



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

ROY COOPER
GOVERNOR

J. ERIC BOYETTE
SECRETARY

MEMO TO: Post Public Meeting Comment Review Meeting Attendees
FROM: Krista Kimmel, P.E. Leah Quattlebaum, P.E.
NCDOT Project Manager SCDOT Pee Dee Regional
Production Engineer
DATE: April 22, 2020
SUBJECT: STIP Project: R-5876 (NCDOT), P029554 (SCDOT)
Carolina Bays Parkway Extension Project

A meeting was held on March 11, 2020 via teleconference to discuss comments received from the public meetings for the Carolina Bays Parkway Extension project. Meeting attendees reviewed the public meeting summary and comments received, and developed responses. The responses provided in this summary are applicable at the time this memorandum was drafted; however, additional information will be made available as the project progresses.

Public Meeting Summary

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) conducted open house public meetings for the Carolina Bays Parkway Extension project in December 2019. 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:

Date and Time	Location
Tuesday, December 3, 2019 4:00 – 7:00 p.m.	Sea Trail Convention Center 75B Clubhouse Road Sunset Beach, NC 28468
Wednesday, December 4, 2019 4:00 – 7:00 p.m.	VFW Post 10804 111 State Hwy 57 North Little River, SC 27566

The informal public meetings gave the public the opportunity to view project maps and the nine corridor concepts, review the project schedule and cost estimate, ask questions, provide comments, and discuss various aspects of the project with the project team. An online version of the meetings was hosted through PublicInput.com, which gave users an opportunity to review the same information provided during the meeting, prioritize the nine corridor concepts in

order of preference, and leave comments. A total of 553 individuals signed-in to the North Carolina meeting, and 467 individuals signed-in to the South Carolina meeting.

The public meetings were advertised via the following methods:

- Legal ads posted in local newspapers
- 35,496 postcards sent to area residents via Every Door Direct Mail
- Online at NCDOT and SCDOT websites
- A variety of informational materials were developed to educate attendees about the proposed improvements, including display materials and handouts. The following information was available to attendees during the meetings:
 - Project handouts, which included:
 - A description of the project
 - A description of the development process for the nine corridor concepts
 - A project schedule
 - A table demonstrating potential environmental impacts for each corridor concept
 - Proposed typical sections for project roadways in both South Carolina and North Carolina
 - A map of the project area, overlaid with all nine corridor concepts
 - Individual maps of each of the nine corridor concepts
 - A public comment form
 - Display boards of each of the nine corridor concepts
 - Interactive mapping stations, allowing users to zoom in to specific areas of interest within the project study area
 - A station for attendees to view a video presentation. The video was on a rolling loop and provided an overview of the proposed project, the project development process, and details on the nine alternative corridor concepts. Due to space restrictions the video was not available during the South Carolina meeting.

STATISTICAL OVERVIEW OF COMMENTS

Comments Received

- 1,804 comments received
- 1 petition containing 270 typed names and 22 additional comments

Comment Types

- PublicInput.com online forms: 1,394
- Emails: 206

- Public Meeting Forms: 115
- Mailed Letters: 89

Comment Subjects:

- Corridor Concept Preferences: 768
- Sunset Beach Proposal: 628
- Project Impacts: 576
- Alternative Concepts: 420
- Traffic & Safety: 74
- Flooding & Evacuation Route: 66
- Preserve Indigo Farms: 62
- Project Schedule, Cost, & Funding: 53
- Against Project / No Need in NC: 51
- Miscellaneous: 12

Local Jurisdiction Comments:

- 4 (Town of Sunset Beach, NC; Town of Carolina Shores, NC; Town of Shallotte, NC; Town of Calabash, NC)

Corridor Concept Preferences

Through a poll on PublicInput.com, commenters were able to rank the nine corridor concepts (see attached figure) in order of preference. The results are as follows:

- Concept 1 (Red): 1,835 (19.5%)
- Concept 2 (Light Green): 868 (9.3%)
- Concept 3 (Purple): 809 (8.6%)
- Concept 4 (Gold): 1,551 (16.5%)
- Concept 5 (Light Blue): 752 (8.0%)
- Concept 6 (Dark Blue): 740 (7.9%)
- Concept 7 (Pink): 914 (9.7%)
- Concept 8 (Yellow): 927 (9.9%)
- Concept 9 (Dark Green): 999 (10.6%)

GENERAL RESPONSE TO COMMENTS

Corridor Concept Preferences

Comment Summary

Approximately 768 comments related to a commenter’s preference on which corridor concepts to select or avoid. While each of the nine concepts received some level of support and opposition, a majority of the comments in this category were categorized as “Favor Concept 1 (Red)” or “Favor Concept 4 (Gold)”; more commenters expressed their support for these two concepts than all other concepts combined.

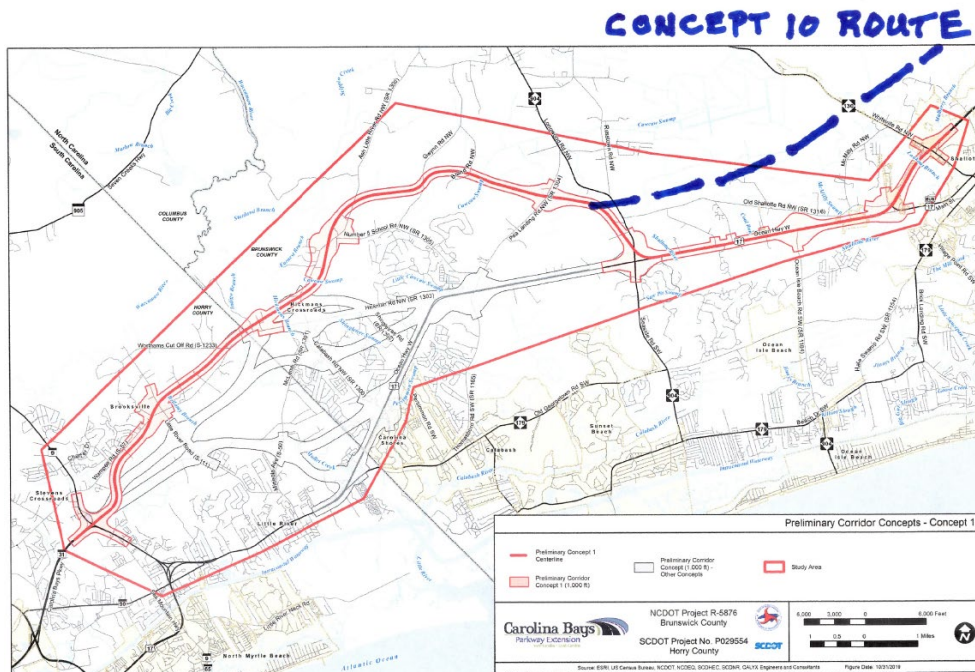
Response

In spring 2020, the project team will identify alternatives to be studied in detail. These detailed study alternatives will be identified based on an evaluation of which of the preliminary corridor concepts best meet the purpose and need of the project, while minimizing impacts to the human and natural environments and considering safety, costs, and traffic services, social and natural resource impacts, and public comments.

Sunset Beach Proposal

Comment Summary

Approximately 628 comments were in support of an alignment proposed by the Town of Sunset Beach, dubbed Concept 10. This proposal would extend Concept 1 inland and parallel to U.S. 17 from Pea Landing Road NW to U.S. 17 north of Shallotte. Below is the sketch of the proposed concept provided by the Town:



Response

An option that considers the Town of Sunset Beach Resolution will be evaluated and reviewed by the project team to determine if it should be carried forward for detailed study. In spring 2020, the project team will identify alternatives to be studied in detail. These detailed study alternatives will be identified as outlined above.

Project Impacts

Comment Summary

Approximately 576 comments were received regarding the potential impacts various corridor concepts may have to homes, businesses, farmland, cemeteries, and the environment throughout the project study area. A number of these comments relate to specific neighborhood concerns (specifically, impacts to the Spring Mill Plantation, Crow Creek, Meadowlands, and Ocean Ridge neighborhoods) and general quality of life concerns in the towns of Calabash and Carolina Shores in North Carolina.

Response

The project team works hard to avoid potential impacts to natural and human environmental features. The nine corridor concepts 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 or minimize impacts to the natural and human environment.

The corridor concepts presented at the public meeting and on PublicInput.com 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, in general approximately 400 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.

Alternative Concepts

Comment Summary

Approximately 420 comments were received that voiced a need for or suggestions to alternative concepts from the nine presented at the public meetings. While most of these comments simply referred to a general need to reconsider the project study area, many commenters recommended their own alternative designs.

Examples of these alternative concept suggestions include:

- Run the Parkway further inland, parallel to U.S. 17 before tying in with the Shallotte Bypass (essentially the Sunset Beach proposal)
- Connect the Parkway to N.C. 130 north of Shallotte
- Connect the Parkway to N.C. 211 beyond Shallotte and north of Supply
- Connect to I-140
- Connect to U.S. 74
- Connect to I-40 north of 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 to tie into U.S. 74, N.C. 211, or I-140, for example, is beyond the scope of this project. In order for a project to be included in the North Carolina State Transportation Improvement Program 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.

Traffic & Safety

Comment Summary

Approximately 74 comments were received that expressed concern about increased traffic along U.S. 17 and the need for additional safety considerations as a result of higher traffic through the area. Specifically, commenters noted the potential uptick in motor accidents – both on the Parkway and on feeder roads – and the inability of emergency response vehicles to efficiently travel to their destinations.

Response

This project would provide a more direct route for tourist and coastal truck traffic travelling through the area. As a result, existing transportation routes would be able to convey shorter local trips more efficiently. The proposed project would also provide additional capacity, improving the flow of traffic and lessening delays on area roadways.

The proposed project offers the potential to reduce the number and severity of vehicle crashes by providing an alternate route to travelers in heavily congested areas, separating through traffic from local traffic, and controlling the number of access points to the proposed roadway.

Flooding & Evacuation Route

Comment Summary

Approximately 64 comments were regarding an increased risk of flooding due to water runoff from the proposed project. Also, commenters noted the need for additional evacuation routes in the event of a hurricane, which some perceive this project does not address.

Response

A detailed hydraulic study will be conducted for the proposed project, and detailed plans will be developed to handle runoff from the project during final design. By providing additional capacity and improving mobility in the project area, the proposed project offers the potential to support more efficient clearance times during emergency evacuations and improved access to I-40.

Preserve Indigo Farms

Comment Summary

Approximately 62 comments and one petition were received regarding the preservation of Indigo Farms, a multi-generational organic farm in northeastern Horry County, South Carolina with a market across the North Carolina border in Brunswick County. As designed, all corridor concepts except 7 (Pink), 8 (Yellow), and 9 (Dark Green) would likely impact Indigo Farms in some capacity.

Response

The project team works hard to avoid potential impacts to natural and human environmental features. The nine corridor concepts 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 or minimize impacts to Indigo Farms and other community features.

The corridor concepts presented at the public meeting and on PublicInput.com 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, in general approximately 400 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.

Project Schedule, Cost & Funding

Comment Summary

Approximately 53 comments requested additional information about the project's schedule, how much it will cost in total, and how it is being funded.

Response

In spring 2020, the project team will identify alternatives to be studied in detail. Cost estimates that include utility relocation, right-of-way acquisition and construction will be prepared for the detailed study alternatives.

Based on preliminary cost estimates, the South Carolina portion of the project will cost approximately \$185 million and the North Carolina portion of the project will cost approximately \$367 million, for a total estimated project cost of \$552 million. These costs are subject to change as the project is further developed.

Utilizing Horry County's RIDE III Sales Tax Funding, the SCDOT 2017-2022 State Transportation Improvement Program includes funding for the purchase of property for the extension of Carolina Bays Parkway from S.C. 9 to the North Carolina state line. Right-of-way acquisition in South Carolina is scheduled to begin in 2022.

In North Carolina, the project is not currently funded for right-of-way acquisition or construction.

Against Project / No Need in N.C.

Comment Summary

Approximately 51 comments were received that either voiced non-specific opposition to the project or asserted the project is not needed in North Carolina. The primary argument for the latter was that traffic will be bypassing towns in Brunswick County as tourists travel to and from Myrtle Beach, forcing North Carolina citizens to front the expense of the proposed project without benefit to the local economy.

Response

The purpose of the project is to improve the transportation network in the study area by enhancing mobility and connectivity for traffic moving in and through the project area. Traffic volumes on area roadways are expected to increase considerably by 2040. The population within Horry and Brunswick counties has steadily increased along with the number of tourists to the area.

Growth in population, tourism, and supporting services has resulted in an increase in mixed-purpose traffic on area roads. The proposed project would improve mobility on existing roadways, benefiting both local and through traffic. The project includes potential secondary benefits including more efficient clearance times during emergency evacuations and the potential to reduce the number and severity of vehicle crashes.

Miscellaneous

Comment Summary

Twelve comments were received that either did not fit into any of the above categories or necessitated a special response. Of those 12, four comments do not require a response. The remaining eight comments and their corresponding responses are as follows:

Specific Comments and Responses

- One comment was received requesting information about the various ways individuals could comment on the project.

Response

Comments on the Carolina Bays Parkway Extension project may be submitted online at publicinput.com/carolina-bays-pkwy or by sending an email to carolina-bays-pkwy@publicinput.com. Alternatively, comments may be provided via U.S. Mail to one of the following Project contacts:

*Ms. Krista Kimmel, P.E.
Project Manager, NCDOT
5501 Barbados Blvd
Castle Hayne, NC 28429*

Ms. Leah Quattlebaum, P.E.
Pee Dee Regional Production Engineer, SCDOT
PO Box 191
Columbia, SC 29202

Ms. Liz Kovasckitz, AICP
Planning Program Manager, NV5
6750 Tryon Rd
Cary, NC 27158

- One comment was received regarding the use of controlled access facilities along the project corridor, arguing that the addition of service roads at C/A points will unnecessarily impact existing homes and businesses.

Response

Full control of access will likely be incorporated on portions of the proposed project. 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. The use of service roads will be evaluated during the preliminary design phase of the project for the detailed study alternatives. The use of service roads may be needed to provide access to private driveways, homes, and businesses.

- Two comments were received requesting the project team take bicycle and pedestrian considerations into account.

Response

Bicycle and pedestrian considerations will be further evaluated during the development of functional designs for detailed study alternatives. However, existing Carolina Bays Parkway is a freeway with full control of access, and access to the highway is only provided at interchanges. The extension of Carolina Bays Parkway is also expected to be a freeway with controlled access. This type of facility would not include bicycle and pedestrian accommodations. If included in the design, service roads may provide an opportunity for consideration of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.

- Two comments regarding traffic congestion on N.C. 57 (Hickman Road) requested additional stoplights on the road.

Response

The requested roadway improvements on N.C. 57 are not within the scope of this project, which is to extend the Carolina Bays Parkway through Horry County and southwestern Brunswick County. A new project as described above would need to originate with a submittal of the project from Brunswick County and then scored through NCDOT's Prioritization Process before inclusion in the NCDOT's State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

- One comment was received from an individual who has lived in the project study area since 2012 but hasn't received notifications on the project's development to date.

Response

Notifications about the Carolina Bays Parkway Extension project and its public meetings were sent via postcard, printed as legal advertisements in local newspapers, and posted online at the NCDOT and SCDOT websites. Postcards were mailed to each postal customer located in the study area using Every Door Direct Mail from the U.S. Postal Service. Postcards were also mailed to each non-resident owner of property in the study area. The commenter has been added to the project's mailing list to receive future correspondence specific to the Carolina Bays Parkway Extension project.

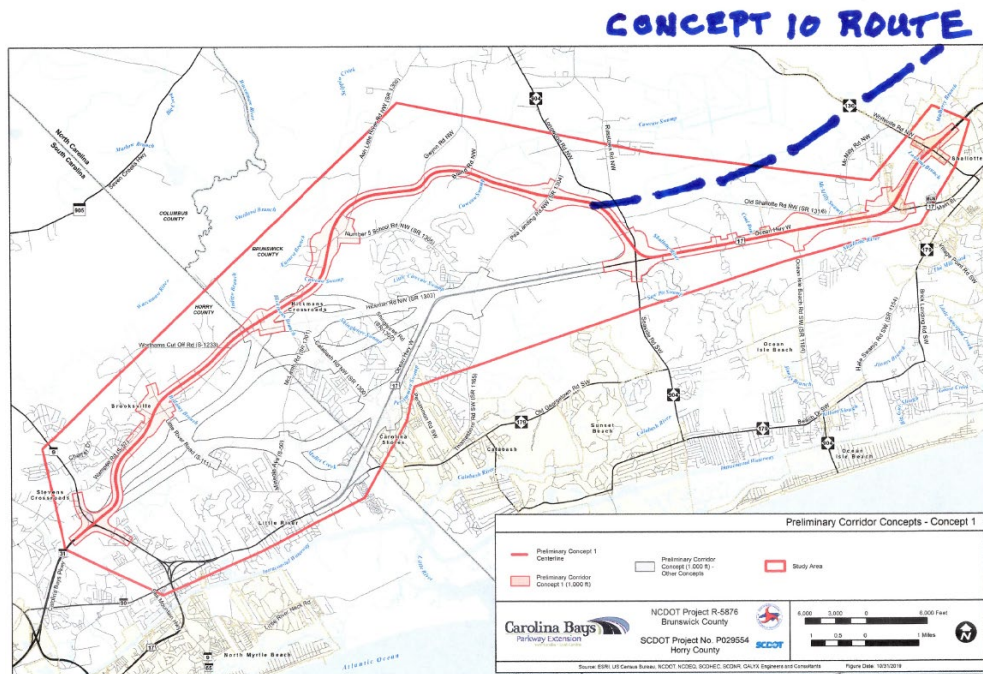
- One comment was received regarding the corridor concept preference tool on PublicInput.com and how the project team verifies that each commenter only submits one vote.

The corridor concept preference tool on the Carolina Bays Parkway Extension project's PublicInput.com page is monitored by the North Carolina Department of Transportation Public Involvement and PublicInput.com development team. The results displayed on the site reflect raw comment data prior to the team's review and vetting process. The public meeting survey responses are not to be used as a Popular Referendum to determine location and/or a majority vote of those responding. NCDOT considers safety, costs, traffic service, social and natural resource impacts, and public comments in making decisions. A public meeting summary will be developed to address all forms of public input and will include updated results of the corridor concept preferences tool. The summary will be posted to the PublicInput.com project site when it is available.

Local Government Comments

Town of Sunset Beach

- A resolution submitted by the Town of Sunset Beach voiced their opposition to all nine corridor concepts on the grounds that each would connect with U.S. 17 at N.C. 904 and run along it for 6.3 miles until it joins the Shallotte Bypass. The Town submitted an alternative corridor concept that would extend Concept 1 inland and parallel to U.S. 17 from Pea Landing Road NW to U.S. 17 north of Shallotte.



Response

The project team will continue to coordinate with the Town of Sunset Beach as a key stakeholder in the development of this project. The following response has been sent:

An option that considers the Town of Sunset Beach Resolution will be evaluated and reviewed by the project team to determine if it should be carried forward for detailed study. In spring 2020, the project team will identify alternatives to be studied in detail. These detailed study alternatives will be identified based on an evaluation of which of the preliminary corridor concepts best meet the purpose and need of the project, while minimizing impacts to the human and natural environments and considering safety, costs, and traffic services, social and natural resource impacts, and public comments.

Town of Carolina Shores

- A resolution submitted by the Town of Carolina Shores expressed concern and opposition to any of the corridor concepts that would impact an existing, established neighborhood. Therefore, the Town submitted their support for Corridor Concepts 1 (Red) or 4 (Gold).

Response:

The project team will continue to coordinate with the Town of Carolina Shores as a key stakeholder in the development of this project. The following response has been sent:

In spring 2020, the project team will identify alternatives to be studied in detail. These detailed study alternatives will be identified based on an evaluation of which of the preliminary corridor concepts best meet the purpose and need of the

project, while minimizing impacts to the human and natural environments and considering safety, costs, and traffic services, social and natural resource impacts, and public comments.

Town of Shallotte

- The Town of Shallotte submitted a letter voicing their support of the project, specifically Corridor Concepts 1 (Red) and 2 (Light Green). They also noted a concern about the project's design at the south end of Main Street, where the Town feels an interchange is necessary for emergency service accessibility.

Response

The project team will continue to coordinate with the Town of Shallotte as a key stakeholder in the development of this project. The following response has been sent:

The project team will take into account the Town's concerns about the need for an interchange for emergency service accessibility at the south end of Main Street during the development of the functional designs for detailed study alternatives.

In spring 2020, the project team will identify alternatives to be studied in detail. These detailed study alternatives will be identified based on an evaluation of which of the preliminary corridor concepts best meet the purpose and need of the project, while minimizing impacts to the human and natural environments and considering safety, costs, and traffic services, social and natural resource impacts, and public comments.

Town of Calabash

- A resolution submitted by the Town of Calabash expressed concern that the Parkway will impact a number of businesses and neighborhoods in the project study area regardless of which concept is selected. While the Town formally endorsed Corridor Concept 6 (Dark Blue), they also recommend the project team explore a tenth alternative similar to the proposal submitted by the Town of Sunset Beach to further minimize impacts to the area's residents.

Response

The project team will continue to coordinate with the Town of Calabash as a key stakeholder in the development of this project. The following response has been sent:

An alternative concept similar to the concept referred to in the Resolution from the Town of Sunset Beach will be further evaluated to determine if this concept should be carried forward as a detailed study alternative. In spring 2020, the project team will identify alternatives to be studied in detail. These detailed study alternatives will be identified based on an evaluation of which of the preliminary

corridor concepts best meet the purpose and need of the project, while minimizing impacts to the human and natural environments and considering safety, costs, and traffic services, social and natural resource impacts, and public comments.

cc: Post Public Meeting Attendees

Krista Kimmel – NCDOT Division 3
Katie Hite – NCDOT Division 3
Mason Herndon – NCDOT Division 3
Diane Wilson – NCDOT Public Involvement
Leah Quattlebaum – SCDOT
Henry Phillips – SCDOT
Chris Cooper – SCDOT
Shannon Meder – HDR
Pierce Sprague – HDR
Liz Kovaschitz – NV5
Eric Midkiff – NV5
Brian Yamamoto – NV5
Steve Drum – NV5
Beth Allen – NV5