



I-77 South Express Lanes

Fall 2025 Public Meeting Comment Summary

General Responses

- **Opposition to highway expansion, suggesting that added capacity will not alleviate congestion, but rather induce travel demand and cause more congestion**

This section of the I-77 corridor was last widened in the 1990s, from four to six lanes. Since then, travel demand on I-77 in the project area has continued to increase. As of 2024, more than 160,000 vehicles per day use I-77 between the South Carolina state line and I-277/N.C. 16 (Brookshire Freeway), and traffic projections indicate congestion will continue to increase.

The primary needs identified for the I-77 South Express Lanes project include:

- **Existing and Future No-Build Traffic Conditions** – No-build volumes are estimated to increase by 14 to 52 percent for segments of I-77 in the study area by 2050, which will further degrade traffic operations and reduce the level of service (LOS). LOS is a measure of roadway performance that reflects traffic flow quality, similar to a report card, and is typically rated from A to F. An “A” grade means free-flowing traffic with little to no delay, while an “F” grade indicates severe congestion, long delays, and stop-and-go conditions.
- **Poor Existing and Projected Traffic Operations** – Seven of 13 segments along I-77 currently operate at or above capacity (LOS E or F) for at least one hour of the day with segments north of Clanton Road operating at this point for 11 hours of the day. The total time spent at or above capacity is expected to increase substantially by 2050.
- **Lack of Travel Time Reliability** – Trips along I-77 through the project area typically take at least twice as long as they should when compared to free-flow conditions and over five times longer during peak hours.
- **Inability to Serve High-Speed Regional Travel** – Congestion on I-77 inhibits regional travel and diminishes the ability of I-77 to function as part of a larger system of designated freight and commerce routes.
- **Existing Crash Data** – Five-year crash data from 2017 to 2022 indicates a crash rate along I-77 in the project area that is two and a half times greater than the statewide crash rate for similar roadways.

The I-77 South Express Lanes project offers solutions that could help address these needs, including the following:

- Manage congestion by adding express lanes, consistent with recommendations from the Charlotte Region **Fast Lanes Study** (July 2013) and the Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization's (CRTPO) long-range transportation plan.
- Express lanes provide an option for reliable travel time along I-77 from the North Carolina/South Carolina State Line to I-277 (Brookshire Freeway) and offer NCDOT the flexibility to manage operations of the corridor long-term.
- Improve traffic operations by increasing travel speed and increasing throughput along I-77 from the North Carolina/South Carolina State Line to I-277 (Brookshire Freeway)
- Reduce congestion-related crashes.
- Support planned economic growth.
- Encourage transit usage to promote mode shift and improve air quality.
- Transit vehicles and High Occupancy Vehicles with three or more passengers (HOV 3+) will use the express lanes for free, guaranteeing these travel modes a reliable travel time which influences future travel choices and over time promotes transit and carpooling options that would decrease the number of single driver vehicles.

Induced demand – the idea that increasing roadway capacity encourages more people to drive, thus failing to improve congestion – has been extensively studied; however, there is also research/arguments that the effects of induced demand are overstated or outweighed by the benefits of adding capacity. There are many factors that contribute to induced demand (such as local economic and demographic conditions, the quality and availability of alternative transportation options, and the individual decision-making processes of those who may or may not decide to use the facility). Introducing express lanes to the discussion also changes the outcome because one of the main reasons for express lanes is to provide a reliable travel time by monitoring capacity in the lanes and adjusting the cost for using the lanes to ensure traffic continues to flow – for I-77 South Express Lanes, pricing will be adjusted to maintain a minimum speed of 45 miles per hour in the express lanes.

Express lanes offer a long-term, sustainable solution to issues including rising travel demand and growing rush-hour congestion by providing travel time savings and trip reliability for those driving in the express lanes.

- **Concerns about tolls/express lanes being unaffordable, ineffective, and contributing to inequality**

Express lanes have been implemented in 14 states and over 20 cities across the U.S., including in Charlotte, because they are a sustainable, long-term solution to managing congestion and providing a reliable travel time. Express lanes on I-77 and other facilities in the Charlotte region (including I-485 and U.S. 74/Independence Boulevard) were introduced as part of the Fast Lanes Study in 2007.

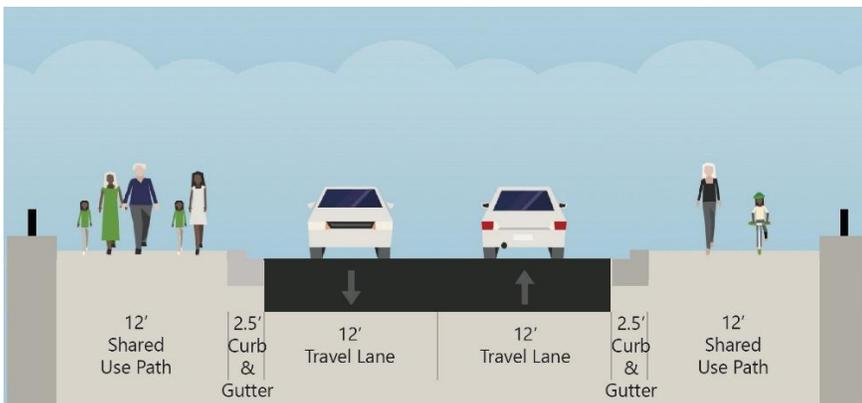
In densely populated urban corridors, adding general-purpose lanes offers only temporary relief. Express lanes, using a pricing system that adjusts based on real-time congestion, provide continuous traffic flow and a predictable travel experience in the express lanes. This offers NCDOT the flexibility to manage operations of the corridor long-term. Drivers still have the option to use the existing, non-tolled general-

purpose lanes. Additionally, every vehicle in the express lanes is one less vehicle adding to the congestion in the general-purpose lanes.

Given funding constraints, NCDOT is pursuing a Public-Private Partnership (P3) to deliver the project, which takes advantage of private funds to deliver the project at a lower public cost. For the I-77 South Express Lanes project, a CRTPO working group was formed and developed the following recommendations related to the P3 delivery:

- Optimize utilization of express lanes and general-purpose lanes with toll rate caps: For the I-77 South Express Lanes, toll rate caps will be established to make sure there is more throughput and higher speeds are maintained along the corridor.
- Encourage a competitive procurement process: This will allow NCDOT to incorporate items discussed with communities along the corridor into the terms of the public private partnership contract.
- Provide benefits to transit: CATS buses and HOV 3+ carpool vehicles will use the express lanes for free, and a low-income resident program will be implemented, meaning transit users and low-income households will benefit from the travel time reliability offered by the express lanes.

The I-77 South Express Lanes project also includes enhancements to bicycle and pedestrian facilities at interchanges and on non-interchange bridges where improvements are proposed, which will promote and benefit users of alternative transportation modes.



The image to the left displays an example of bicycle and pedestrian enhancements that could be included on bridges that cross the I-77 corridor within the project limits.

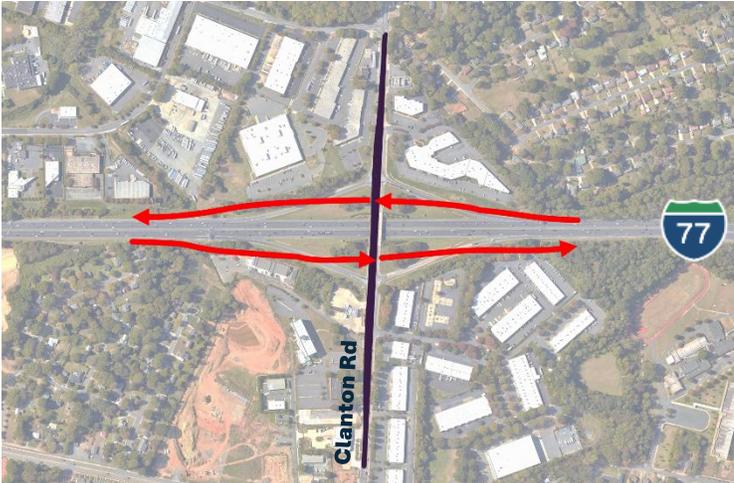
- **Community impact and displacement, repeating the history of past urban renewal projects, such as in Uptown-adjacent neighborhoods**

NCDOT strives to deliver transportation projects that balance the need to provide safe and reliable travel solutions within the context and needs of the local community. Through the project development process, a comprehensive environmental assessment is conducted in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) which provides a framework for integrating environmental and community considerations into project decision making. Through this process, the project team is

analyzing potential impacts and taking measures to avoid and minimize those impacts to the natural and human environment. The project team will work with the community to develop appropriate mitigation measures to address impacts that may be unavoidable through this process. (More information regarding NEPA can be found [here](#).)

Between January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025, NCDOT conducted public engagement above and beyond what is required by NEPA, meeting with over 25 neighborhood and business groups, reaching over 800 people. Additionally, two public meetings were held on November 12 and 13, 2025, attended by more than 600 people. There is also a project website (<https://www.ncdot.gov/projects/i-77-south-express-lanes>), email (i-77south@ncdot.gov), and hotline (1-800-254-0498 and 1-800-481-6494 for non-English speakers) where comments can be submitted for consideration. As the project team continues to meet with communities, NCDOT will continue to listen. Updates to public engagement efforts and options to sign up to receive project information are included on the **I-77 South Express Lanes website**.

The I-77 South Express Lanes project is in the preliminary design phase, meaning the impacts shown do not necessarily reflect what will be included in the final design. Based on the comments received from public engagement activities and due to the complexity and sensitivity of resources in the project area, NCDOT has and will continue efforts to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts.



The Clanton Road interchange is an example of a redesigned interchange with a reduced footprint to avoid impacts, referred to as a tight urban diamond interchange. The design also includes bicycle and pedestrian enhancements along Clanton Road.

-  New ramp alignment
-  Clanton Road new bridge

- **Loss of green spaces and parks, such as Frazier Park, cemeteries, and greenways**

NCDOT recognizes the importance of greens spaces, parks, and other community amenities. Throughout the development of the project, a thorough assessment of community resources, including parks, greenways, and cemeteries has been conducted. Additionally, there has been extensive coordination with the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County to design the I-77 South

Express Lanes with consideration of City and County initiatives near the corridor (such as the Reconnecting the West End initiative and planned greenways, including along Irwin Creek).

An elevated express lanes option is being considered through the Uptown Charlotte area. By elevating the express lanes, the freeway footprint will remain narrower in this portion of the project corridor to minimize impacts on either side of I-77.

Engineering experts looked at a potential tunnel option in 2024 and found that the cost of a tunnel is too expensive to build and maintain and has more construction risks. NCDOT reviewed and compared other major tunnel projects such as the Big Dig (Boston) and Alaskan Way (Seattle). Based on those comparisons, relocating I-77 underground would cost billions of dollars per mile (10-20 times NCDOT's annual capital budget). Additionally, maintenance costs would be more than \$50 million per year (nearly all NCDOT Division 10's annual maintenance fund). Relocating I-77 underground could also take several decades to complete. The eight-mile Big Dig tunnel took nearly 16 years to complete and the Alaskan Way tunnel, completed in 2019 and just under two miles long, took six years to complete.

Through the ongoing environmental assessment, the design alternatives will be refined as public comments are addressed. An alternatives analysis is being conducted to analyze and document the impacts of each alternative, which will be included as part of the environmental documentation.

- **Environmental and health concerns related to noise and air quality, along with proposed mitigation measures**

The environmental analysis for this project includes a noise traffic analysis to identify potential noise impacts associated with the design alternatives. Results of the analysis will be available when completed. In addition, a more detailed noise analysis will be completed during project final design. Mitigation measures, such as noise barriers, will be considered and presented as appropriate depending on the noise analysis findings.

An air quality analysis, including greenhouse gas analysis, is also being performed, which will be documented in a project-level air quality report. The report will be available when completed and air quality mitigation measures will be considered and presented as appropriate depending on the results of this analysis.

Potential impacts to landscaping and vegetation will also be evaluated as part of the environmental assessment and mitigation measures will be considered and presented as appropriate based on the results.

- **Preference for public transit, bicycle, and pedestrian transportation modes**

I-77 is a major interstate that crosses through several states, includes a significant amount of freight traffic, and is intended to move a large volume of vehicles. The I-77 corridor is also important for regional and local mobility. The I-77 South Express Lanes project does not preclude transit or other modes. There has been extensive coordination with CRTPO, CATS, City of Charlotte, and

Mecklenburg County throughout the development of this project to promote benefits to other transportation modes. Part of the purpose and need for the project is to encourage transit usage to promote mode shift and improve air quality.

One of the recommendations of the CRTPO working group is that CATS buses and HOV 3+ carpool vehicles use the express lanes for free to take advantage of the travel time reliability benefit of the project. The design alternatives also accommodate future transit infrastructure included in the CATS 2055 Transit System Plan. Additionally, the LYNX Blue Line light rail began offering transit service parallel to the I-77 South Express Lanes project corridor in 2007. Since that time, there have been multiple expansions to this important transit rail service, including the extension of platforms to accommodate more passengers and expansion of service north of Uptown to the UNC Charlotte campus.

The Blue Line is heavily utilized and congestion on I-77 continues to increase. Replacing the anticipated interstate traffic volume on I-77 with other transportation modes (such as transit) is not a feasible solution as it will not serve all the needs of the interstate. New transit infrastructure also takes time to construct and has its own set of potential impacts. In addition, driving versus utilizing public transportation can be an individual choice and even if more transit options are offered, it does not guarantee a change in travel behavior. Commuting statistics for the region have consistently shown that the majority of people drive alone.

The I-77 South Express Lanes project also includes enhancements to the bicycle and pedestrian network on streets that cross the corridor. NCDOT has coordinated closely with the City of Charlotte to identify bicycle and pedestrian improvements to be included in the project design.

- **Equity and transparency to ensure meaningful engagement with affected communities**

The I-77 South Express Lanes were first introduced as part of the **Fast Lanes Study** in 2007. The study was adopted by the CRTPO Board in 2010 and included in the CRTPO's Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) in 2014. The CRTPO then submitted the project to NCDOT for inclusion in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The project has been in both the MTP and the STIP for more than 10 years. Both the MTP and STIP are public documents that include community engagement as they are being developed.

Additionally, the project was presented to the CRTPO Board numerous times. The CRTPO Board meetings are publicly advertised and allow for public comments to be made. A CRTPO Working Group was also formed and developed several recommendations for the I-77 South Express Lanes project, including increased transparency during all phases of the project.

Focused public engagement for the I-77 South Express Lanes began in late 2024 with the creation of a website (<https://www.ncdot.gov/projects/i-77-south-express-lanes>) and a series of more than **25 small group meetings** to neighborhood and business groups near the project corridor or with interest in the project were conducted, reaching over **800 people** (from January 2025 through October 2025).

March 2026

Two public meetings were held on November 12 and 13, 2025 in different areas of the project corridor (one near Uptown and the other off Arrowood Road) for which over **40,000 postcards** were sent, multiple media releases were issued, several radio and media interviews were conducted (in English and Spanish), and social media was utilized to reach over **75,000 people**. The meetings were well attended, with over **600 people** participating across both meetings. There are also a project website (<https://www.ncdot.gov/projects/i-77-south-express-lanes>), email (i-77south@ncdot.gov), and hotline (1-800-254-0498 and 1-800-481-6494 for non-English speakers) where comments can be submitted for consideration.

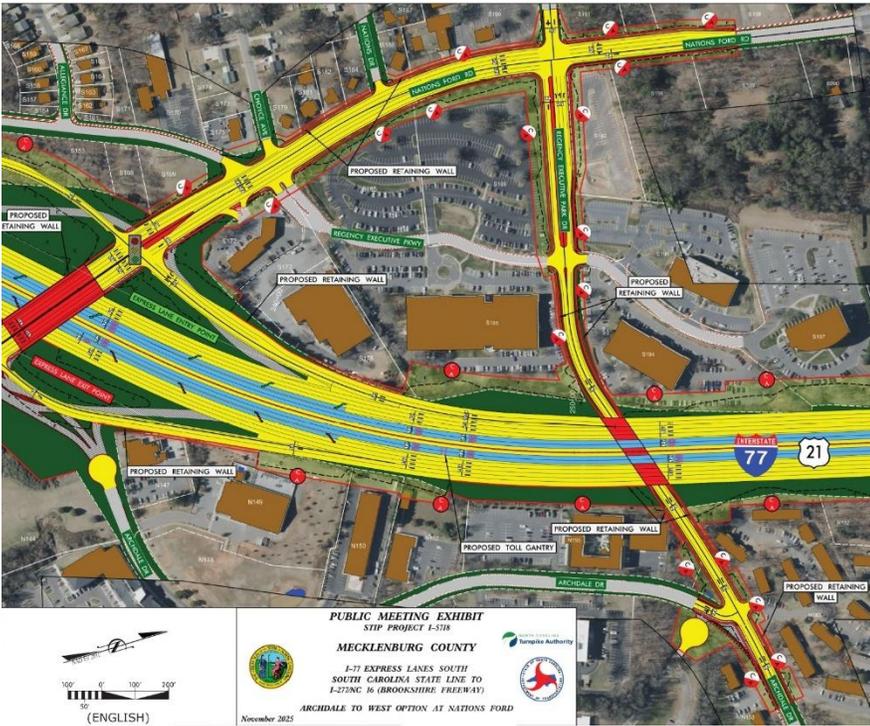
NCDOT has carried out significant stakeholder and community engagement for this project, recognizing the potential effects to local communities along the corridor. Additional community engagement opportunities will continue in 2026, and information will be communicated about how local communities can engage with the project team in a more focused setting, which is essential for informing NCDOT's understanding of potential impacts and to develop appropriate mitigation. This will include the establishment of a Community Engagement Center and recurring Office Hours (in-person and virtual). NCDOT will continue to engage with the public, provide project updates, and accept public input throughout the development of the project.

- **Connectivity and access**

NCDOT understands the importance of offering connectivity and access across the transportation network, to allow for travel choices. While the I-77 South Express Lanes project includes the addition of express lanes and improves interchanges and non-interchange bridges, it will also provide enhancements to other travel modes such as transit and the bicycle and pedestrian network.

As part of the interchange and bridge improvements, there are design features being considered to improve connectivity and access for local roads and multimodal facilities, including the following two examples:

- **Archdale Drive relocation to west option**
- Wilkinson Boulevard barrier separated multimodal connection, to allow a new connection for bicycles and pedestrians to cross I-77 in a designated space



One of the Archdale Drive relocation options being considered would include a new bridge over I-77, creating a new east-west connection across the corridor that did not previously exist.

Next Steps:

The designs presented are not final and the project team continues to coordinate with stakeholders and community members to address design concerns. Responses to individual comments are also being provided. Public engagement for this project is ongoing and future public meetings will be advertised and posted online, as was done for the November 2025 public meetings. In addition, a Community Engagement Center and recurring Office Hours (in-person and virtual) for 1-on-1 conversations with the project team will be established in Spring 2026.

Please visit the [project website](#) for more information, including how to contact the project team with any additional questions or concerns.