downstream receiving channel and property will not be adversely affected by increased discharge or erosion control from the upstream runoff.



15) Landscaping

12 comments were received on this topic in one or more of the following subtopics:

- Request large trees be planted as part of project landscaping to offset impacts from Hurricane Helene.
- Request for commitment to increase areas, appropriate grading for planting trees and native flora.

NCDOT Response

Due to presence of endangered species in the project area, NCDOT has a project commitment to coordinate with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the City of Asheville on the trees and flora for this project. The reforestation/vegetation will be discussed in upcoming months with USFWS. This will include discussion of types of flora and locations where trees might be appropriate in the landscape in accordance with NCDOT Guidelines for Planting in the Highway Right of Way and Native Plant Policy



16) Homeless Encampments

7 comments are specific to homelessness although coordination with the I-26 Coalition has also raised this as an issue.

- Concerns regarding the I-26 Bridge over Patton Avenue creating a large, covered area for homeless encampments to overtake.
- There are concerns in general around the project with homeless encampments

NCDOT Response

NCDOT is in ongoing discussions with the City of Asheville to address homelessness concerns in and around the project. Encampments where they arise will be handled according to existing policies and agreements between the City of Asheville, the Asheville Police Department and NCDOT.

Concerns regarding the area in and around the proposed I-26 over Patton Avenue interchange are addressed in more detail in Response 1.



17) Montford Hills

3 comments were received on this topic in one or more of the following subtopics:

- Impacts to cultural heritage
- Loss of property value

NCDOT Response

NCDOT continues to work to minimize impacts to property and cultural resources where reasonable.



18) Website

4 comments were received on this topic in one or more of the following subtopics:

- What is the NCDOT Dashboard?
- Recommendation to include the renderings from the April 2025 Public Meeting on the website
- Are the current plans available for public review?

NCDOT Response

What is the NCDOT Dashboard?

The NCDOT Performance Dashboard is located at:

<https://www.ncdot.gov/about-us/our-mission/Performance/Pages/default.aspx>

Its function is to serve as an indicator of how well the department is doing in its mission of connecting people, products and places safely and efficiently with customer focus, accountability and environmental sensitivity to enhance the economy and vitality of North Carolina.

Include Public Meeting Renderings on website

The project renderings have been added to the project website:

<https://www.ncdot.gov/projects/asheville-i-26-connector/Pages/default.aspx>

Are the current plans available for public review?

The plans are available for public review on the project website

<https://www.ncdot.gov/projects/asheville-i-26-connector/Pages/default.aspx>

19) General Questions

The following were questions not fitting into one of the response categories above:

- Amboy Road condition
- Emma Road is dangerous
- U-Turn at Regent Park Boulevard and Patton Avenue
- City maintenance and operating costs
- Fly around model
- Bowen Bridges multi use paths
- This project has already taken enough affordable housing in West Asheville
- Are the updated 'value engineered' Connector Plans available for public review or is a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request required to view the latest design development plans?

NCDOT Response

Amboy Road condition

Question - Amboy Road is a mess now when it rains. This will become worse once construction begins, 3 areas that flood: in front of the gas station (worse than historical), at the climbing gym where the ditch is full of mud, and between Upstream Way at the French Broad River Bridge where the developer still has the silt fence in ROW 5+ years after construction. *Response* - Amboy Road is in Section A of I-2513 which is not part of the I-2513 B &D sections addressed by this public outreach.

Response - Amboy Road is beyond the scope of I-2513. STIP project U-4739, scheduled to be Let spring of 2030, will address Amboy Road.

Emma Road is dangerous

Question – Emma Road is dangerous, particularly the single lane under the RR bridge. Will there be any improvements?

Response – a portion of Emma Road will be resurfaced to repair impacts from the project, but it is beyond the scope of the project to address any further issues.

U-Turn at intersection of Regent Park Boulevard and Patton Avenue.

Question - Is the U turn widening required on the south side of Regent and Patton Avenue if southbound left turns are allowed at the next intersection to the east?

Response - Access traveling east on Patton Avenue is offered through the turnaround bulb. Safety/traffic implications led to prohibiting left turns out of Regent Park.

City Maintenance and Operating Costs

Question - Many items of the project will incur ongoing (city) maintenance and operating costs. Is there a published division of responsibility for these costs and any estimating of annual costs to be borne by the city or county?

Response – A municipal agreement is being developed between NCDOT and the City to cover the items of concern. The agreement covers items the city will be responsible for like aesthetic treatments, lighting, sidewalks, multiuse paths and roadways. Contacting the city manager's office is the best way to seek this information.

Fly Around Model

Question - Since static renderings show static views, please offer to the city, county and stakeholders a live model presentation allowing fly-around and fly-through views of the project. A bike rider's view, passing on the MUP under the I-26 Bridge over Patton Avenue would better inform the public. Other critical areas of the project could respond to questions from the audience, such as the Haywood Road Bridge or the approach to the Jeff Bowen Bridge from the East or West. We recognize the model is not fully developed to say an LOD 300, but even LOD 100 or 200 would better explain the project's impact on the community.

Response – While a fly around model will not be included for this project, NCDOT will consider this approach on future projects.

Bowen Bridges Multi Use Path

Question – The current rendering of the Jeff Bowen Bridges shows a multiuse path down the middle, but the designs show multiuse paths down the outsides.

Response – both the renderings presented at the public meeting as well as the ones presented to the I-26 Aesthetics Committee match the design shown at the public meeting. The design will include multiuse paths on the outside of either bridge.

This project has already taken enough affordable housing in West Asheville

The current design has reduced the overall impact on residential relocations and efforts continue to minimize impacts.

Are the updated 'value engineered' Connector Plans available for public review or is a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request required to view the latest design development plans?

The NCDOT Public Input website for I-2513 B and D has the plans from the Optimization and Refinement process.

The link to the plan is as follows: <https://publicinput.com/i26connector>

