The following is a summary of comments received by the Project Team members during and after Public Meeting #2 with responses from the Project Team.

**PROJECT IMPACTS**

1. **Where would the utility poles be located on private property along the project area? (4 citizens)**

   Response – The utility poles would be moved approximately 5 feet to 20 feet further away from the current edge of pavement, depending on the alternative and current pole location.

2. **What is the plan for the powerlines? (4 citizens)**

   Response – If utility poles cannot be avoided by revising the design or by adding guardrail protection, they would have to be relocated approximately 20 feet to 30 feet outside of the proposed edge of travel. Upon selection of the preferred alternative, utility pole locations will be coordinated with the utility owners during final design.

3. **Will the noise from the proposed bridge be analyzed? (4 citizens)**

   Response – Based on the NCDOT Traffic Noise Policy, agreed to by the Federal Highway Administration, this project is anticipated to cause minimal noise impacts which will not require a noise analysis.

4. **How are the widths of right-of-way determined? Why are right-of-way impacts different at different points along the project? Can right-of-way impacts be reduced for residential properties? (5 citizens)**

   Response – The range in the widths of the right-of-way for a project are based on the NCDOT Design Manual. Once the range is determined and the design has begun, construction limits of the road are used to determine where right-of-way or easements should be provided. For this project, a minimum of 10 feet outside of the construction limits is shown. After the preferred alternative is selected and design is refined, opportunities to minimize property impacts, wetland impacts, and other environmental impacts will be made.

5. **How will the headlights of vehicles traveling on the bridge be prevented from shining into nearby residences’ windows? (4 citizens)**

   Response – For the proposed bridge, the barrier height will be 2.5 feet and should prevent vehicle headlights from illuminating nearby residences, as typical headlight height for a passenger vehicle is 2 feet above the ground.
6. How will the drainage be managed on our properties? (2 citizens)

Response – Drainage design details will be addressed once a preferred alternative is selected and the project moves into the design phase.

7. Will the archeological study be redone for the land in the northeast quadrant of the study area due to the alignments of Alternatives 4 and 5? (1 citizen)

Response – No additional archeological study will be done for the project as the area evaluated in the report includes the area in which Alternatives 4 and 5 are located. Avoidance of the archeological site present in the northeast quadrant of the project study area will be considered during the final design phase, after the Preferred Alternative is selected.

8. How will impacts to the oyster beds and trout fishing in the project study area be considered? What will happen to the characteristics of the waterway? (6 citizens)

Response – NCDOT and the environmental agencies will coordinate throughout the project development process to avoid and minimize impacts to these resources.

9. When will the effect on the sea turtles be resolved? If this makes a difference to any of the alternatives how will this information be disseminated and used in selecting the alternative? (1 citizen)

Response – It is anticipated that the impacts to the sea turtles will be determined after an alternative is selected, as that is the typical process for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Protected Resources Division. This project will comply with any applicable laws regarding protected species.

BRIDGE CLEARANCE

10. Has the U.S. Coast Guard approved the proposed bridge height? Why was 45 feet vertical navigational clearance (VNC) determined to be sufficient for the project? There are large fishing trawlers and vessels with cabins coming from Morehead City that would not fit under the 45-foot VNC. (4 citizens)

Response – The Navigation Impact Report (NIR), submitted to the U.S. Coast Guard in December 2016, documented the marine travel in the area, including information from the vessel height survey. The vessel height survey results concluded that the proposed bridge would not impact the safe and efficient navigation of 99.9% of the vessel traffic observed. Only one vessel observed (0.1%), out of 1,765 vessels, was measured to be over 45 feet in height and would be unable to travel under the proposed bridge without adjustment. Interviews with local mariners and area marine facilities confirmed these conclusions.

Based on the information provided in the NIR and comments received by the public, the U.S. Coast Guard issued a Preliminary Navigational Clearance Determination (PNCD) on March 24, 2017 for a minimum vertical navigational clearance (VNC) of 45 feet and a minimum horizontal navigational clearance (HNC)
of 125 feet for the proposed replacement structure. A final navigational clearance determination will be made after NCDOT submits a complete bridge permit application to the U.S. Coast Guard after final design.

11. What will happen if a large vessel hits the proposed bridge? (1 citizen)

Response – As the bridge will be built to accommodate the size of vessels traveling through the Straits waterway, it is not anticipated that the bridge would be hit. If a vessel accidentally hits the bridge, emergency repairs would be handled as quickly as possible.

12. Can existing Bridge No. 96 be removed so that vessels can travel beneath that portion of the proposed bridge as well? (1 citizen)

Response – For Alternatives 2 and 3, existing Bridge No. 96 would be removed but replaced with a bridge of similar height. For Alternatives 4 and 5, existing Bridge No. 96 would remain in place and be taken over by Carteret County as a pedestrian-only bridge.

SAFETY/MAINTENANCE

13. What wind speeds will require the bridge to be closed? (2 citizens)

Response – Bridge closure due to high winds is determined by the local law enforcement authority. Typically, other bridges in the area are closed when wind speeds exceed 45 miles per hour.

14. How will speeding be addressed for the new bridge? Can the speed limit be lowered in the area? There is a concern that the proposed bridge height will encourage speeding and be a safety issue for other vehicles and pedestrians. Will law enforcement provide more consistent monitoring of the bridge to ensure safe driving? (5 citizens)

Response – The proposed bridge(s) are being designed for a posted 45 mile per hour speed limit based on NCDOT design standards, which is consistent with the current speed limit on the existing bridges. Concerns regarding the speed limit or any speed limit reduction requests may be made to NCDOT’s Division 2 Traffic Engineer, Steven Hamilton, PE (252-439-2800 and shamilton@ncdot.gov).

NCDOT does not regulate state or local law enforcement. It is recommended that any concerns and requests for increased law enforcement presence be voiced to the State Highway Patrol and/or the Carteret County Sheriff’s Office.

15. Adding a parking lot to the center fishing island for Alternatives 2 and 3 could cause traffic accidents. How will the possibility of traffic accidents with other vehicles and pedestrians be avoided? (2 citizens)

Response – The proposed parking area for Alternatives 2 and 3 would be designed to meet the standards for sight distance, to allow drivers to see vehicles and pedestrians entering/exiting the parking lot.
16. What entity will ensure public safety and prevent the public areas from being gathering places for drug dealers/users/partiers? (2 citizens)

Response – It is recommended that any concerns and requests for increased law enforcement presence be voiced to the Carteret County Sheriff’s Office.

17. If Bridge No. 96 is kept with Alternative 5, how easily can medical or police units access the center island in the case of an accident or criminal behavior? (1 citizen)

Response – The existing Bridge No. 96 entrance from the mainland would be retrofitted with a barrier to prevent vehicles from entering, ensuring its use by pedestrians only. The barrier will be designed so that law enforcement or Emergency Medical Services can lower it in case of emergency.

18. Currently the roads from Beaufort to Straits flood during storms. What can be done about this? (1 citizen)

Response – A detailed hydraulic analysis will be conducted during final design for the project study area. Any roadway drainage issues outside of the study area should be directed to NCDOT Carteret County Maintenance (252-223-4811).

19. Can the slope along the north side of Sparks Road be reinforced due to erosion? The road is prone to washing out. (3 citizens)

Response – This improvement will be considered by the Project Team during the design phase.

20. Why have repairs been made recently to Bridge No. 96 if it will just become a pedestrian-only bridge? (2 citizens)

Response – The recent repairs on Bridge No. 96 were done to sustain vehicle traffic until the replacement can be made as part of this project. These repairs make the bridge sufficient for long term pedestrian use rather than vehicular.

21. What is being done about the large hole on the shoulder of Island Road on the southeast side of Bridge No. 73? The emergency repairs that have been made by NCDOT are continually being washed out. (3 citizens)

Response – The Project Team has shared these concerns with NCDOT Carteret County Maintenance. Additional questions or concerns should be directed to NCDOT Carteret County Maintenance (252-223-4811).

22. Why are the splash zone impacts classified as “high” in the handout for Alternatives 2 and 3? How was that determination made? (1 citizen)

Response – The term ‘splash zone’ refers to the region above the spring high-tide level that receives wave splash. For the Harkers Island Bridges, the splash zone extends up to 14 feet above mean high water. The effect of the water in the splash zone causes the bridge structure to face constant wetting and drying as the tide levels change, damaging the structure of the bridge.

Alternatives 2 and 3 result in high splash zone concerns because the lower level bridge replacing existing Bridge No. 96 will still lie within the splash zone, with its highest point approximately 12 feet above mean
high water. Alternatives 4 and 5 have lower splash zone concerns because neither alternative touches down on the center island, thus allowing for the bridges to be designed to be higher than 14 feet above mean high water, and avoiding the splash zone. All bridges would be in the splash zone at the tie-in points on either end of the bridge(s) as that is unavoidable.

23. What entity will be responsible for maintaining center fishing island for trash pickup, mowing the grass, etc. if the fishing pier remains in place? (1 citizen)

Response – Maintenance responsibilities for the center fishing island would remain the same as they are today – shared by NCDOT and Carteret County.

COST/CONSTRUCTION

24. What is the cost of future upkeep of the new bridge? Alternatives 4 and 5 cost approximately $2 Million to $4 Million more than Alternatives 2 and 3. Could this difference in cost go towards addressing any repairs needed due to splashing on the bridge(s)? What will the future cost of maintaining the existing Bridge No. 96 be if Alternative 4 or 5 were selected? (4 citizens)

Response – The specific maintenance costs of each of the four alternatives have not been determined, however the future upkeep for the fixed span bridges will be minimal in comparison to the moveable span bridge currently in place. In addition, it is anticipated that the long term maintenance costs of Alternatives 2 or 3 would be higher than that for Alternatives 4 or 5 due to the splash zone impacts. The long term maintenance costs for Alternatives 2 or 3 are expected to exceed the difference in construction cost from Alternatives 4 or 5.

If Bridge No 96 is kept in place with Alternatives 4 or 5, the maintenance costs would be relatively low to keep it pedestrian-only and would be the responsibility of Carteret County.

25. How will our taxes be affected by this project? (5 citizens)

Response – The Harkers Island Bridge Replacements Project is part of the 2016-2025 NCDOT State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) list of currently funded projects. This means that the monies required for the project have already been allocated to NCDOT for planning, design, and construction of this project. No additional taxes or fees will be required to fund this project.

Maintenance of Bridge No. 96, should it remain in-place, would be the responsibility of Carteret County. Whether or not taxes would increase due to the maintenance of Bridge No. 96 would be determined by Carteret County. Please contact the Carteret County officials or staff (252-728-8485).

26. Can the County guarantee to provide funding to maintain the safety, civil peace, and landscaping in regards to the center island if Alternative 5 is chosen? Will a plan and supporting funds documentation be presented and approved by County residents? (1 citizen)

Response – Please direct these questions to the Carteret County officials or staff (252-728-8485).
27. Is there an identified construction staging area? If so, how long will the area be required/used? (1 citizen)

Response – Construction staging areas have not yet been identified. Typically, the contractor will coordinate directly with a property owner regarding location and duration if private property is to be used.

PUBLIC RECREATION/PARKING

28. What maintenance would be needed to maintain Bridge No. 96 – as pedestrian-only or for vehicular use? (3 citizens)

Response – If Bridge No. 96 is kept in place, Carteret County will take over ownership and maintenance. Based on discussions with County officials, it is being considered for pedestrian-use only.

29. Why is Bridge No. 96 proposed to be pedestrian-only? Will any type of motorized vehicle, such as golf carts, be allowed on the pedestrian-only bridge? Would parking be provided on the center fishing island? How will those with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility issues and the elderly be able to easily use the fishing pier? (6 citizens)

Response – If Bridge No. 96 is kept in place, vehicular traffic would not be allowed other than emergency vehicles. If vehicles were allowed on Bridge No. 96, additional bridge maintenance and inspection requirements (National Bridge Inspection Standards) would need to be met, more so than if the bridge is kept as pedestrian-only. No parking would be provided on the center fishing island. NCDOT will work with Carteret County to ensure the facility is made ADA compliant.

30. If Bridge No. 96 is pedestrian-only, will people be able to fish off of the existing bridge? (2 citizens)

Response – It is not known at this time whether fishing would be allowed directly from Bridge No. 96 if it is kept in place.

31. Why would Bridge No. 96 ownership change from the State to the County? It should remain State owned, but managed by NC Fish & Wildlife. (1 citizen)

Response – As Bridge No. 96 would be used to provide access to the Carteret County owned fishing pier, the County would be responsible for maintenance of the bridge. Since NCDOT would no longer maintain the bridge, and it would not be used by vehicular traffic, the ownership would be transferred to Carteret County.

32. Can Bridge No. 96 be salvaged as a vehicle accessible bridge if Flex Seal was used to reduce erosion? (1 citizen)

Response – The recent repairs on Bridge No. 96 were done to sustain vehicle traffic until the replacement can be made as part of this project. Repairs to Bridge No. 96 will not meet the purpose and need of this project. If Carteret County takes ownership of the bridge, then the County can determine if products like Flex Seal might be used.
33. If Alternative 5 is selected, can Bridge No. 96 be used as an area park? (1 citizen)
Response – Please direct this question to the Carteret County officials or staff (252-728-8485).

34. What will be done to reduce/eliminate parking on the shoulders? What will be done to deter public recreational facility users from using private property for parking? (6 citizens)
Response – Guardrail will be provided on either end of the bridge(s) and signing can be installed to deter parking along the shoulders of the roadway.

35. Has a solution been created for the parking issue? Parking issues exist for all three community features and could increase with Alternative 4 and 5 eliminating parking on the center fishing island. Can additional parking be provided at the boat ramp area? (26 citizens)
Response – The Project Team is aware of this issue and is investigating potential solutions.

36. Can a safe walkway be provided along the bridge(s)? (1 citizen)
Response – The proposed bridge(s) would have 4-foot wide shoulders on both sides which would allow for pedestrians and bicyclists along the bridge(s).

37. Can the fishing pier be relocated to the northwest side of the center fishing island? The current location is not good due to shallow waters. Instead of frequently repairing the fishing pier, it should be relocated. Can a new fishing pier be placed on the Mainland? What about relocating the fishing pier to the Cape Lookout National Seashore Visitor Center area on the east side of the island? (6 citizens)
Response – Relocation options for the fishing pier are being evaluated by the Project Team. However, the endangered species (sea turtles) in the study area are under the jurisdiction of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). NOAA may not support the construction of any new fishing structures due to potential impacts to these endangered species (see list of species in the Public Meeting #2 Handout). Data regarding sea turtles and fishing interaction in the area is currently being gathered.

38. Can the Public Beach Access Area be expanded? (1 citizen)
Response – Please direct this question to the Carteret County officials or staff (252-728-8485).

OTHER IDEAS/QUESTIONS

39. It seems that Alternative 5 is farther to the east than it needs to be if the intent was to avoid impact on the fishing pier. Have other options, not as far to the east, been researched? (1 citizen)
Response – Alternative 5 was developed to avoid the fishing pier, avoid the utility poles in the Straits waterway, and ease constructability by providing more separation between the existing and proposed bridges. Options located horizontally between Alternatives 4 and 5 would impact the fishing pier and utility poles in the water either during construction or permanently.
40. Can Alternative 1 be reassessed to avoid impacts to individual property? (1 citizen)

Response – In June 2016, the Project Team agreed to eliminate Alternative 1 from further study. Alternative 1 was eliminated due to low public support, low agency support, higher community resource impacts, and higher natural environmental resource impacts than the other alternatives.

41. Why isn’t a bridge being built from Harkers Island straight to Beaufort? (2 citizens)

Response – A bridge directly from Harkers Island to Beaufort has not been identified as a need at the local or state level. The project would need to be prioritized for potential inclusion in the State Transportation Improvement Program and funding secured. A bridge of this length (at least 2 miles) would be difficult to prove cost effective.

42. How will the naming of the new bridge be decided? How can we provide our input? (2 citizens)

Response – Bridge naming requests can be completed and submitted to the NCDOT staff contact in the Chief Engineer’s Office. The Road, Bridge or Ferry Naming Request Policy lists contact information and the process by which infrastructure naming occurs.