## NCDOT PROJECT R-5876/SCDOT PROJECT P029554
## CAROLINA BAYS PARKWAY EXTENSION PUBLIC HEARING SUMMARY

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), together with the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), conducted two Public Hearings during the month of October 2025 for the Carolina Bays Parkway Extension Project. The proposed project extends from S.C. 9 in Horry County, South Carolina to U.S. 17 Shallotte Bypass in Brunswick County, North Carolina. To gather input from the public in both states, two meetings were held as follows:

The first public hearing was held on October 20, 2025, at the North Strand Recreational Center, 120 State Highway 57 North in Little River, South Carolina. The hearing was preceded by an informal open house from 5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., during which the public had the opportunity to review project maps and displays, ask questions, provide comments, and discuss the project informally with project representatives. The public hearing began at 7:00 p.m. with a formal presentation of the project, followed by citizens who signed up to make formal comments, and finally the floor was opened to anyone else who wished to comment and did not sign up previously. 227 citizens registered their attendance at the public hearing. Participants included residents, property owners, local government employees and officials, and church and local organization representatives. A total of 10 citizens signed up to speak during the formal hearing, of which 5 spoke and 5 did not. When the floor was opened to others who wished to speak, an additional eight (8) citizens spoke, including one citizen who spoke via MS Teams online. The hearing was then adjourned.

The second public hearing was held on October 23, 2025, at the Sea Trail Convention Center, 75A Clubhouse Road in Sunset Beach, North Carolina. The hearing was preceded by an informal open house from 5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., during which the public had the opportunity to review project maps and displays, ask questions, provide comments, and discuss the project informally with project representatives. The public hearing began at 7:00 p.m. with a formal presentation of the project, followed by citizens who signed up to make formal comments, and finally the floor was opened to anyone else who wished to comment and did not sign up previously. 536 citizens registered their attendance at the public hearing. Participants included residents, property owners, local government employees and officials, and church and local organization representatives. A total of 23 citizens signed up to speak during the formal hearing, of which 18 spoke and 5 did not. When the floor was opened to others who wished to speak, an additional two (2) citizens spoke. The hearing was then adjourned.

The purpose of the hearings was to provide information concerning the proposed Carolina Bays Parkway Extension project and to receive public comments on the proposed locations for the seven alternatives under consideration. During the open house, representatives of the NCDOT and the SCDOT, along with additional consultant staff from NV5, HDR, and Gannett Flemming were available to meet with the public, answer questions, and accept comments.

**The public hearing was advertised via the following methods:**

- Local newspapers
    - The Horry Independent, October 9 & 16, 2025
    - The Sun News, October 5, 8, 12, 15, & 19, 2025
    - Wilmington Star News, October 5, 8, 12, 15, 19, & 22, 2025
    - North Myrtle Beach
- NCDOT's project webpage
- NCDOT's public input website
- Approximately 23,000 postcards were mailed to citizens and businesses in the project area
- Facebook Pages

- Brunswick County Government
- Town of Sunset Beach
- Indigo Market

**Materials/Information Provided:**

Project handouts were provided to meeting attendees detailing the project description and purpose, benefits, detailed study alternatives, project costs, proposed typical sections, project schedule/next steps, potential environmental impacts; a Title VI comment form; and comment sheets for the project.

Information stations were located around the room and included:

**Station 1: Electronic sign-in:** Staff input attendees' contact information while the attendee viewed a screen confirming it is correct. Resources include:

- 4 to 6 staff, laptops & monitors
- 2 Informational Boards with "Save Time – Sign In" QR code
- Meeting Handouts
- Handwritten Sign-in Sheets
- Handouts
- Director at Sign-in

**Station 2: Public Meeting Introduction:** Separate area with PowerPoint presentation on loop with voice-over to showcase the purpose for the public meeting, project development process, and project information. Resources include:

- PowerPoint presentation with voice-over
- 1 Smart TV
- 20 chairs
- Partitions
- Schedule Board

**Station 3: Public Hearing Maps:** Display boards and interactive maps (Smart TVs) presenting the 9 corridor concepts. Resources include:

- 14 staff
- 5 Smart TVs for displaying corridor concepts with aerial background
- 2 half-size hard copies of the public hearing maps
- 7 full size Alternative Maps
- 2 full size Phased Option maps
- 2 tables with half-size key maps

**Station 4: Noise table:** Area for Noise Consultant to review noise analysis

- 2 to 4 staff
- Informational materials

**Station 5: Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) table:**

- 2 staff
- 2 hard copies of the DEIS
- 1 Environmental Impacts Board
- 1 Environmental Features map (On Monitor)

**Station 6: Comment tables:** Area for attendees to write and submit their comments in person or submit them through the PI site with staff assistance. Resources include:

- 2 staff
- 2 iPads
- Comment boxes/Comment forms
- 2 tables with chairs

  - 1 Comment Information board to include screen shot of comment form, PI site address and corresponding QR code.

Right of Way: No station, NCDOT/SCDOT staff on hand.

- **Display Boards (displayed on easels)**
  - Project Schedule – Next Steps (Process)
  - Detailed Study Alternatives / Potential Environmental Effects Table
  - Typical Sections (2)
  - Comment Form
  - Welcome
  - Sign-In (2)
  - Thank You for Coming
  - Title VI
  - Non-Discrimination
  - Directional Signs (inside and out)

**Petitions/Resolutions:**

A total of five (5) petitions have been received to date:

- **Brooksville**: 402 signatures in opposition to Alternatives 4 and 4A, which would impact Mount Calvary #2 Baptist Church., as well as opposition to Alternates 1, 1A, & 2, which would impact their community.
- **Ash, NC**: 15 signatures in opposition to Alternatives 4 and 4A.
- **McMilly Rd., Old Shallotte Rd., and Highway 130**: 31 signatures in opposition to any alternative that impacts the roads or communities of McMilly Rd., Old Shallotte Rd., and Highway 130 in Brunswick County, NC
- **Heather Glen Community**: 210 signatures in opposition to any alternatives that go behind or through the Heather Glen Community in Little River, SC.
- **Anti US 17 Conversion**: 458 signatures in opposition to the conversion of US 17 into an interstate highway or the construction of interstate interchanges on US 17. The petition supports the construction of an inland route parallel to US 17.

## STATISTICAL OVERVIEW OF COMMENTS

A total of 386 comments were received as of December 13, 2025. Comments were received via:

- Paper Comment Forms 190
- Public Input Site online form 108
- Emails 68
- Mailed Letters 13
- Contact Us 7
- Toll Free Number 0

The following information is based on the 386 post hearing comments received as noted above. This information does NOT reflect the petitions previously discussed.

| COMMENTOR: | No. |
|---|---|
| Supports Alternative 1 | 5 |
| Supports Alternative 1A | 24 |
| Supports Alternative 2 | 3 |
| Supports Alternative 4 | 34 |
| Supports Alternative 4A | 157 |
| Supports Alternative 7 | 12 |
| Supports Alternative 8 | 8 |
| Supports Alternative 4A with modifications | 25 |
| Does Not Support Alternative 1 | 9 |
| Does Not Support Alternative 1A | 9 |
| Does Not Support Alternative 2 | 10 |
| Does Not Support Alternative 4 | 43 |
| Does Not Support Alternative 4A | 4 |
| Does Not Support Alternative 7 | 2 |
| Does Not Support Alternative 7 | 4 |
| No alternative preference specified | 129 |
| Supports the Project | 21 |
| Does Not Support the Project | 12 |

## MOST FREQUENT PROJECT SPECIFIC COMMENTS

The most frequent project specific comments expressed by citizens were the following:

| COMMENT CATEGORIES | No. |
|---|---|
| 1- Affected property values, Impacts to homes/businesses/communities | 125 |
| 2- Do not utilize US 17 as part of the extension | 85 |
| 3- Concerns about project costs/funding | 62 |
| 4- Extend project north to I-140, I-40, Wilmington | 52 |
| 5- Study options/go further inland | 40 |
| 6- Flooding/Hurricane Evacuation | 34 |
| 7- Preserve Indigo Farms | 35 |
| 8- Old/out of date DATA (inaccurate displacements) | 31 |
| 9- Environmental impacts | 20 |
| 10- SC Route 57 Concerns | 17 |
| 11- Safety (along existing & future roads) | 13 |
| 12- Noise Concerns | 12 |
| 13- Impacts to Mount Calvary #2 Baptist Church | 11 |
| 14- Turnpike / Toll Road | 7 |
| 15- Supports Alternative 4A with modifications | 25 |

## GENERAL RESPONSES TO PROJECT SPECIFIC COMMENTS

1. Affected property values, Impacts to homes/businesses/communities: There were 125 comments received expressing concerns regarding falling property values and impacts to homes, businesses and communities.

**Response:** The Detailed Study Alternatives were developed to minimize impacts to homes, businesses, farmland, cemeteries, golf courses, wetlands, streams, and other features to the extent possible. However, not all impacts can be avoided. As the project progresses, the project team will continue to seek ways to avoid or minimize impacts to the natural and human environment.

The Detailed Study Alternatives corridors analyzed in the DEIS and presented at the public hearings are much wider than the area needed for a future road. The study corridors shown are generally 1,000 feet wide, but the required right-of-way width will be much narrower, ranging from approximately200 to 360 feet. The 1,000-foot width of the study corridors was chosen to allow the project team the flexibility to further minimize impacts to homes, businesses, and natural resources as the project continues to develop. Impacts shown on the public hearing maps reflect the "worst-case" scenario anticipated based on the most current data; they are preliminary and expected to change as designs are fine-tuned and impact footprint is tightened.

The Carolina Bays Parkway Extension will be a full control of access facility. A controlled-access facility (such as an interstate highway) provides an unhindered flow of traffic, with no traffic signals, intersections, or property access. Elimination of conflicts with other directions of traffic and pedestrians provides improved safety and capacity. The use of service roads has been incorporated, as needed, into the designs of the Detailed Study Alternatives in order to provide access to private driveways, homes, and businesses. The locations of potential service roads will be further evaluated and refined as the project development and design processes move forward.

NCDOT and SCDOT are committed to minimizing the number of business relocations resulting from this project. Once a Preferred Alternative is identified, the design will be further refined. NCDOT and SCDOT consider safety, human and natural environment impacts, traffic service, cost, and public comments. All of these things are considered when making decisions on projects.

NCDOT and SCDOT will continue to look for other opportunities to further avoid and minimize relocations to the greatest extent practicable during final design and construction. The refined preliminary designs for the Preferred Alternative may incorporate features such as retaining walls to minimize impacts to the natural and human environments. Any impacts that cannot be avoided or minimized will be mitigated.

Once a Preferred Alternative is identified, additional public involvement and outreach efforts with local governments, businesses, and other stakeholders will also be scheduled.

2. Do not utilize US 17 as part of the extension: There were 85 comments received opposing alternatives along the existing US 17 corridor.

**Response:** Detailed Study Alternatives 1A and 4A, which are variations of Detailed Study Alternatives 1 and 4, respectively, avoid using existing US 17 to the east of NC 904. The nine Preliminary Corridor Concepts initially developed for the proposed project and presented to the general public at the December 2019 open house public meetings all followed existing US 17 to the east of NC 904. However, in response to public comments received at the meetings, as well as an alternative corridor submitted by the Town of Sunset Beach to address the Town's concern that none of the concepts under consideration provided an alternative to following existing US 17 to the east of NC 904, two additional Preliminary Corridor Concepts were added (Concepts 1A and 4A) that are on new location

between NC 904 and the US 17 Shallotte Bypass, bypassing the existing US 17 corridor completely through the project study area. These concepts became Detailed Study Alternatives 1A and 4A as evaluated in the DEIS.

Alternatives 1 and 4 would utilize the existing US 17 corridor between NC 904 and NC 130. Alternative 7 utilizes the existing US 17 corridor between Pea Landing Road and NC 130, while Alternative 8 utilizes the US 17 corridor between Calabash Road and NC 130.

Frontage roads have been incorporated into the designs of the Detailed Study Alternatives that follow existing US 17 in order to provide continued access to businesses and residences along the existing roadway. The design and locations of the frontage roads will be further refined as the project development and design processes move forward.

Detours and road closures may be required in locations where the proposed project uses or crosses existing roadways, including existing US 17. Maintenance of traffic and construction sequencing will be planned and scheduled to minimize traffic delays within the project limits. Temporary lane closures and detours may be required at times during construction. A traffic control plan will be prepared during the final design phase of the project, which will detail impacts to existing traffic patterns, as well as road closures or realignments. The plan will also define detour routes, designated truck routes, and parking areas for construction equipment. Signs will be used where appropriate to provide notice of road closures and other pertinent information to the traveling public. Access to all businesses and residences will be maintained to the extent practical during construction.

3. Concerns about project costs/funding: There were 62 comments received that expressed concern about the project's high cost and affordability.

**Response:** The proposed Carolina Bays Parkway Extension project is currently funded in the SCDOT 2024-2033 STIP (Project P029554), with right-of-way acquisition planned to begin in 2026 and construction in 2028. The proposed project is not, however, currently funded for right-of-way or construction in the NCDOT 2024-2033 STIP (Project R-5876). Currently NCDOT has not identified the financial resources to construct the Carolina Bays Parkway Extension project in its entirety within North Carolina.

Project costs are not the only factor considered by NCDOT, SCDOT, and the interagency Merger Team in determining the Preferred Alternative to construct for the proposed project. The Detailed Study Alternatives analyzed in the DEIS were identified based on an evaluation of which of the eleven Preliminary Corridor Concepts best met the purpose and need of the project, while minimizing impacts to the human and natural environments and considering safety, costs, traffic services, and public comments. The selection of the Preferred Alternative is also based on an evaluation of these factors. Cost estimates for all seven of the Detailed Study Alternatives will be updated for the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) based on updated preliminary designs, as well as updated 2026 project data, including project area building permit data.

The cost estimates for all of the Detailed Study Alternatives are comprised of four primary components: right-of-way acquisition, utility relocation, wetland and stream mitigation, and construction. The construction cost estimates for each Detailed Study Alternative include all potential individual factors that would affect the cost for that alternative, including traffic control, temporary detours, and frontage road construction. The right-of-way acquisition cost estimates also account for factors such as the fair market value of all parcels, whether they are undeveloped or developed with residential or commercial properties, expected to be acquired.

There may be some temporary loss of tax revenue as a result of the acquisition of some residential and business properties, but there has been substantial growth of the residential market in the project area in recent years which is expected to continue with or without the proposed project. The project is not expected to have negative impacts to existing property values and is expected to provide a benefit to adjacent neighborhoods. The project will provide operational improvements and

safety enhancements in the project study area. An improved and more efficient project corridor can be expected to improve market reach of businesses along and in the vicinity of the project. Once a Preferred Alternative corridor is determined, the design will be further refined and will take into consideration engineering feasibility, safety, economics, public well-being, and the least amount of impact and inconvenience to the public. NCDOT and SCDOT will continue to avoid and minimize property impacts to the greatest extent practicable.

4. **Extend project north to I-140, I-40, Wilmington:** There were 52 comments received requesting that the project limits be extended northward to I-140, I-40, and Wilmington.

**Response:** The project study area was established with consideration given to the ability to develop a full range of alternatives while also minimizing potential impacts to important environmental features. The U.S. 17 Shallotte Bypass was selected as the project's northern terminus in order to tie the project into an existing controlled access facility. Extending the project 25 miles to the northeast to terminate at the I-140/US 17 interchange takes the alternative well outside of the expanded project study area boundary established by the Merger Team at the May 4, 2020, CP 2 meeting. It is also well beyond the scope and financial feasibility of the Carolina Bays Parkway Extension as programmed in the current North Carolina State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). In order for a project to be included in the North Carolina STIP and developed for right-of-way acquisition and construction, it must go through the Strategic Transportation Investment (STI) prioritization scoring process. If a project scope is altered during the preliminary engineering process such that it no longer resembles the project that was scored through the prioritization process, this could result in the project being reprioritized in a future prioritization cycle and may delay the project significantly or affect its inclusion in the STIP altogether.

5. **Study options/go further inland:** There were 40 comments received that requested the identification and development of alternatives located further inland than the current detailed study alternatives.

**Response:** The project study area was established with consideration given to the ability to develop a full range of alternatives while also minimizing potential impacts to important environmental features. The US 17 Shallotte Bypass was selected as the project's northern terminus in order to tie the project into an existing controlled access facility. Extending the project to tie into US 74, NC 211, or I-140, for example, is beyond the scope and financial feasibility of this project.

All of the Detailed Study Alternatives are largely located on an elevated ridge between the Waccamaw River (to the north and west) and the Atlantic Ocean to minimize stream, wetland, and floodplain impacts. The project study area was developed to stay out of the floodplains and natural areas surrounding the Waccamaw River, and the proposed project cannot be located further inland within the South Carolina portion of the study area, or within North Carolina to the north and west of Ash Little River Road.

Since Preliminary Corridor Concepts were presented to the public and project stakeholders in December 2019, NCDOT and SCDOT have received multiple requests to consider routes located inland of the initial concepts and extended to various points north of Shallotte in Brunswick County. These requests resulted in the development of Alternatives 1A and 4A, which both appear as Detailed Study Alternatives in the DEIS.

In December 2020, NCDOT and SCDOT received an additional request from a citizens' group to study an alternative concept that was similar to Alternative 4A but would extend the project approximately 25 miles to the northeast terminating at the I-140/US 17 interchange near Leland. This concept, known as the Alternative Inland Concept, is shown on Figure 4 of the October 7, 2021, Supplementary Notice of Intent (NOI) in Appendix B of the DEIS (see page 547 of the DEIS PDF). This option was determined to be well outside of the scope and financial feasibility of the Carolina Bays Parkway Extension project. A response to the citizens' group was provided, indicating this option was not practical or feasible.

The citizens' group followed up in May 2021 suggesting a shorter concept, known as the Conceptual Citizen Option, that would tie into a future interchange at US 17 Shallotte Bypass and Smith Avenue as shown on Figure 5 of the Supplementary NOI in Appendix B of the DEIS (see page 548 of the DEIS PDF). NCDOT and SCDOT prepared a conceptual design and conducted a detailed review of its anticipated impacts based on a 1,000-foot corridor. The option would not fully utilize a controlled access portion of the US 17 Shallotte Bypass to the west of the proposed interchange and is located outside of the study area established by the Merger Team. The impacts to High Quality Water (HQW) with this option would be more than double the impacts of the highest Detailed Study Alternatives based on 400-foot-wide corridors. In addition, the wetlands impacts would be as high or substantially higher than the alternative with the highest wetlands impacts based on the 400-foot impact boundary. The potential increased natural resources impacts, and high costs made this alternative not practicable or feasible when compared to the other Detailed Study Alternatives. As such, NCDOT and SCDOT determined that the Conceptual Citizen Option did not require further consideration. On August 12, 2021, NCDOT mailed a response letter to the citizens' group outlining the aforementioned reasons why the Conceptual Citizen Option was determined not to be practicable or feasible and, therefore, was eliminated from further study.

NCDOT has made every effort to evaluate all potential corridor options that are reasonable and feasible to address the purpose and need of this project

6. **Flooding/Hurricane Evacuation:** There were 34 comments received that expressed concern about the project's potential impact on flooding in the area, and evacuation in the case of extreme storm events and flooding.

**Response:** By providing additional roadway capacity and connectivity, thereby improving the flow of traffic in the project area, all of the Detailed Study Alternatives are expected to provide a benefit to emergency response, access to emergency facilities, and emergency evacuation, as well as improved access to I-40.

All of the Detailed Study Alternatives are largely located on an elevated ridge between the Waccamaw River and the Atlantic Ocean to minimize stream, wetland, and floodplain impacts. As such, most of the lengths of the Detailed Study Alternatives will not be affected by tidal influences. The northern terminus of all of the Detailed Study Alternatives is in the same location on US 17 Bypass near the existing NC 130 interchange, which is the lowest elevation within the study area. This portion of US 17 Bypass does experience some tidal influence from the south along the Shallotte River and its tributaries, Lookout Branch and Mulberry Branch, both of which are crossed by all of the Detailed Study Alternatives on the same alignment. This is the area where all of the Detailed Study Alternatives would be most susceptible to potential sea level elevation change impacts since they would be at-risk for inundation.

It is not anticipated that any of the Detailed Study Alternatives will result in an increase of flood levels. Further detailed modeling and hydraulic analysis, including detailed plans to handle runoff from the proposed project, will be completed once more detailed survey information is provided for the Selected Alternative during the Final Design phase of the project. All major hydraulic structures for the Detailed Study Alternatives were initially designed to accommodate the 50-year rainfall event, as has historically been standard practice for primary routes in both North Carolina and South Carolina. However, following subsequent discussion with NCDOT and SCDOT related to considering the potential risks from extreme weather events on evacuation routes, the project team determined hydraulic structures for the proposed project will instead be designed to accommodate the 100-year rainfall event in both states to allow the roadway to recover more quickly from intense rainfall events. Designing the proposed project based on the 100-year storm event will enhance its resilience against extreme events, ensuring continued functionality during and after such events.

7. **Preserve Indigo Farms:** There were 35 comments received that expressed concern about the project's potential impact on the Indigo Farms Market and farmland.

**Response:** As discussed in Section 3.1.3.10 of the DEIS, Indigo Farms is an active Century Farm, market, and agritourism operation with farm fields located in both South Carolina and North Carolina along S-57 (Wampee Road) and Hickman Road. The Indigo Farms Produce Market and Garden Center is located on Hickman Road just inside the North Carolina State Line.

The Indigo Farms Produce Market and Indigo Farms farm fields are located within the study area of Alternatives 4 and 4A but would likely not be impacted by the actual right-of-way needed for those alternatives as currently designed. Alternatives 1, 1A, and 2 would involve direct impacts to Indigo Farms farm fields in South Carolina but would not directly impact the Indigo Farms Produce Market. Alternatives 7 and 8 would not impact any Indigo Farms property.

The project team works hard to avoid potential impacts to natural and human environmental features. The seven Detailed Study Alternatives were developed to minimize impacts to homes, businesses, farmland, cemeteries, golf courses, wetlands, streams, and other features. However, not all impacts can be avoided. As the project progresses, the project team will continue to seek ways to avoid, minimize or mitigate impacts to Indigo Farms and other community features.

It should be noted that the corridors for the Detailed Study Alternatives presented in the DEIS and at the public hearings are much wider than the area needed for the future Carolina Bays Parkway Extension. The corridors shown are generally 1,000-feet-wide, but the required right-of-way width will be much narrower, ranging from approximately 200 to 360 feet. The 1,000-foot width of the study corridors was chosen to allow the project team the flexibility to further minimize impacts to homes, businesses, and natural resources as the project continues to develop. Once an alternative corridor has been selected as the Preferred Alternative/Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative (LEDPA) corridor, adjustments will be made to minimize impacts to the extent possible, and the proposed design will be presented to the public at a Design Public Hearing. The design will be further adjusted following the Design Public Hearing to further minimize impacts and address individual concerns as practical.

8. **Old/out of date DATA (inaccurate displacements):** There were 31 comments received stating that the data presented in the Draft EIS was not accurate or up to date concerning the project's impacts on homes and businesses, due to the recent home construction that has been occurring in the project vicinity.

**Response:** The number of home and business that are estimated to be displaced by the project alternatives are based on relocation reports generated in January 2022 for the Detailed Study Alternatives, as well as in July 2024 for the two Construction Phase 1 scenarios. All team members preparing these impact studies have continually visited local neighborhoods throughout the project's development to assess communities, determine how they travel, identify where development is occurring, and where it is expected to occur in the future. The Carolina Bays Parkway DEIS is meant to be a snapshot in time, and the project development team will be informed of this rapid development when comparing impacts and choosing a Preferred Alternative. Once a Preferred Alternative is chosen and the designs refined, these studies will be updated again (as well as other technical studies, as applicable). Information on relocations is continuously updated well into the final design process. These findings will be presented in the FEIS.

NCDOT and SCDOT will continue consideration of all available project data collected through the project development and design processes including traffic operations analyses, natural environmental impact data, human environment impact data, roadway design data, preliminary cost estimates, and public input to compare and contrast the Detailed Study Alternatives. Aerial photography of the project area from early 2025 was obtained and reviewed to identify existing residential and commercial developments, as well as approved developments under construction. GIS data used in the analysis for the DEIS is 2025 data from NCDOT and SCDOT, as well as local

government agencies in the project area. Current Horry County and Brunswick County local planning documents indicate that rapid population growth has consisted largely of residential subdivisions. NCDOT and SCDOT are aware of the rapid development that is occurring throughout the project area and will continue to remain apprised of the rapid growth of residential subdivisions.

9. **Environmental impacts:** There were 20 comments received expressing concern about the overall environmental impact of the project.

**Response:** The seven detailed study alternatives were developed to minimize impacts to homes, businesses, farmland, cemeteries, wetlands, streams, and other features to the extent possible. However, not all impacts can be avoided. As the project progresses, the project team will continue to seek ways to avoid or minimize impacts to the natural and human environment. Where impacts cannot be avoided or minimized, they will be mitigated.

The Detailed Study Alternatives analyzed in the DEIS and presented at the public hearings are much wider than the area needed for a future road. The study corridors shown are generally 1,000 feet wide, but the required right-of-way width will be much narrower, ranging from approximately 200 to 360 feet. The 1,000-foot width of the study corridors was chosen to allow the project team the flexibility to further minimize impacts to homes, businesses, and natural resources as the project continues to develop.

Minimization measures for unavoidable impacts have been developed through coordination with federal and state environmental regulatory and resource agencies including the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the US Army Corps of Engineers, the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, the NC Division of Water Resources, and the SC Department of Natural Resources, among others. Following identification of the Preferred Alternative, designs will be refined based upon an updated traffic forecast. NCDOT and SCDOT will continue to evaluate ways to modify the selected alternative to further avoid and minimize impacts to physical and natural environments. Impacts to wetlands and streams that cannot be avoided or further minimized will be compensated with mitigation efforts agreed to by the permitting agencies.

Water quality Impactss will be avoided and/or mitigated through compliance with state and federal regulations covering watershed protection, floodplain protection, stream and river buffers, and stormwater management.

10. **SC Route 57 Concerns:** There were 17 comments received expressing safety and congestion concerns along S-57.

**Response:** SCDOT completed STIP Project P038944 at the Wampee Road (S-57)/Little River Road (S-111) intersection in late 2022. The project included installation of a traffic signal and left-turn lanes on all four intersection approaches. It is expected that this project will improve safety and traffic operations in the vicinity of this intersection; however, it is expected that Wampee Road would not show an appreciable increase in capacity in the design year with these improvements. As discussed in the DEIS, the results of the future traffic capacity analyses indicated that many existing intersections and roadway segments in the project area would continue to either approach or exceed the roadway capacity limits in 2045 without the eventual construction of the proposed Carolina Bays Parkway Extension.

The proposed project offers the potential to reduce the number and severity of vehicle crashes by providing an alternate route to through traffic, including tourists and coastal truck traffic, in heavily congested areas within the project area, in particular along US 17 in both states and the Hickman Road/S-57 corridor, thereby reducing traffic volumes on existing roadways and separating through traffic from local traffic. The proposed project would also provide additional capacity, improving the flow of traffic and lessening delays on area roadways. As a result, existing transportation routes would be able to convey shorter local trips more safely and efficiently. In addition, the Carolina Bays Parkway Extension will be a median-divided, full control of access facility, reducing the likelihood of

head-on collisions and crashes associated with turning movements. A controlled-access facility provides an unhindered flow of traffic, with no traffic signals, intersections, or property access. Elimination of conflicts with other directions of traffic and pedestrians provides improved safety and capacity.

Additional roadway improvements on the Hickman Road/S-57 corridor, such as roadway widening or traffic signal installation, are not within the scope of this project, which is to extend the Carolina Bays Parkway through Horry County and southwestern Brunswick County. Any such new projects along the Hickman Road/S-57 corridor would need to originate with a submittal of the project from either Brunswick County or Horry County to the appropriate state DOT, and then the project would be scored through the appropriate state DOT's Prioritization Process before inclusion in either the NCDOT or the SCDOT STIP.

11. **Safety (along existing & future roads):** There were 13 comments received citing safety concerns along US 17, S-57, and Little River Road.

**Response:** The proposed project offers the potential to reduce the number and severity of vehicle crashes by providing an alternate route to through traffic, including tourists and coastal truck traffic, in heavily congested areas within the project area, in particular along US 17 in both states and the Hickman Road/S-57 corridor, thereby reducing traffic volumes on existing roadways and separating through traffic from local traffic. The proposed project would also provide additional capacity, improving the flow of traffic and lessening delays on area roadways. As a result, existing transportation routes would be able to convey shorter local trips more safely and efficiently. In addition, the Carolina Bays Parkway Extension will be a median-divided, full control of access facility, reducing the likelihood of head-on collisions and crashes associated with turning movements. A controlled-access facility provides an unhindered flow of traffic, with no traffic signals, intersections, or property access. Elimination of conflicts with other directions of traffic and pedestrians provides improved safety and capacity.

Designing roadways that promote safe passage and provide flexibility for predicted traffic growth is a priority for NCDOT and SCDOT projects. The design of the Preferred Alternative follows AASHTO's (American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials) Policy on design standards (designed to ensure safety, permanence, utility, and flexibility to provide for predicted traffic growth). The design also follows NCDOT's Roadway Design Manual and NCDOT's Complete Streets Policy for the North Carolina portion of the proposed project, and SCDOT's Roadway Design Manual for the South Carolina portion.

By improving mobility and roadway connectivity in the project study area, the proposed project offers the potential to support more efficient clearance times during emergency evacuations. None of the Detailed Study Alternatives will impede emergency response or evacuation activities. In fact, all of the Detailed Study alternatives would improve mobility and roadway connectivity in the project study area and would therefore support more efficient clearance times during emergency evacuations and decrease emergency response times.

12. **Noise Concerns:** There were 12 comments received expressing concern of increased noise levels due to the construction of the project. Several of the comments were referring to the noise concerns near the Ocean Ridge Plantation subdivision.

**Response:** During planning and design for highway projects, NCDOT and SCDOT must identify traffic noise impacts, examine potential noise abatement, incorporate feasible and reasonable noise abatement measures, and coordinate with local officials to provide helpful information on compatible land use planning and control. The procedures for doing this are stipulated by Federal regulation (23 CFR 772), the NCDOT Traffic Noise Policy, and the SCDOT Traffic Noise Abatement Policy.

NCDOT and SCDOT have performed preliminary noise analyses for this project and an initial Traffic Noise Report has been prepared. Based on that analysis, traffic noise levels due to the project are

predicted to be high enough in the project's design year to constitute a traffic noise impact as defined by the NCDOT Traffic Noise Policy and the SCDOT Traffic Noise Abatement Policy. Where noise impacts are predicted, noise abatement was considered. Noise walls were evaluated and found to preliminarily meet feasibility and reasonableness criteria defined in the respective NCDOT and SCDOT traffic noise abatement policies at a total of 28 locations for the seven Detailed Study Alternatives.

A more detailed analysis will be completed during project final design. Noise barriers found to be feasible and reasonable during the preliminary noise analysis may not be found to be feasible and reasonable during the final design noise analysis due to changes in proposed project alignment and other design considerations, surrounding land use development, or utility conflicts, among other factors. Conversely, noise barriers that preliminarily were not considered feasible and reasonable may meet the established criteria and be recommended for construction.

13. Impacts to Mount Calvary #2 Baptist Church: There were 11 comments received citing concern of the project's impact on the Mt. Calvary #2 Baptist Church and cemetery.

**Response:** Based on the current functional designs for all of the Detailed Study Alternatives using CP1 – S1, there would be property-only impacts to the Mt. Calvary No. 2 Missionary Baptist Church along the Little River Road (S-111) frontage. SCDOT will make every attempt to avoid the cemetery and minimize impacts to the church property to the greatest extent practicable as more detailed roadway designs are developed.

14. Comments related to Turnpike/Toll Facility: There were 7 comments received regarding the CBP being a toll facility. 5 suggest tolling as a funding option, 1 wants to prevent it from being a tolled facility, and 1 believes that it is a tolled road.

**Response**: The NC Toll Project Development Policy (adopted by the NC Board of Transportation in February 2018) defined and implemented NCDOT's process for evaluating the feasibility of using toll financing for appropriate high-capacity urban and rural highway improvement projects, such as the proposed Carolina Bays Parkway Extension. The Policy also indicates that the feasibility of using toll financing will be determined in cooperation with North Carolina's Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Rural Transportation Planning Organizations (RPOs). For any toll project to be programmed and constructed by NCDOT, it must first be approved by the nominating MPO or RPO through inclusion in their adopted Comprehensive Transportation Plan, Metropolitan Transportation Plan, or other adopted local plan. The project must also advance through the state's Strategic Prioritization process and score well enough to be included in the local Transportation Improvement Program and the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. The proposed Carolina Bays Parkway Extension is not included in any adopted local plans for consideration as a toll facility, as result the financial feasibility of tolling the proposed project has not been evaluated.

NCDOT will continue to look for alternative funding options.

15. Supports Alternative 4A with modifications: 25 comments mention support for Alternative 4A with modifications.

**Response**: All the Detailed Study Alternatives are largely located on a ridge between the Waccamaw River (to the north and west) and the Atlantic Ocean to minimize stream, wetland, and floodplain impacts. The project study area was developed to stay out of the floodplains and natural areas surrounding the Waccamaw River, and the proposed project cannot be located further inland within the South Carolina portion of the study area, or within North Carolina to the north and west of Ash Little River Road. As shown on DEIS Figure 21 (Flood Hazard Areas), the area immediately to the north and west of the Alternative 4/4A alignment in the vicinity of Ash Little River Road is part of the expansive 100-year floodplain and floodway along the Waccamaw River and its tributaries. The proposed alignment of the modified 4A alternative is located completely within the Waccamaw River floodplain, and it would be cost prohibitive to build a roadway through this area that would not be highly vulnerable to frequent flooding. Specifically, it would not be prudent to build a road through this

area that will serve as a major hurricane evacuation route for southwest Brunswick County and the surrounding area. As shown on Figure 13 in the DEIS, the Alternative 4/4A alignments in the vicinity of Ash Little River Road were laid out to avoid the Waccamaw River floodplain complex, and to cross the floodplain on Hickman's Branch and Cawcaw Swamp at the narrowest locations possible. These are highly sensitive environmental areas; the regulatory agencies are unlikely to issue permits if there are less environmentally damaging, practicable alternatives available.