

I-26 Connector



NCDOT State Transportation Improvement Program Project No. I-2513

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) is aware of the concern in the Asheville community regarding the delays that the I-26 Connector project has experienced and would like to take this opportunity to explain where we are, what we are doing, and how we plan to select a preferred alternative.

Since the September 2008 public hearing, NCDOT has been reviewing and addressing the public comments received. That process is almost complete. The responses will be posted on the project Web site (<http://www.ncdot.gov/projects/I26Connector/>) in the post-public hearing minutes soon. Alternative 4B, which was shown at the hearing, is being included as a detailed study alternative for this project and will be considered on an equal basis when a preferred alternative is chosen.

The Federal Highway Administration requires an interchange modification report for all revisions to the interstate system, such as the I-26 Connector. This report looks beyond the project area to ensure the interstate and interchanges will operate properly when the project is constructed and into the future. For the purpose of this report the NCDOT is updating the traffic forecasts for the entire project.

While I-26 traffic volumes have remained relatively unchanged from previous projections, preliminary results of the traffic forecast show the traffic volumes for the crossing streets, ramps and auxiliary lanes are higher than previously projected. This could create congestion for local traffic if it is not resolved. In an effort to ensure the least impact to and avoid segmentation of local roadways and neighborhoods, careful study of the project's effect on local interchanges and traffic is currently under way.

NCDOT anticipates that design modifications may be needed for some of the alternatives. We are also looking at other design changes to reduce impacts to residences and businesses, including retaining walls in the Burton Street area. These updates will be included in the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS), which will also include alternative 4B.

Another public hearing will be held once the SDEIS is completed. All the project alternatives, including 4B, will be displayed. No decision will be made on a preferred alternative until after the public hearing and comment period. Comments received will all be considered in the selection of the preferred alternative.

All of this work has and will require an effort beyond what was originally anticipated. It is therefore necessary to revise the project schedule as shown on the front of this newsletter.



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I-26 CONNECTOR I-2513 PROJECT NEWSLETTER

Project Contact Information

Maps displaying all alternatives under consideration, a copy of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, and other project information may be viewed at the project website:

<http://www.ncdot.org/projects/I26Connector/>

or at the NCDOT Division 13 Office located at:

**55 Orange St.
 Asheville, NC 28801
 (828) 251-6171**

Mr. Vince Rhea, PE, NCDOT Project Engineer can also be contacted for additional information by email at vrhea@ncdot.gov, or by phone **919-733-7844 Ext. 261**

Revised Project Schedule

Supplemental DEIS *Spring 2010*
 SDEIS Public Hearing *Spring 2010*
 Preferred Alternative..... *Summer 2010*
 Final EIS*Early 2011*
 Record of Decision *Summer 2011*
 Begin Right of Way Acquisition..... *Fall 2012*
 Begin Construction *Fall 2014*

Toll Free Hotline:.....1-800-233-6315