

Public Involvement

The NCDOT has held numerous meetings with community leaders, local interest groups, business groups and the affected business owners and neighborhood groups since 1989. The purpose of these meetings has been to explain the project development process, to identify methods for reducing project impacts, and to assure conformance with future area plans. From 1989 to 1995, the I-26 Connector was studied as part of the Asheville Urban Area Corridor Preservation Pilot Project. As a result of this study, bypass alternatives were eliminated from further study and the study corridor was chosen. For information about this early study.. In 1995, NCDOT's Project Development and Environmental Analysis Branch (PDEA) began the current, more detailed study. PDEA began to develop conceptual engineering plans and conduct environmental studies to determine the most suitable location for the proposed project within the study corridor.

On April 23, 1998, a Citizens Informational Workshop was held at the National Guard Armory on Brevard Road to present three proposed project alternatives to the general public.

In late 1999, public concern about the project prompted the City of Asheville to request that NCDOT pursue additional public involvement. Partnering with the City of Asheville, NCDOT invited the leaders of the interested business groups, affected neighborhoods, and other public interest organizations to meet and discuss the principal issues of concern. To bring the greater community to a consensus, a Community Coordinating Committee (CCC) was formed from this group of community leaders.

The CCC, with the help of NCDOT and the City of Asheville conducted a Project Educational Forum on June 15, 2000 at UNC-Asheville's Lipinsky Auditorium to present project design issues and encourage public participation in a Project Design Forum scheduled for July 2000. At this educational forum, NCDOT's proposed alternatives, major project features, and relevant project issues were presented to the general public. On July 21 and 22, 2000, the CCC organized and conducted the Project Design Forum to allow interested citizens the opportunity to suggest improvements and become involved in the project design. Ideas and recommendations from the Project Design Forum are listed in the November 2000 newsletter. As a result of the ideas collected at the Project Design Forum, NCDOT expanded the study area to add two alternatives that separate the I-240 and Patton Avenue traffic that cross the Smokey Park Bridges. Recently NCDOT eliminated further consideration of one of these alternates that proposed construction a new crossing of the French Broad River immediately south of the existing Smoky Park Bridges to accommodate Patton Avenue traffic. This alternative was eliminated due to operational deficiencies that worsen the traffic operations along existing I-240 east of the project in downtown Asheville. NCDOT also is including major improvements to the I-26/I-40/I-240 interchange southwest of Asheville as part of this project.

In June 2004, NCDOT conducted an open-house Citizens Informational Workshop at the National Guard Armory on Brevard Road in Asheville to present alternatives for the I-

26/I-40/I-240 interchange improvements that were added as part of the project.

In July 2004, NCDOT conducted a Citizen's Informational Forum at Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College in Asheville to explain to the community the information that is the basis of NCDOT's recommendation to provide eight through lanes for traffic along the I-240 segment of the I--26 Connector project in West Asheville.

In October 2006, NCDOT conducted three Citizen's Informational Workshops at the Radisson Hotel in Asheville to display the revised designs, answer questions and receive comments about the entire I-26 Connector project. Numerous Small Group Meetings have been conducted with various local civic, neighborhood, and business groups:

Western North Carolina Corridor Association	3/10/98
Riverlink Inc.	3/10/98
Leadership Asheville Seniors	10/14/98
Coalition of Asheville Neighborhoods	1/25/99
Westwood Neighborhood	3/29/99 7/20/07
Burton Street Neighborhood	3/30/99 6/24/99 12/14/99 7/16/07
Haywood Road Businesses	5/17/99
Riverside Drive Businesses	7/21/99
Westgate/Patton Avenue Businesses	7/22/99
Land of Sky Bicycle/Pedestrian Task Force	8/19/99
Amboy Road Businesses	8/19/99
City Seeds Conference	9/28/99
Montford Avenue Neighborhood	12/13/99

Council of Independent Business Owners	12/15/99
Bingham Road Area Neighborhood	3/8/00 7/17/07
Fairfax/Virginia Avenue Neighborhoods	4/6/00
I-26 Connector Awareness Group	4/12/00 6/27/03
Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce	11/5/02 6/6/03 12/15/03
Downtown Rotary Club	11/13/03
West End Neighborhood	7/18/07
Hillcrest Neighborhood	7/19/07

The I-26 Connector Project Team is available to speak with your civic group, business group, neighborhood association or other small group meeting upon request. To request a representative at a small group meeting, please send a letter to one of the contacts listed in this site.