

**Public Comment Summary for the  
I-2513 (I-26 Asheville Connector) Interchange Improvements Project  
Public Meeting  
May 12, 2014**

**Background**

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) proposes the construction of a multilane freeway, partly on a new location (TIP Project Number I-2513), to connect I-26 from the I-26/I-40/I-240 interchange southwest of Asheville to US 19-23-70 north of Asheville. This new interstate will connect I-26 with I-81 south of Kingsport, Tennessee. The I-26 Asheville Connector (Project) is currently in the project development and environmental analysis phase.

**Public Meeting**

NCDOT hosted a public meeting for the Project on May 12, 2014 at the Renaissance Hotel in Asheville, NC. The Public Meeting had multiple purposes, primarily to request public input on the Project and alternatives for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), but also to introduce one new alternative and highlight changes made to other alternatives to avoid impacts to the Emma Road Community. Prior to the Public Meeting, project staff mailed newsletters to 4,265 residential and business addresses in the study area. The newsletter included information on the upcoming Public Meeting as well as a project map, which outlined new and modified Project alternatives.

Upon arriving at the Public Meeting, attendees were asked to sign in and were offered a newsletter – in English or Spanish – and given a comment sheet that included address information and a Project fact sheet. The public meeting format was designed as a drop-in open house without a formal presentation. Presentation materials included a looping slide presentation, a modified visualization “fly-over” of each of the three sections of the project, and detailed maps (measuring 12-15 feet each) which showed every property potentially affected by each of the alternatives. Project staff, including NCDOT engineers, noise specialists, right-of-way and consultant staff, were available to talk with public meeting participants.

According to Project public meeting documentation, 124 individuals formally signed in to the meeting, while an additional estimated 20 individuals did not sign in. From the approximately 144 attendees, 32 comment forms were submitted, five anonymous comments were submitted verbally to project staff, 16 email comments were received, and four letter/information pieces were submitted for a total of 57 submitted comments.

**Comment Summary**

The following comment summary outlines information gathered from the comment forms, emails, and hotline telephone calls received during the public comment period which occurred between May 12, 2014 and June 12, 2014.

Because most comment forms addressed more than one topic, these comments are recorded as multiple comments rather than being accounted for as a single comment. For example, a single comment sheet may contain comments on Project alignment, public involvement process, social impacts and proposed project modifications – resulting in four total comments rather than one. For the

purpose of accurately capturing and cataloging the comments, the 57 submitted comments were subcategorized into nine categories based on their content, thereby generating a total of 119 separate comments. These 119 comments were then subcategorized using the following categories. The number of comments attributed to each category, and subcategory, is noted below.

**Accommodations - 24**

Access - 3  
Bike/Ped - 10  
Connection - 4  
Multi-modal - 7  
Transit – 0

**Economic Impacts - 6**

Acquisition - 3  
Impacts on Business or Industry - 0  
Property Values - 1  
Regional Economy - 2  
Right-of-way - 0

**Environmental Impacts - 2**

Air Quality - 1  
River - 1  
Water Quality - 0  
Wetlands - 0  
Wildlife Habitat – 0

**Other Transportation Proposal - 3**

Growth Reduction Measures - 0  
Multi-modal - 0  
No Build - 3

**Proposed Project Modifications - 23**

Alignment - 1  
Bike/Ped - 0  
Bridge - 0  
Decrease Laneage - 9  
Increase Laneage - 1  
Local Roadway Connections – 4  
Multi-modal – 1  
Other Transportation Proposal – 3  
Realignment – 2  
Interchange Design – 2

**Proposes other Solution - 1**

Alignment - 1  
Bike/Ped - 0  
Transit – 0

**Social Impacts - 22**

Agency Coordination - 2  
Community Continuity - 1  
Displacements - 2  
Impacts on Neighborhood - 8  
Low-income/Minority - 0  
Noise and Vibration - 7  
Recreational Resources – 1  
Safety – 1

**Study Process - 28**

Agency Coordination - 0  
Consistency with Local Plan - 3  
Data Analysis - 2  
Local Input/Participation - 3  
NEPA - 6  
Public Involvement - 14

**Traffic Operations - 10**

Alternate Routes - 0  
Congestion - 1  
Local Roadway Network Operations - 9  
Signaling - 0

### Totals by Category

The following graph illustrates the distribution of comments attributed to the nine major categories contained in the database and provides an overview of the areas respondents most frequently identified in their comments. The graph shows that the majority of comments addressed a requested Accommodation (20%), followed by Proposed Project Modifications (19%), Social Impacts (18%) and Environmental Impacts (8%). Details on the comments within each of these categories are included in later portions of this report. (Study process was most commonly identified, but since this category includes Public Involvement, it also represents general comments about the public involvement process, requests to be added to the Project mailing list, and comments about the Project Website.)

