APPENDIX B

Letters from Interested Parties

The Nature Conservancy®
NORTH CAROLINA CHAPTER
Saving the Last Great Places

Southeast Coastal Plain Stewardship Office
Building 4, Unit E
2725 Old Wrightsboro Road
Wilmington, North Carolina 28405

TEL 910 762-6277
FAX 910 762-5441

International Headquarters
Arlington, Virginia
TEL 703 841-5300

RECEIVED
MAY 13 2004
RUMMEL, KLEPPER & KAHL
RALEIGH, NC

May 14, 2004

Rummel, Klepper & Kahl, LLP
Attn: Keith Skinner, P.E.
5800 Faringdon Place, Suite 105
Raleigh, NC 27609-8382

Re: Feasibility Study of I-74 (T.I.P. R-3436 Revised)

Mr. Skinner:

Thank you for your March 24, 2004 letter inviting The Nature Conservancy's comments on the proposed corridor for Interstate 74. Recall that The Nature Conservancy owns 15,550 acres in Brunswick County commonly referred to as the Green Swamp Nature Preserve. Presently, N.C. Highway 211 bisects this property. The North Carolina Natural Heritage Program has categorized the Green Swamp as a "nationally significant" natural area, and the preserve is registered with the National Park Service as a "National Natural Landmark".

High quality longleaf pine savanna- particularly areas alongside N.C. Highway 211- could be significantly impacted by the proposed roadway. Pine savannas are notable for their diversity of plant species. These communities naturally experienced frequent, low intensity surface fires. Without question, frequent fire is essential for maintaining the high species diversity and vegetational structure. In the absence of fire, the canopy becomes denser, shrubs invade and diversity declines.

The complexities and liabilities associated with controlled burns adjacent to an interstate highway would present serious restraints on our ability to manage these savannas with fire. Consequently, the habitats for both federally endangered species found in the Green Swamp- red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*) and rough-leaf loosestrife (*Lysimachia asperulifolia*) -would be degraded.

As we discussed in our March 5, 2004 Raleigh meeting, NCDOT and RK&K agreed that the endangered species habitat, along with basic alignment issues, were compelling reasons to align the roadway along the western boundary of TNC's Green Swamp preserve.

As RK&K and NCDOT proceed with the amendment to Feasibility Study R-3436, The Nature Conservancy asks that you consider the irreplaceable natural communities of the Green Swamp. I am enclosing the following items for your review.

recycled paper

- NC Natural Heritage Program Inventory Report (1995)
- TNC letter to Governor Easley and NCDOT Secretary Lyndo Tippett (August 10, 2003)
- USFWS letter to Governor Easley and NCDOT Secretary Lyndo Tippett (December 18, 2003)
- Green Swamp "Burn Units" map and key (2003)
- National Park Service "Natural Landmark Brief" (March 1974)
- Red-cockaded woodpecker study "Population Size & Nest Locations" (1995) and survey sheets (1996).
- Rough-leaf loosestrife survey notes (1992-99) and "Population Monitoring Reports" (2001, 2002, 2003)

Last month I forwarded a GIS file of The Nature Conservancy's ownership boundary to Brian Peeler with your office.

The Nature Conservancy would like to meet again with RK&K and NCDOT this summer as possible routes emerge. In the next month, Frank Vick or I will contact you to schedule that meeting.

Again, thank you for your consideration of this material and your assistance. If you have any further questions or need more information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Dan Bell
Project Director

cc:
Nicole Hackler, NCDOT Feasibility Studies Unit
Frank Vick, PBS&J

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

MICHAEL F. EASLEY
GOVERNOR

LYNDO TIPPETT
SECRETARY

May 20, 2004

Mr. B. Keith Skinner, P. E.
Rummel, Klepper, & Kahl, LLP
5800 Faringdon Place
Suite 105
Raleigh, North Carolina 27609-3960

SUBJECT: **Feasibility Study of I-74 (T. I. P. R-3436 Revised) from just west of US 701 in Whiteville to the South Carolina State Line, Columbus and Brunswick Counties**

Dear Mr. Skinner:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this feasibility study. Division 6 staff have conducted a review of the segment within Columbus County and offer the following comments for your further consideration:

District Engineer and Resident Engineer Comments

The District Engineer along with the Resident Engineer offers the following comments:

1. Please note that interchanges should be constructed at SR 1001, SR 1735, and SR 1740. SR 1735 is the main access road to the Town of Lake Waccamaw and is the preferred route for local residents. In addition to providing access to existing industrial facilities, this route serves as the primary access to the Boy's and Girl's Home of North Carolina and their Exhibition Center. Good access to this center is of great importance since the facility frequently hosts regional and statewide events. The ADT on SR 1735 is 2,400 vpd south of US 74-76 and 2,200 vpd north of US 74-76. East Columbus High School is located at the SR 1740 intersection. Additional right-of-way may have to be acquired.

2. There is the possibility that the signalized NC 211 intersection with US 74-76 near the Town of Bolton will become an interchange in the future.

3. Very little economic development exists between the Town of Bolton and the Brunswick County line since it is passing through the environmentally sensitive Green Swamp. Construction costs in this area will be high.

P. O. BOX 1150, FAYETTEVILLE, NC 28301 - PHONE (910) 486-1493 - FAX (910) 486-1959

TRAFFIC ENGINEERING COMMENTS

The Division 6 Traffic Engineer offers the following comments:

1. The current proposed alignment is to route I-74 down NC 211 from Bolton toward Supply. This alignment would have to overcome some significant environmental problems. The only benefit to this location would be to accelerate growth in the coastal areas between Ocean Isle northward toward Southport. The coastal area will develop without interstate connection.
2. A route that would encourage more development in Columbus County would be to route I-74 between the Whiteville, Chadbourn, and Tabor City part of the county. The I-74 route could align with US 17 near Shallotte. This proposal would benefit the coastal areas, as well as, inland Columbus, Bladen, and Robeson Counties.
3. If the project is built in sections, we recommend that it be built to full control access standards. Multilane sections of roadways in Robeson, Columbus, and Bladen Counties have experienced severe accident problems at locations with at-grade intersection treatments.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMENTS

The following comments address the current US 74-76 roadway shown in the study.

1. Some of the drainage ditches may be considered jurisdictional wetlands. Buffer Regulations should be reviewed for this project. Buffer rules are currently not in effect but will be an issue eventually.
2. The roadway cuts across several expansive wetlands, the Green Swamp being one of them. There are also several bays that have been eliminated or segmented. Re-establishing these bays may be a valuable form of onsite mitigation, along with the possibility of using some of the properties along the corridor. The proposed corridor will also use prior converted land that has already been cleared and manipulated.
3. Spill containment will most likely be required on the project. Critter crossing will also be an issue. There is currently little or no north/south access for wildlife.

The following comments address the portion that deviates from the existing US 74/76 roadway from the Town of Bolton area going down to the South Carolina Line. NC 211 is a great alignment for this project. Though the road is proposed through Green Swamp, very little of the project will impact jurisdictional wetlands.

1. The multi-laned highway should utilize a median that is wide enough to accommodate the existing drainage along NC 211. The drainage ditches are jurisdictional.
2. Being that the majority of the property situated along NC 211 is in Pine Plantation Ownership, there will be some concern with Red-Cockaded Woodpecker colonies along the route, besides numerous threatened species.
3. There are two 4-f properties along NC 211: the first is the Green Swamp Preserve, the second is the Brunswick County Recreational Park.
4. All crossings of High Quality Wetlands must be bridged.
5. Critter Crossings must be incorporated into the bridge designs.

6. The project will have wetland impacts, but, the Department does have a unique opportunity to offset the impacts by initiating a mitigation strategy that expands the reaches of the Green Swamp Preserve. For years the Green Swamp Preserve has been attempting to restore and expand as much of the Green Swamp as possible, while several of the large timber companies have been attempting to sell off parcels.
7. Green Swamp was designated a National Landmark by the USFWS in 1974.
8. There is concern with the availability of fill material for the project. Under the current regulatory constraints upon borrow sites, i.e. 400 foot buffer from jurisdictional streams and wetlands unless proven to be a non-impact, borrow sites will be difficult to locate.
9. A huge 100 acre 300 foot tall landfill was planned for construction in the Green Swamp just off of NC 211. A private corporation was petitioning the State of North Carolina to place this landfill in the Green Swamp near Clewis Corner which is located near the Columbus and Brunswick County line. Local citizens are opposed to this landfill and hope to preserve the Green Swamp.

Division 6 has one comment on the Carolina Bays Parkway Extension from South Carolina. In reviewing the proposed alignments from the South Carolina DOT study for the Carolina Bays Parkway Extension, alignment F is preferred. This alignment will improve upon existing roadways that currently funnel traffic towards the Carolina Bays Parkway.

If you have any additional questions, please contact me at (910) 486-1493.

Very truly yours,

Tracey Pittman, P. E.
Division 6 Construction Engineer

BY: William Russell Marsh, P. E.
Whiteville Resident Engineer

E: Mr. Robert Crumpler, P. E.
Mr. Rusty Marsh, P. E.
Mr. Jim Rerko, P. W. S.
Mr. Ray Goff

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

MICHAEL F. EASLEY
GOVERNOR

LYNDO TIPPETT
SECRETARY

May 27, 2004

TIP Project: R-3436
County: Columbus / Brunswick
Description: I-74 from West of US 701 in Whiteville, Columbus County, to the South Carolina State Line, Brunswick County

MEMORANDUM

TO: Derrick W. Lewis, P.E., Feasibility Studies Unit Head
Feasibility Studies Unit, Program Development Branch
Attention: Nicole Hackler, Feasibility Studies Engineer

FROM: for Nathan K. Phillips, P.E., Plan Review Engineer Deborah K Jokisch
Congestion Management Section

SUBJECT: Feasibility Study

As requested, the Plan Review Group of the Traffic Engineering and Safety Systems Branch has collected preliminary input pertaining to the feasibility study for this project. We would like to share the following comments:

- Our Traffic Operations Group does not see any opportunities within this project to advance the Coastal Regional Strategic Deployment Plan.
- Our Traffic Safety Systems Management Unit has determined that the fatal crash rate for this section exceeds the statewide rate, but not the critical rate. The full report has been sent to the consulting engineer for this project.

If additional information is required, please feel free to contact Deborah Jokisch, Facility Upgrade Engineer, or me at (919) 250-4151.

NKP/dkj:tp

cc: M. Pate Butler, P.E.
A. L. Grandy
R. E. Mullinax, P.E.
T. M. Hopkins, P.E. (Attention: J. H. Dunlop, P.E.)
C. L. Evans (Attention: K. S. Thompson)
J. S. Bourne, P. E.
R. W. King, P.E.
B. K. Mayhew, P.E.
B. K. Skinner, P.E. (Rummel, Klepper, & Kahl)

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JUN 02 2004
RUMMEL, KLEPPER & KAHL
RALEIGH, NC

MAILING ADDRESS:
TRAFFIC ENGINEERING AND SAFETY SYSTEMS BRANCH
1592 MAIL SERVICE CENTER
RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA 27699-1592

TELEPHONE: 919-250-4151
FAX: 919-250-4195
WEBSITE: WWW.DOH.DOT.STATE.NC.US

LOCATION:
CENTURY CENTER COMPLEX BUILDING B
1020 BIRCH RIDGE DRIVE
RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA 27610

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PROGRESS THROUGH COOPERATION

August 11, 2004

Keith Skipper, PE
Rummel, Klepper & Kahl
5800 Farringdon Place, Ste. 105
Raleigh, North Carolina 27609-3960

RE: I-74 Feasibility Study (TIP R-3436 Revised)

Dear Keith:

On May 21, 2004 the Cape Fear Area Rural Transportation Advisory Committee agreed to support the construction of the interstate highway as outlined on the study area map. They did not have any site-specific comments.

Respectfully,

Don Eggert
Rural Transportation Planner

1480 Harbour Drive, Wilmington, NC 28401 • (910) 395-4553 • (910) 395-2684 Fax
www.capefearcog.org

TOWN OF SHALLOTTE

Post Office Box 2287 • Shallotte, North Carolina 28459
Telephone: (910) 754-4032 • Facsimile: (910) 754-2740

August 17, 2004

Rummer, Klepper & Kahl, LLP
attn: B. Keith Skinner, P.E.
5800 Faringdon Place
Suite 105
Raleigh, NC 27609-3960

Dear Mr. Skinner,

This letter is in response to your request for comments on the I-74 Feasibility Study (TIP R-3436). On behalf of the Shallotte Board of Aldermen, the Town is in favor of continuing the feasibilty study as proposed and believe that an Interstate leading into Brunswick County would be beneficial to the Town, County, and State.

Please keep us informed of further developments with this project. If you have any questions, I can be contacted at (910) 754-4032. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Gerald L. Long

Gerald L. Long
Mayor

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

MICHAEL F. EASLEY
GOVERNOR

D. M. CAMPBELL, JR.
P. O. BOX 39, ELIZABETHTOWN, N. C. 28337

LYNDO TIPPETT
SECRETARY

August 20, 2004

Mr. B. Keith Skinner, P.E.
Rummel, Klepper & Kahl, LLP
5800 Faringdon Place
Suite 105
Raleigh, NC 27609-3960

Dear Mr. Skinner:

Thank you for your request for comments in regards to the Feasibility Study for I-74 (TIP R-3436 Revised) from just west of US 701 in Whiteville to the South Carolina State Line in Columbus and Brunswick Counties.

Please note that I concur with the comments provided in the attached letter from Ms. Tracey Pittman, P.E., Division Construction Engineer, dated May 20, 2004. These comments were developed through the District and Resident Engineers in Columbus County, Division Traffic Engineer, and the Division Environmental Officer.

While additional concerns may arise through the development of the Feasibility Study, please be advised that all appropriate Division 6 personnel will be at your disposal.

Sincerely,

D. M. Campbell Jr. /TRG

D. M. Campbell, Jr.
Board of Transportation Member

(910) 862-8423 ext. 26 (B)
FAX (910) 862-5531
e-mail: dmcamp@bizec.rr.com

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

MICHAEL F. EASLEY
GOVERNOR

LANNY T. WILSON
BOARD OF TRANSPORTATION MEMBER

LYNDO TIPPETT
SECRETARY

August 26, 2004

B. Keith Skinner, PE
Rummel, Klepper & Kahl, LLP
5800 Farringdon Place, Suite 105
Raleigh, NC 27609-3960

Dear Mr. Skinner:

Thank you for your letter concerning the Revised Feasibility Study of I-74, from just west of US 701 in Whiteville to the South Carolina line, Columbus and Brunswick Counties.

I have no specific comments other than I am in full support of the proposed route in Brunswick County as shown in Figure 1 of your letter. This route is the same route identified by Governor Easley's Transportation Improvement Plan in Southeastern North Carolina (May 2003).

If you have any questions, or need further information let me know.

Sincerely,

Lanny

Lanny T. Wilson

cc: H. Allen Pope, PE., Division Engineer

1442 Quadrant Circle, Wilmington, NC 28405 (910)256-8015 Fax: (910)256-6439

Town of Lake Waccamaw

ON THE SHORES OF NORTH CAROLINA'S LARGEST NATURAL LAKE

P.O. Box 145
Lake Waccamaw, North Carolina 28450
(910) 646-3700
(910) 646-3860 Fax
email lakewaccamaw1@ncez.net

Member N.C. League of Municipalities

August 26, 2004

B. Keith Skinner, P.E.
Rummel, Kepper & Kahl. LLP
5800 Faringdon Place
Suite 105
Raleigh, NC 27609-3970

Dear Mr. Skinner:

Mr. Lloyd Payne has been called up and is serving in Iraq. I am filling in as Interim during his absence.

I have received your letter dated August 10, 2004 and must apologize for taking so long to respond. Lloyd has left many irons in the fire and it takes time just to keep up. I have attended several meetings that Congressman McIntyre has conducted in reference to Interstate 74 and Interstate 20. I strongly support both of these projects.

The Interstate 74 project will provide easier access to the beaches of both North Carolina and South Carolina thus helping the tourism of both states. The Interstate will also relieve some of the seasonal traffic on our rural roads and make driving much safer in the entire area.

Everyone that I have talked with can hardly wait for the project to be completed.

If there is anything else I can do for you, please feel free to call on me.

Sincerely,

Michael Prostinak
Interim Town Manager

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Michael F. Easley
GOVERNOR

P.O. BOX 25201, RALEIGH, N.C. 27611-5201

Lyndo Tippett
SECRETARY

September 14, 2004

Mr. B. Keith Skinner, PE
Rummel, Klepper & Kahl, LLP
5800 Faringdon Place
Raleigh, North Carolina 27609-3960

Dear Mr. Skinner:

Thank you, for the opportunity to comment on this study. I am sure there are many issues to consider for this corridor and here are some initial concerns.

First, as the corridor enters Brunswick County, there will be environmental impacts to the Green Swamp wetland area to consider. There are some minor areas along NC 211 & US 17, but the Green Swamp is the major area of concern. Good locations for interchanges are at the intersection of US 17 & NC 211, the Town of Shallotte and the intersection of NC 904 & US 17 or SR 1303 (Hickman Road) & US 17. With the corridor following SR 1303, please contact Mr. Dave Wasserman, with the Systems Planning Unit at (919) 715-5482 for information on the "Carolina Bays Corridor" project from South Carolina. Finally, there is an identified future need for a new "Rest Area/Welcome Center" at the South Carolina State line. There is an existing "Rest Area/Welcome Center" at Shallotte. Please contact Mr. Jim Parrish, Rest Area Supervisor at (919) 733-2920, for further information.

If further information is needed or if there are any questions, please call Mr. Patrick Riddle or me at (910) 251-5724.

Sincerely,

Patrick Riddle

Patrick Riddle
Division Project Manager

124 Division Drive, Wilmington, NC 28401
PHONE (910) 251-5724 FAX (910) 251-5727

Cc: H. Allen Pope, P.E.
Jackson Provost, P.E.
Joe Blair, P.E.
David Thomas, P.E.
Dan Cumbo, P.E.

124 Division Drive, Wilmington, N.C. 28401
PHONE (910) 251-5724 FAX (910) 251-5727