

**NCDOT TO HOLD PUBLIC MEETING
FOR PROPOSED CORRIDOR K IMPROVEMENTS
FROM ANDREWS TO STECOAH IN CHEROKEE AND GRAHAM COUNTIES**

STIP Project No. A-0009

The N.C. Department of Transportation will hold two public meetings to present information on proposed improvements between Andrews in Cherokee County and Stecoah in Graham County. The proposed improvements are part of the Appalachian Development Highway System (ADHS) Corridor K.

Public meetings will be held on **Tuesday, February 12, 2019** from 4 to 7 p.m. at the Graham County Community Building, located at 196 Knight Street in Robbinsville and on **Thursday, February 14, 2019** from 4 to 7 p.m. at the Andrews Community Center located at 535 Main Street in Andrews. Interested citizens may attend at any time during the above meeting hours. Please note there will be no formal presentation.

The opportunity to submit written comments will be provided at the meeting or can be done via phone, email, online or mail no later than **March 15, 2019**. All comments will be taken into consideration as the project progresses.

As information becomes available, it may be viewed at the NCDOT Public Meeting Webpage: <https://www.ncdot.gov/news/public-meetings>. The study team is available throughout the process to meet and discuss the project through informal question and answer sessions with neighborhood groups and civic organizations.

For additional information please contact Consultant Project Manager Amy Sackaroff (919-851-6866, amy.sackaroff@stantec.com), Consultant Project Manager Stacy Oberhausen (919-773-8887 ext. 116, soberhausen@tgsengineers.com), or NCDOT Division 14 Project Development Engineer, Wanda Austin (828-631-1142, whaustin@ncdot.gov).

NCDOT will provide auxiliary aids and services under the Americans with Disabilities Act for disabled persons who wish to participate in this meeting. Anyone requiring special services should contact Diane Wilson via email at pdwilson1@ncdot.gov or by phone at (919)707-6073 as early as possible, so that arrangements can be made.

Persons who do not speak English, or have a limited ability to read, speak or understand English, may receive interpretive services upon request prior to the meeting by calling 1-800-481-6494. Aquellas personas no hablan inglés, o tienen limitaciones para leer, hablar o entender inglés, podrían recibir servicios de interpretación si los solicitan antes de la reunión llamando al 1-800-481-6494.



**Proposed Corridor K Improvements from Andrews to Stecoah
Cherokee and Graham Counties
STIP Project No. A-0009**

**PUBLIC
MEETINGS**

Tuesday Feb. 12, 2019
4 - 7 pm
**Graham County
Community Building**
196 Knight St.
Robbinsville

Thursday Feb. 14, 2019
4 - 7 pm
**Andrews
Community Center**
535 Main St.
Andrews

The N.C. Department of Transportation is studying improvement options from Andrews to Stecoah in Cherokee and Graham Counties as part of a proposed project to provide the transportation infrastructure necessary for the well-being of local residents and regional traffic. The proposed improvements are part of the Appalachian Development Highway System (ADHS) Corridor K.

Public meetings will be held on **Tuesday, February 12, 2019** from 4 to 7 p.m. at the Graham County Community Building in Robbinsville and on **Thursday, February 14, 2019** from 4 to 7 p.m. at the Andrews Community Center in Andrews. Interested citizens may attend at any time during the above meeting hours. There will be no formal presentation, but project maps will be available for review during the meeting and on the NCDOT Public Meetings Website:

<https://www.ncdot.gov/news/public-meetings>.

For additional information please contact Consultant Project Managers Amy Sackaroff (919-851-6866, amy.sackaroff@stantec.com), Stacy Oberhausen (919-773-8887 ext. 116, soberhausen@tgsengineers.com), or NCDOT Division 14 Project Development Engineer, Wanda Austin (828-631-1142, whaustin@ncdot.gov).

NCDOT will provide auxiliary aids and services under the Americans with Disabilities Act for disabled persons who wish to participate in this workshop. Anyone requiring special services should contact Diane Wilson at (919) 707-6073 or pdwilson1@ncdot.gov as early as possible so that arrangements can be made.

Connecting people, products and places, safely and efficiently with customer focus, accountability and environmental sensitivity; to enhance the economy and vitality of North Carolina



NCDOT STIP Project No. A-0009
Amy Sackaroff, AICP
Stantec Consulting Services, Inc.
801 Jones Franklin Road, Suite 300
Raleigh, NC 27606

**Important Information
Please read!**

CURRENT RESIDENT OR

Aquellas personas que no hablan inglés, o tienen limitaciones para leer, hablar o entender inglés, podrían recibir servicios de interpretación si los solicitan antes de la reunión llamando al 1-800-481-6494.



Proposed Corridor K Improvements from Andrews to Stecoah Cherokee and Graham Counties

STIP Project No. A-0009

February 12 and 14, 2019

The N.C. Department of Transportation (NCDOT) is studying improvement options from Andrews to Stecoah in Cherokee and Graham Counties as part of a proposed project to provide the transportation infrastructure necessary for the well-being of local residents and regional traffic.

BACKGROUND

This project is part of Corridor K of the Appalachian Development Highway System – a network of road corridors that Congress established in 1965 to provide a safe, efficient transportation system for the Appalachian Region. Corridor K extends from Dillsboro in Jackson County, to I-75 in Cleveland, Tennessee.

The project is located in southwestern North Carolina near the Tennessee and Georgia borders. Given the challenges associated with the region's mountainous terrain and the presence of natural and cultural features, the proposed project is among the last of the Appalachian Development Highway System's corridors to be completed.

Transportation options in the area are limited and primarily consist of a few narrow, two-lane roads that have sharp curves and steep grades. Roads in the study area are prone to landslides, fog conditions, and other weather-related effects.

This project was originally proposed under the Appalachian Regional Development Act of 1965 and has reached various points in the project development process over the past several decades. After a pause in 2011 to conduct a regional study and develop County Comprehensive Transportation Plans, the project was restarted in 2015.

In July 2015, transportation and resource agency leadership met to reinitiate studies and identify themes for a new project approach. A "fresh look" approach was developed with a focus on early and ongoing collaboration to help avoid schedule delays by identifying and addressing concerns as they arise.

The new process places emphasis on early and continuous input and participation of local elected officials and local government staffs as well as tribal staff, and federal/state regulatory and resource agencies. This group is collectively referred to as the "project team."



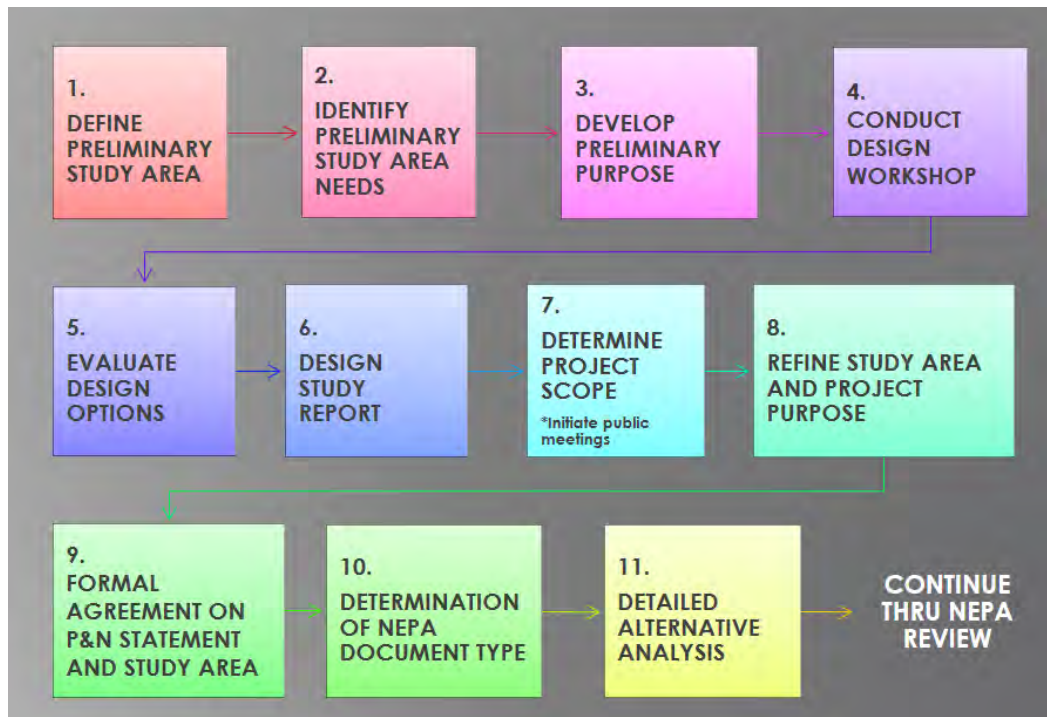
NEW APPROACH

Much of the new approach was based on guidance provided by the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution, which stated in its 2011 report that the team should create, “an atmosphere of exploration where ideas can be expressed freely...” This idea has become a guiding principle for this project.

The project team recognized that a new process was needed to foster collaboration and exploration. The project is described in broad terms in both the county and state transportation plans but these are programming documents that don’t include project-specific details. The new process, shown below, was developed to help the team identify the project scope – while making sure that all team members are in agreement at each step. This approach will also help avoid delays during detailed environmental review and permitting by identifying potential concerns early in the process.

The project team is made up of transportation agency staff, resource agency staff, tribal staff, local government staff, and local elected officials. The team also includes technical staff, or subject matter experts, that provide guidance related to their specific area of expertise.

We are currently moving through Steps 5, 6, and 7, evaluating design options and determining the project scope.



PROJECT NEED: MOBILITY AND RELIABILITY

After defining the preliminary study area, the team worked together to identify the needs of the project area. The needs for this project are generally categorized into physical and mobility needs. Physical needs are related to the limited roadway options in Graham and Cherokee Counties and how reliability can be affected by any type of blockage or disruption such as winter weather, fog, washouts, landslides, fallen trees, traffic incidents, vehicle breakdowns, or slow-moving vehicles. Such situations adversely affect travel time as travelers must wait or back-track. Steep grades, narrow lane widths, and sharp curves on U.S. 129, N.C. 143, and N.C. 28 affect travel speed and opportunities to pass slower vehicles. In addition, there are sections of U.S. 129 and N.C. 143 where traffic volumes will be over-capacity in 2040.

Mobility needs are related to improving access to employment, medical facilities, commercial centers, and educational facilities in Graham County and other parts of the region. Improved mobility is needed for emergency response services that are frequently affected by roadway conditions and slow vehicles encountered while responding to emergencies.

PROJECT PURPOSE: SETTING A COMMON VISION

The preliminary purpose and need statement summarizes the goals of the project and provides a common vision for the project as it's further developed. The preliminary purpose and need statement is as follows:

The proposed project purpose is to provide the transportation infrastructure necessary for the well-being of local residents and regional traffic by **improving vehicular travel time, reliability, and safety** between the existing four-lane section on NC 28 at Stecoah and the existing four-lane section on US 74 east of Andrews; **providing an average travel speed of 50 mph**, consistent with the **Appalachian Development Highway System** criteria, and in a manner that is **sensitive to the natural environment**.

DESIGN STUDIES

The next step in the process was to conduct a Design Workshop with the full project team. The team met in Murphy in 2016 to explore design options. The project team identified locations where NCDOT and FHWA should evaluate improving existing roadways and areas where improving the existing roadways may not be feasible. In these areas, it was agreed that NCDOT and FHWA would study options on new location.

After the Design Workshop, NCDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) began evaluating design options. As part of taking a fresh look at the project, the team is using a software tool called Quantm to generate potential design options. Quantm is an alignment optimization software that was used to find and explore options based on the team's feedback at the Design Workshop.

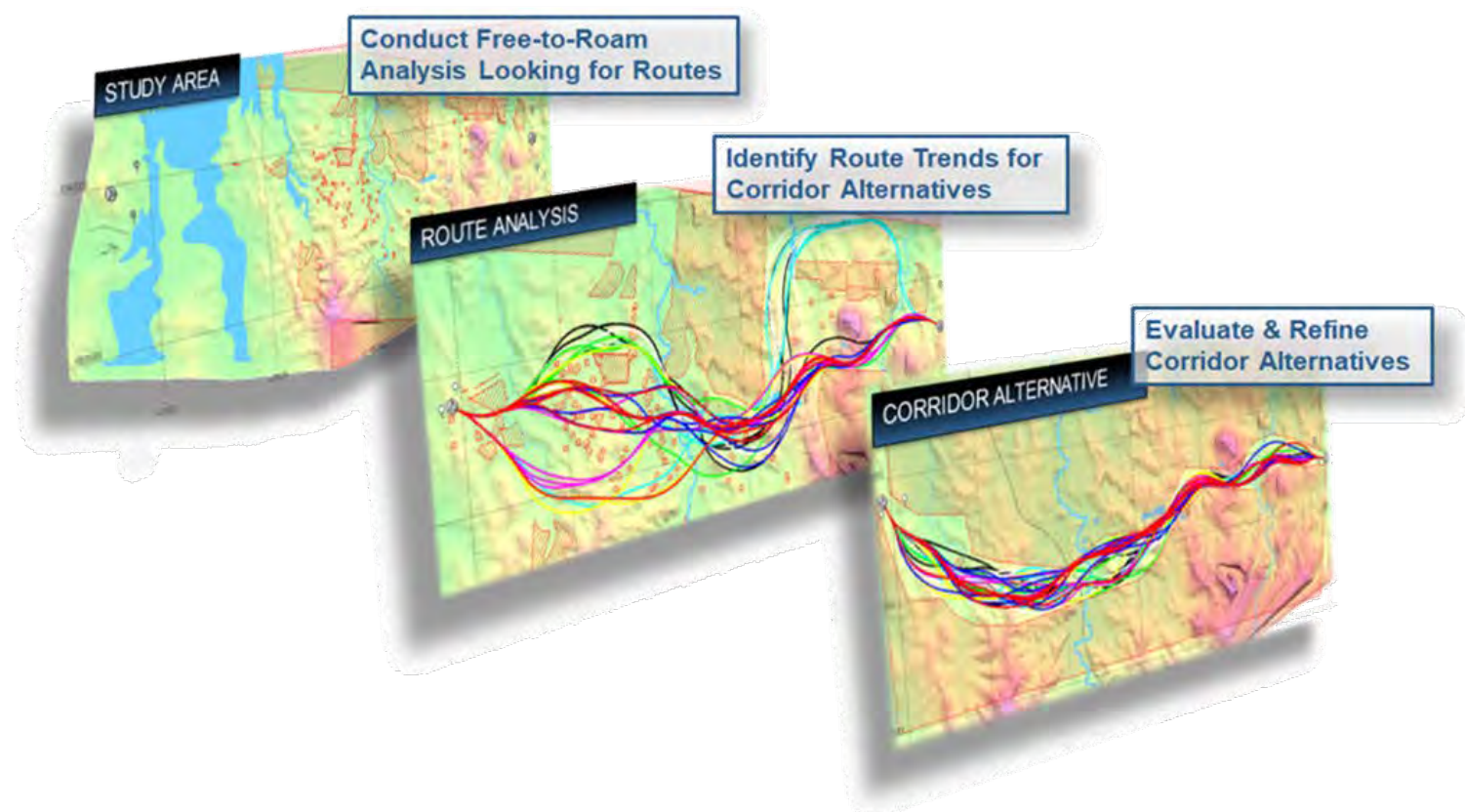


The purpose of the design workshop was to build on the Graham County CTP and "Opt-in" Regional Vision to ultimately define the project scope.

Quantm uses a three-dimensional terrain model to evaluate literally thousands of potential routes between two given points. The software looks for routes that meet the model's design standards – things such as speed limit and maximum grade – and identifies locations where tunnels or bridges are likely needed to maintain the desired design standards. Quantm also estimates construction costs based on NCDOT cost data.

Quantm is an optimization program that identifies route trends to help refine study corridors and optimize alignments within the refined corridors.

The first round of Quantm – the 'route analysis' shown in the middle image below - shows the most representational range of the thousands of scenarios the software goes through to identify where and how the project could be built. In some instances, the results include areas where a number of the routes will run together; this is called a "route trend" and indicates an area that consistently has an advantage over other locations based on how well it meets the model's design standards.



The second round of Quantm – After the route analysis, individual routes were refined to identify route trends for that particular alignment. The second round identified route trends that provided a high-level picture of potential impacts. Because it sets a construction footprint for each route, it can also help form the study corridor for that particular alignment. The study corridors on display at tonight's meeting are based on two rounds of Quantm and have undergone review by roadway designers and geotechnical engineers to expand study areas where shifts in the routes could avoid or minimize potential impacts. A two-lane typical section was used in the Quantm design studies conducted to develop the proposed study corridors shown here. Typical sections will be determined during the project development phase, based on traffic volumes and other considerations such as passing lanes, climbing lanes, and other design needs.

Quantm results were reviewed by members of the project team throughout the design study, including seven meetings with local officials, three meetings on items related to the Appalachian Trail, and one meeting with representatives of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Among other things, these meetings helped confirm understanding of local perspectives and priorities and generated additional Quantm studies.

PROPOSED STUDY CORRIDORS (SEE MAP ON PAGE 7)

The study corridors presented here tonight represent a range of potential transportation solutions that are recommended for detailed study by the project team. The feedback gathered at tonight's meeting (and during the comment period) will help determine the next steps. As noted previously, the Quantm studies were conducted in order to generate a range of alignments and associated cost estimates which can be used by the project team to help determine the project scope. In addition to the proposed study corridors, NCDOT and FHWA will also conduct detailed studies on an option that improves existing NC 28, N.C. 143, and U.S. 129 with no new location sections.

Although additional design work, geotechnical investigations, and natural resource surveys are required to ultimately refine alignments within the proposed study corridors, the study corridors can be used for high-level planning and programming to help identify priorities and set a path forward for more detailed studies.

STECOAH SCENARIOS

S-2 **Scenario S-2** originates at NC 28 and follows the north side of the Stecoah Valley, then turns south, crossing NC 28 and N.C. 143 south of their intersection, before climbing to a tunnel under the Appalachian Trail, after which the corridor turns south paralleling N.C. 143 to the east before converging with existing N.C. 143. When compared to the range of other Quantm scenarios, this scenario was the shortest new location section and presents opportunities for climbing/passing lanes. Of all the Quantm scenarios in the Stecoah area, this scenario is expected to have the least impacts on the Nantahala Forest and the lowest potential for visual impacts from the Appalachian Trail.

CURRENT STATUS: SUMMARY

NCDOT and FHWA used Quantm to study design options for the proposed project. The entire project team, comprised of local officials, local government staff, regulatory and resource agency staff, and tribal staff were provided frequent opportunities throughout the evaluation process to help shape the Quantm design studies.

NEW
MINDSET



NEW
RESULTS

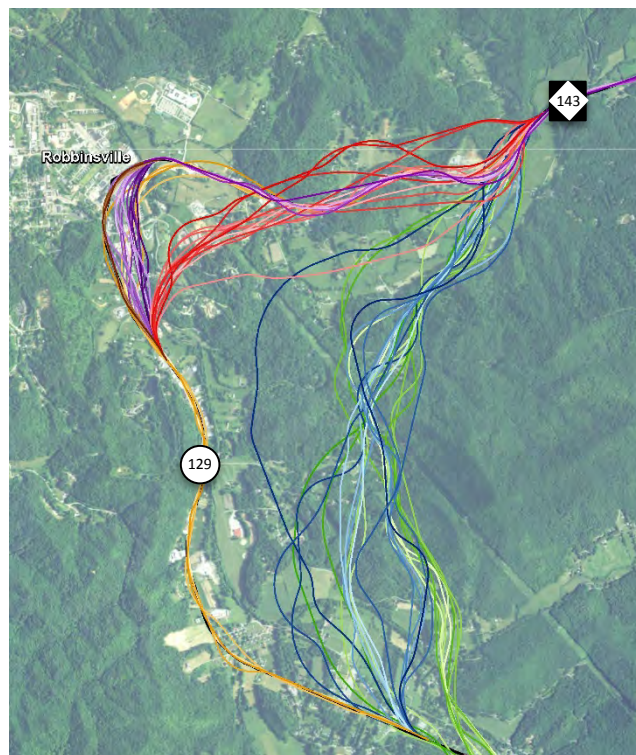
Through this extensive evaluation and coordination process, the team identified study corridors for presentation here tonight. These study corridors represent the routes being proposed for detailed study in the project development and environmental review phase. They are being presented here tonight to gather your feedback to help inform the next steps in the process.

S-6 **Scenario S-6** originates at NC 28 and follows the south side of Stecoah Valley before turning southward, running westward parallel to Cody Branch and then climbing to a tunnel under the Appalachian Trail, after which the corridor turns southwest converging with existing N.C. 143. This scenario is 0.1-mile longer than S-2, still one of the shortest new location sections, and like S-2, it also presents opportunities for climbing/passing lanes. S-6 avoids tribal landholdings and has the potential for lower residential impacts than S-2.

ROBBINSVILLE SCENARIOS

R-1 **Scenario R-1** originates on N.C. 143, just south of Pinhook Road and follows the existing N.C. 143 corridor to Five Point Road. From here, the corridor turns southwest on new location for a short section, then connects to the existing intersection of Five Point Road and U.S. 129. This short new location section, and all other potential new location sections, would be studied to develop 'best fit' alignments that avoid and minimize impacts to the maximum extent possible.

The project team reviewed a wide range of Quantm scenarios to identify the proposed study corridor shown at tonight's meeting. Local officials and local government staff believe that R-1 provides the most opportunity for the Town of Robbinsville as it would not hinder local development goals or other initiatives. It would also avoid and minimize potential impacts to the community better than other Quantm scenarios. R-1 is close to the Robbinsville town center but avoids major impacts to businesses along N.C. 143 and U.S. 129, Old Mother Cemetery, and homes on Five Point Road. Local officials recommended that options further east of Robbinsville should not be recommended for detailed study because they had the potential to pull traffic away from Robbinsville.



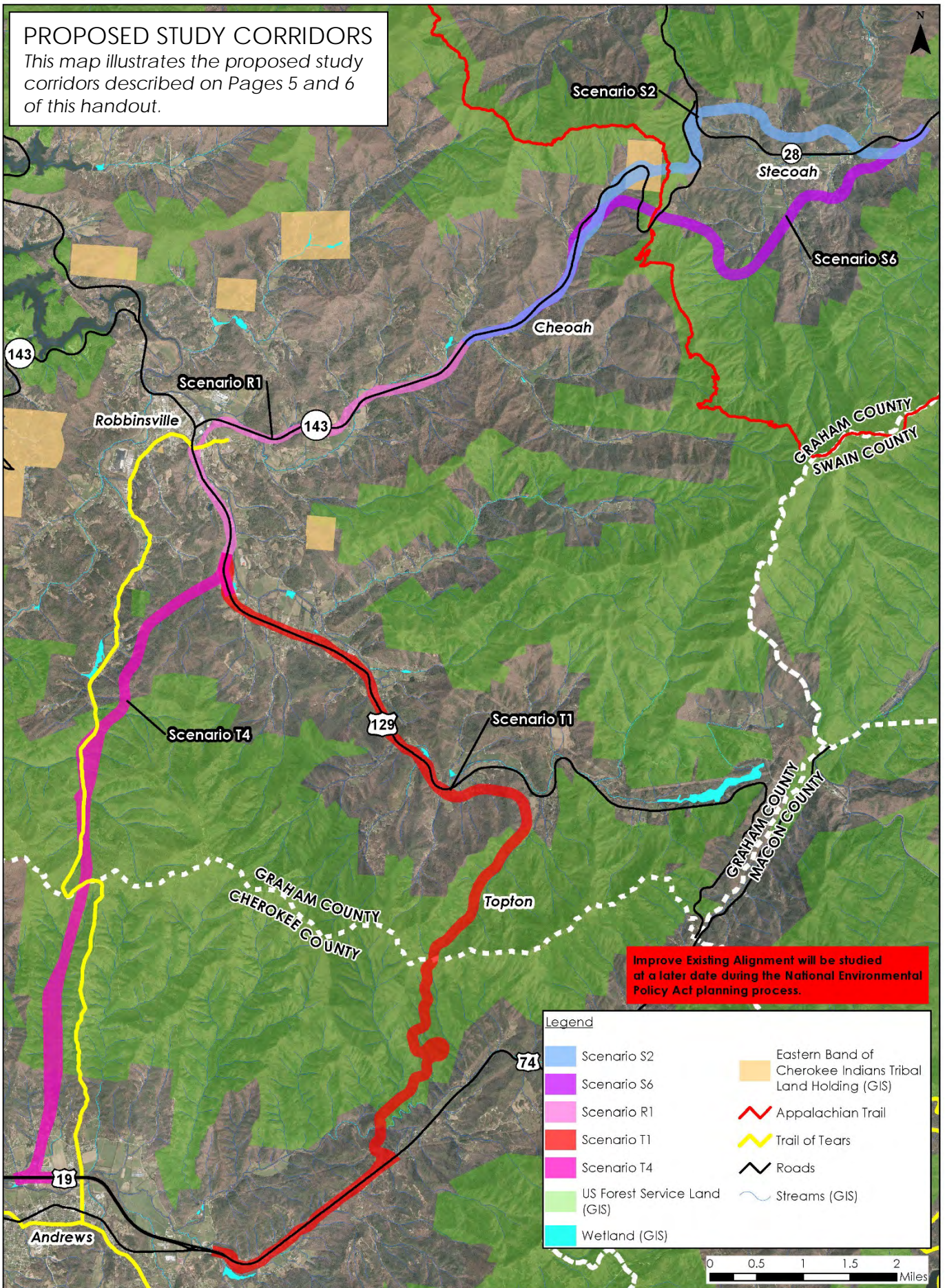
A large number of Quantm scenarios were evaluated at a preliminary level before R-1 was determined to be the sole study corridor proposed for the Robbinsville area.

TOPTON SCENARIOS (ANDREWS TO ROBBINSVILLE)

T-1 **Scenario T-1** originates south of Airport Road and follows existing U.S. 129 to Campbell Creek Road, where the corridor enters a tunnel south of U.S. 129 and turns southwest towards Andrews paralleling Jutts Creek. The scenario continues south on a new location through the Snowbird Mountains and joins existing US 19/74 near Tunnel Ridge Road, where it continues along the existing roadway into Andrews. This scenario provides an opportunity to improve a large portion of U.S. 129 and would avoid geological 'hot spots' to the east along U.S. 129. It is one of the two shortest Quantm scenarios studied in the Topton area and has the shortest section on new location.

T-4 **Scenario T-4** begins south of Airport Road and continues on new location south towards Andrews, paralleling the Trail of Tears and Long Creek Road. The corridor enters a long tunnel underneath the Snowbird Mountains and ends at US 19/74 near Beaver Creek Road in Andrews. This scenario provides the most direct connection between Robbinsville and Andrews and avoids geological 'hot spots' to the east.

In addition to the proposed study corridors, NCDOT and FHWA will also conduct detailed studies on an option that improves existing NC 28, N.C. 143, and U.S. 129 with no new location sections.



YOUR FEEDBACK IS IMPORTANT!

We thank you for participating in the process and sharing your thoughts with us! Team members are available to answer your questions and can be contacted throughout the study process. You are encouraged to review the mapping on display and provide your comments to our project team. Meeting maps are also available online at the project website: <https://www.ncdot.gov/projects/corridor-k> and can be viewed at the following locations:

NCDOT District 3 Office
191 Robbinsville Road
Andrews, NC 28901

NCDOT Graham County Maintenance Yard
2447 Tallulah Road
Robbinsville, NC 28771

These proposed study corridors are being presented to gather your thoughts on how the project should move forward. The project team will review public feedback which will help shape the project as it moves into detailed study. You are welcome to complete the attached comment sheet or go to <https://publicinput.com/Corridor-K> to comment online. **Comments received by March 15, 2019 will be presented at upcoming project team meetings.**

The following questions are included on the comment sheet as a way to start the conversation, but you are welcome to provide comments in any format you would prefer, including email, by phone, or you can mail your comments to us. Contact information is included below. We are interested in knowing:

- **Do you feel you have a good understanding of the project based on the information you've been provided?**
- **Is there anything you need more information on?**
- **What is/are your priority location(s) for improvement? Why?**
- **How do you feel about the presented corridors being carried forward for detailed study?**

NEXT STEPS

The results of the studies and coordination that have occurred up to

Visit <https://www.ncdot.gov/projects/corridor-k> for updates!

this point are documented in the preliminary draft Design Study Report. After tonight's meeting, NCDOT and FHWA will meet with local officials and local government staff to review public comments and gather input on local programming priorities. Public feedback and local perspectives will be discussed with the project team and the results will be incorporated into a final Design Study Report, expected to be finalized in Spring 2019. The final report will also document team decisions on which project-specific details will be included in the project scope. Once the project scope is identified, detailed studies will be conducted as part of the environmental review process under the National Environmental Policy Act, also known as NEPA.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Corridor K Project Team
c/o TGS Engineers
706 Hillsborough Street, Suite 200
Raleigh, NC 27603
919-773-8887 ex 116
CorridorK@tgsengineers.com



COMMENT FORM

Proposed Corridor K Improvements from Andrews to Stecoah in Cherokee and Graham Counties

STIP Project No. A-0009

February 12 and 14, 2019

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE/EMAIL: _____

The following questions are included here a way to start the conversation, but you are welcome to provide comments in any format you would prefer, including email, by phone, or you can mail your comments to us. Contact information is included below. We are interested in knowing:

- Do you feel you have a good understanding of the project based on the information you've been provided?
- Is there anything you need more information on?
- What is/are your priority location(s) for improvement? Why?
- How do you feel about the presented corridors being carried forward for detailed study?

COMMENT: _____

Comments may be sent to:
 Corridor K Project Team
 c/o TGS Engineers
 706 Hillsborough Street, Suite 200
 Raleigh, NC 27603
 919-773-8887 ex 116
CorridorK@tgsengineers.com

Corridor K Project Team
c/o TGS Engineers
706 Hillsborough Street, Suite 200
Raleigh, NC 27603



PUBLIC MEETING

Proposed Corridor K Improvements from Andrews to Stecoah Cherokee and Graham Counties

TITLE VI PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT FORM

Completing this form is completely voluntary. You are not required to provide the information requested in order to participate in this meeting.

Meeting Type: Public Meeting Location: Feb 12 at Graham Co. Community Bldg, 196 Knight St., Robbinsville Feb 14 at Andrews Community Center, 535 Main St., Andrews	Date: February 12 and 14, 2019
STIP No.: A-0009	

In accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related authorities, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) assures that no person(s) shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination under any of the Department's programs, policies, or activities, based on their race, color, national origin, disability, age, income, or gender.

Completing this form helps meet our data collection and public involvement obligations under Title VI and NEPA and will improve how we serve the public. Please place the completed form in the designated box on the sign-in table, hand it to an NCDOT official or mail it to the NCDOT Environmental Analysis Unit, 1598 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1598. All forms will remain on file at the NCDOT as part of the public record.

Zip Code: _____ Street Name: <i>(i.e. Main Street)</i> _____ Total Household Income: <input type="checkbox"/> Less than \$12,000 <input type="checkbox"/> \$47,000 – \$69,999 <input type="checkbox"/> \$12,000 – \$19,999 <input type="checkbox"/> \$70,000 – \$93,999 <input type="checkbox"/> \$20,000 – \$30,999 <input type="checkbox"/> \$94,000 – \$117,999 <input type="checkbox"/> \$31,000 – \$46,999 <input type="checkbox"/> \$118,000 or greater	Gender: <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female Age: <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 18 <input type="checkbox"/> 45-64 <input type="checkbox"/> 18-29 <input type="checkbox"/> 65 and older <input type="checkbox"/> 30-44 Have a Disability: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
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Race/Ethnicity: <input type="checkbox"/> White <input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Black/African American <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic/Latino <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian/Alaskan Native <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____	National Origin: (if born outside the U.S.) <input type="checkbox"/> Mexican <input type="checkbox"/> Central American: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> South American: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Vietnamese <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese <input type="checkbox"/> Korean <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____
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How did you hear about this meeting? (newspaper advertisement, flyer, and/or mailing) _____

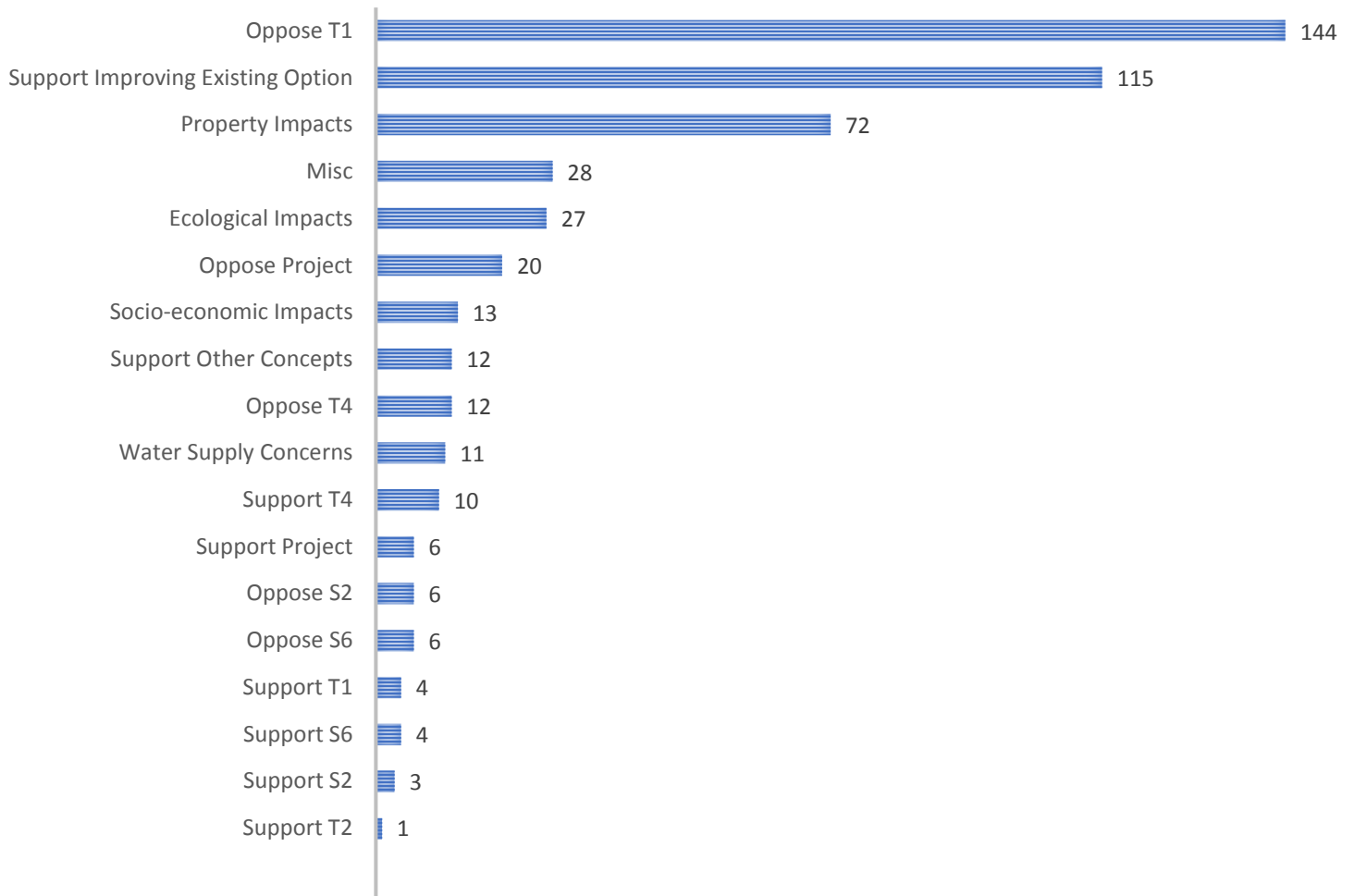
For more information regarding Title VI or this request, please contact the NCDOT Title VI Section at (919) 508-1830 or toll free at 1-800-508-1886, or by email at sddickens@ncdot.gov.

Thank you for your participation!

Attn: Diane Wilson
NCDOT – EAU
1598 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1598

Subject	# Comments on Subject	Percent of Total	Description/Representative Comments
Oppose T1*	144	29.1%	Includes 47 Charge.org petition signatures (18 local, 29 outside area) and 77 signatures on Shook petition (all local); cite impacts to property, forest land, and water quality
Support Improving Existing Option*	115	23.3%	Less impacts, new road isn't needed, widen existing where needed
Property Impacts*	72	14.6%	Note concerns along specific alignments: farm operations, generational landownership; general concern about number of total relocations
Miscellaneous*	28	5.7%	Information requests; concerns over noise, tourism, and tax debt
Ecological Impacts*	27	5.5%	Environmental and archaeological concerns not taken into account; endangered species; acid rock; trout streams
Oppose Project	20	4.0%	Oppose new road construction; use money for schools; environmental impacts, relocations
Socio-economic Impacts*	13	2.6%	Loss of history; cultural impacts; poor losing everything; loss of property value
Support Other Concepts*	12	2.4%	Alignment suggestions; viaduct; improve existing US 74 in Gorge
Oppose T4*	12	2.4%	Impacts to forest land and the Trail of Tears
Water Supply Concerns	11	2.2%	Groundwater effects; water quality
Support T4	10	2.0%	Fewer property impacts; more direct connection to Andrews
Support Project	6	1.2%	Would like to see project complete; project will help with tourism; want safe roads
Oppose S2	6	1.2%	citing difficult navigability
Oppose S6*	6	1.2%	Visual impacts; overkill; irreparable damage
Support T1	4	0.8%	Less disturbance of forest land; avoids Trail of Tears
Support S6	4	0.8%	Shorter distance; less hilly
Support S2*	3	0.6%	Prefer if relocations can be minimized; modify alignment to use [more] existing roadway
Support T2	1	0.2%	Less disturbance to the environment
Total	494	100%	

NOTES: 494 subject-specific positions were contained in 144 comment sheets, emails, and online forms and two petitions that were submitted during the 30-day comment period ending March 15, 2019. Asterisks denote subjects discussed in comments provided by environmental stakeholder organization, WaysSouth. It is also noted that several public comments state opposition to a four-lane facility.



Form letter submitted by 84 individuals, with some additional comments added regarding potential property impacts or general comment that a new roadway or any improvements at all are not needed. These sentiments are captured in the tally under "Support improve existing option" and "Property Impacts".

To: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers/NCDOT/Kevin Corbin, NC State Representative

I am against the completion of any or all of Corridor K (US 74 Relocation) from Andrews to Stecoah that would require building a four lane highway, super two lane highway, or rerouting the existing roads. We have options to improve the existing roads without causing anyone to lose their home or property. We can modify the existing roads by adding a passing lane where possible and making improvements to both the Ledbetter curve on US129 and the Brady curve on US19/74/129. Corridor K would have a negative impact on our economy through tourism. It would also have a huge environmental impact for example, on our water resources for years to come. I am a citizen of Graham County, NC.

Petition signed by 77 residents. This feedback is captured under the tally "Oppose T-1".

PETITION TO STOP FURTHER STUDY OF CORRIDOR K – SCENARIO T-1

We the undersigned oppose "Scenario T-1" of the proposed Corridor K project. It should not be carried forward for further study. "Scenario T-1" would devastate Tallulah by seizing and destroying residential and commercial property, doing irrevocable damage, and changing the dynamic of this community forever.

Change.org petition signed by 47 individuals (18 residents, 29 individuals outside area). This feedback is captured under the tally "Oppose T-1".

change.org

Recipient: NCDOT Highway Division 14

Letter: Greetings,

STOP further study of Corridor K - Scenario T-1. It should not be carried forward for further study.

Wrong way for highway

My family has called Graham County home since the late 1800s. My parents' house sits on land that has been in our family for over five generations. A lot of families in the area have similar histories. Now, the NCDOT and their consultants are proposing to seize and destroy the homes and property of many, many families in Tallulah, including my parents and their neighbors, as part of the T-1 Alignment of the Corridor K highway project.

This is the wrong way for a highway. There are other, better, alternatives that would more effectively and efficiently satisfy

the transportation and economic development needs of Graham County.

One of the talking points you will hear from the NCDOT, their consultants, and your elected officials is that a new highway will drive economic development and be good for the county. Really? The NCDOT's own project assessment report states there are "many questions about whether the expectation of economic benefits from the road are realistic".

Economic development in Graham County isn't going to come in the form of a manufacturing plant or new businesses moving in because a road was built – that's not going to happen.

The fact is, the industry that drives the economy of this region is tourism

from people coming here to experience the natural areas unique to this part of the country. Recognizing this, the NCDOT report also states concern that "the project will seriously impact very valuable natural areas which are important to the economy and ecology of the local area".

The flawed decision making being demonstrated by the NCDOT and their consultants makes you question whether or not they read their own report before charging down this path.

In addition to the devastating impact of the project itself, if this highway is completed the NCDOT plans to re-route all of the commercial traffic out of the Nantahala Gorge and through Robbinsville. How is that going to benefit this

county? Think about all those semi trucks rumbolling through and the effect that will have on the area. Do you want that in your community?

Please, I am asking you to look into what the NCDOT and their consultants are trying to push on this county. Roads need improvements, but that can be done without destroying communities.

If, like me, you think there are better solutions ... speak up! Make the NCDOT focus on alternatives that won't cause neighbors, friends, and family to lose their homes and land or have drastic, negative impacts on valuable and irreplaceable natural areas.

Your voice matters and it will make a difference.

Aaron Nichols



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Proposed Corridor K Improvements

STIP Project No. A-0009

Spring 2019

The Corridor K project team received 144 comment sheets, emails, and online forms and two petitions during the 30-day comment period following the February 2019 public meetings held in Robbinsville and Andrews. In total, 494 subject-specific comments were contained in the feedback provided by the public. Since the public meetings, the project team has reviewed all comments and met with local officials, transportation agency leadership, US Forest Service, US Army Corps of Engineers, and NC Department of Environmental Quality staff to discuss next steps in consideration of public feedback.

These frequently asked questions (FAQs) were developed to serve as responses to public comments. Comments generally fell within a range of subjects (for example, stating support or opposition to a specific scenario, concerns about impacts, etc.) As such, these FAQs address comments by subject and start with the subjects that received the most comments.

1. What is the status of Scenarios T-1 and T-4?

The public comments contained concerns related to residential relocations and environmental impacts, including habitat fragmentation and impacts to water resources. Given the large amount of public opposition to T-1 and support for improving existing roadways between Robbinsville and Andrews, it was determined that Scenarios T-1 and T4 would not be studied further as part of this project.

2. What scenarios will be evaluated moving forward?

The project team is currently evaluating a potential new scenario in the Stecoah area that was suggested during the public comment period. The team is also evaluating improving the existing roadway and the Scenarios R-1, S-2, and S-6 in the Robbinsville to Stecoah area that were presented during the public outreach.

The team may modify these corridors depending on the result of the on-going environmental and engineering evaluations. Modifications would be influenced by things such as impacts to the human and natural environment and addressing the project's transportation needs and purpose.

3. What is being done to minimize property impacts?

A large number of comments expressed concern over property impacts associated with T-1 with others expressing concern over S-2, S-6, or general concerns about impacts to businesses and homes. As noted in FAQ #1, T-1 will not be studied further as part of this project. With regard to the remaining scenarios, these options will be developed during the detailed study process to avoid and minimize impacts to existing development. The study corridors are wider than what would be the actual footprint of the roadway. They are set that way so the roadway alignments can be adjusted to avoid or minimize impacts to existing residences, businesses, natural resources, and cultural resources.

4. What is being done to address environmental concerns?

As noted in FAQ #1, new location options T-1 and T-4 will not be studied further as part of this project.

In the upcoming weeks, field biologists, geologists, engineers, architectural historians, and archaeologists will be starting field surveys along existing roadways and within the study corridors for R-1, S-2, and S-6. If design studies find that the potential scenario suggested for the Stecoah area can meet design standards and satisfy the project's purpose (FAQ #2), field surveys will also be conducted for this new scenario. Once field surveys are complete, the alignments for each scenario will be refined to avoid and minimize impacts to environmental resources. Other measures, such as retaining walls and slope adjustments will be evaluated to reduce impacts.

Stream and wetland impacts are also being surveyed and delineated. After stream and wetland impacts are avoided and minimized to the maximum extent practicable, any remaining impacts to the Waters of the U.S. will be addressed through compensatory mitigation measures.

Evaluations, such as visual and noise studies, and design studies will also be done to assess potential impacts to the Appalachian Trail (AT) and to identify ways to avoid or minimize those impacts. These studies will be done in cooperation with National Parks Service, the US Forest Service and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.

5. Why are there land surveyors in the area?

Over the past few months, surveyors have been field-verifying aerial mapping so the project team can have accurate information on the location of homes, businesses, and utilities, and other human-built features. This work is being done for the existing roadway corridor, S-2, and S-6. **** If there are cemeteries, wells, or any other features you feel the project team should be aware of, please contact us. Sites of a sensitive nature will not be made available to the public.**

6. What is the purpose of the project?

The project's purpose is to address the physical and mobility needs of residents and those traveling through the area. Physical needs are related to the limited roadway options in Graham and Cherokee Counties and how reliability can be affected by any type of blockage or disruption such as winter weather, fog, washouts, landslides, fallen trees, traffic incidents, vehicle breakdowns, or slow-moving vehicles. Such situations adversely affect travel time as travelers must wait or back-track. Steep grades, narrow lane widths, and sharp curves on U.S. 129, N.C. 143, and N.C. 28 affect travel speed and opportunities to pass slower vehicles.

The preliminary purpose and need statement is as follows: "The proposed project purpose is to provide the transportation infrastructure necessary for the well-being of local residents and regional traffic by improving vehicular travel time, reliability, and safety between the existing four-lane section on NC 28 at Stecoah and the existing four-lane section on US 74 east of Andrew; providing an average travel speed of 50 mph, consistent with the Appalachian Development Highway System criteria, and in a manner that is sensitive to the natural environment."

The preliminary purpose and need statement will be refined and finalized as the project's scope and programming is confirmed.

7. Will Corridor K be a four-lane project?

The number and type of lanes will be determined by the results of traffic studies. There may be areas where more than two lanes are needed for passing lanes, climbing lanes, or dedicated turn lanes, but the project is not envisioned as a four-lane roadway, as in past studies. The goal of the project is to find a 'right-size' design that can best address needs (noted in FAQ #6) while minimizing impacts. The project team is currently collecting traffic counts that will help shape the design elements of each of the scenarios being studied.

8. How is the project being funded?

The project is federally-funded through the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and dedicated to the Appalachian Development Highway System (ADHS). Additional federal funding may be available by competing for national discretionary grants such as BUILD and INFRA.

9. What are the next steps for the project?

The project team is beginning detailed studies as part of the environmental review process. Field surveys are being conducted this spring and summer for existing NC 28 and NC 143 and within the R-1, S-2, and S-6 study corridors. These surveys will catalog the location of buildings and utilities, streams, wetlands, rare and protected species habitat, historic structures, and archaeological sites. Traffic studies are also under development and other technical studies such as a 'community impact assessment' and 'indirect and cumulative effects assessment' will be developed. A noise analysis and a visual impact analysis will be conducted as well as other impacts assessed for the Appalachian Trail. The design of the scenarios will be refined based on field surveys and the results of the technical studies. A draft NEPA document will be completed in the fall and the final NEPA document will be completed by the end of 2019. Call the project team or visit the project website: <https://www.ncdot.gov/projects/corridor-k/> for updates!

Who should I contact if I have a question?

Questions and comments can be sent to:

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