

NCTA Recommends Narrowing Alternatives Considered for Monroe Connector/Bypass

The North Carolina Turnpike Authority (NCTA) is studying ways to improve east-west travel in the US 74 corridor from I-485 in Mecklenburg County to just west of the Town of Marshville in Union County.

NCTA held Citizens Informational Workshops on June 25 and 26, 2007 to update the public on the project, obtain input on the project purpose and need, and introduce alternatives being considered for the project. Maps presented at the June 2007 Citizens Informational Workshops included 45 corridor segments, each comprised of a 1,000-foot wide study area. These corridor segments combined to form nearly 165 alternative routes between I-485 and US 74 near Marshville.

Using a three-step alternatives screening process, NCTA is recommending that all but 16 of the 165 alternative routes be eliminated from further consideration. The remaining 16 alternatives will be studied further as part of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The alternatives screening process and preliminary recommendations are documented in a Draft Alternatives Development and Analysis report, which is now available for public review and comment.

Maps showing the original study corridors and the results of the alternatives screening can be found on pages 2 and 3 of this newsletter.

Frequently Asked Questions about the Alternatives Development and Analysis Process

How were the corridors under consideration for the Monroe Connector/Bypass project developed?

Improvements in this area were studied previously by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) in the mid-1990s (east of US 601) and in the early 2000s (west of US 601). As a starting point for NCTA's study, all corridors considered during those previous studies were considered for the current study. A number of potential locations for the Monroe Connector/Bypass have been considered, including new locations, upgrading of existing roads, and combinations of new locations and upgrades. All corridors were shown in a project newsletter and at public workshops in June 2007.

How did public comment contribute to the project studies?

NCTA received more than 1,700 comments on alternatives under consideration, specifically regarding Corridor Segments 18 and 22. These corridors were developed many years ago as part of NCDOT's studies, and now impact large residential areas and other community facilities. Based on these potential impacts, as well as the public comments received, NCTA added Corridor Segments 18A and 22A to minimize direct impacts to these areas.

While public input is an important factor in evaluating alternative corridors, it is not the only consideration. Potential impacts to

natural and cultural resources must also be evaluated. NCTA and the Federal Highway Administration are required by federal law to study a range of reasonable alternatives. Therefore, NCTA has recommended Corridor Segments 18A and 22A be retained for further study, and Corridor Segments 18 and 22 be dropped from consideration.

What is the status of the alternatives screening process?

NCTA has completed the alternatives screening process and recommend 148 alternatives for elimination from further study. NCTA has prepared a report documenting the alternatives screening process and initial recommendations for which corridors to eliminate and which corridors to study further. NCTA has requested input on these recommendations from other members of the Study Team, including federal, state, and local resource and regulatory agencies. In addition, NCTA is seeking public input on these recommendations.

What alternatives are still under consideration and what happens next?

There are 16 alternatives, beginning at I-485 and ending at US 74 near Marshville, that NCTA recommends for further study (see map on page 3 of this newsletter). These alternatives will undergo detailed engineering and environmental studies over the next six to nine months. The results of these studies will be documented in a Draft Environ-

mental Impact Statement, which is scheduled to be available for public review and comment next summer (July 2008). Also next summer, there will be public workshops and a formal public hearing to gather public comments on the remaining alternatives.

Does NCTA have a preferred alternative?

No. NCTA does not have a preferred alternative at this time. A range of alternatives will be evaluated in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The preferred alternative is scheduled to be selected in Fall 2008 based on the results of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, comments from members of the Study Team, and additional public input.

How can the public review the Draft Alternatives Development and Analysis report?

To review and comment on the Draft Alternatives Development and Analysis report, including NCTA's initial recommendations, please visit NCTA's website at www.ncturnpike.org/projects/monroe and click Newsletters/Documents on the left. Comments are appreciated by December 5, 2007. NCTA accepts comments at any time during the project study process. If you have questions or comments, please feel free to call the project hotline at 1-800-475-6402 or email monroe@ncturnpike.org.

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Monroe Connector/Bypass Project Schedule

July 2008
Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)

Summer/Fall 2008
Corridor Public Hearing and Identify Preferred Alternative

June 2009
Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)

July 2009
Record of Decision (ROD)

December 2009
Award construction contract and begin construction

2013
Project open to traffic



For questions or comments about the proposed project, to be added to the project mailing list, and/or to receive future newsletters please contact:

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Project Hotline: (800) 475-6402 Website: www.ncturnpike.org/projects/monroe

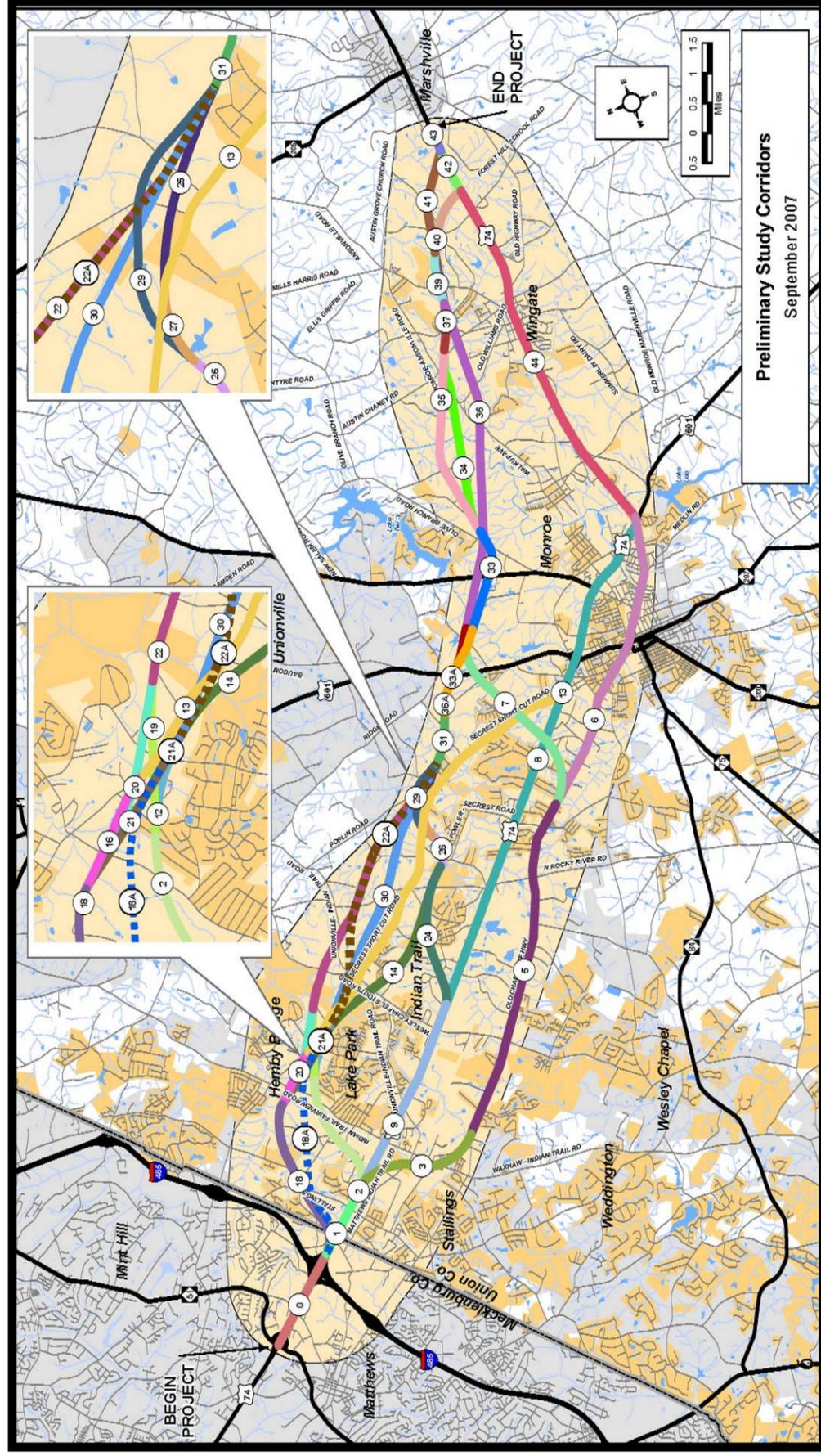
Statement of Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed action is to improve mobility and capacity within the project study area by providing a facility in the US 74 corridor that allows for high-speed regional travel consistent with the designations of the North Carolina Strategic Highway Corridor system and the North Carolina Intrastate system, while maintaining access to properties along existing US 74. The Statement of Purpose and Need report is available in its entirety on the NCTA website at www.ncturnpike.org/projects/monroe.

Draft Alternatives Development and Analysis Report

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PRELIMINARY STUDY CORRIDORS

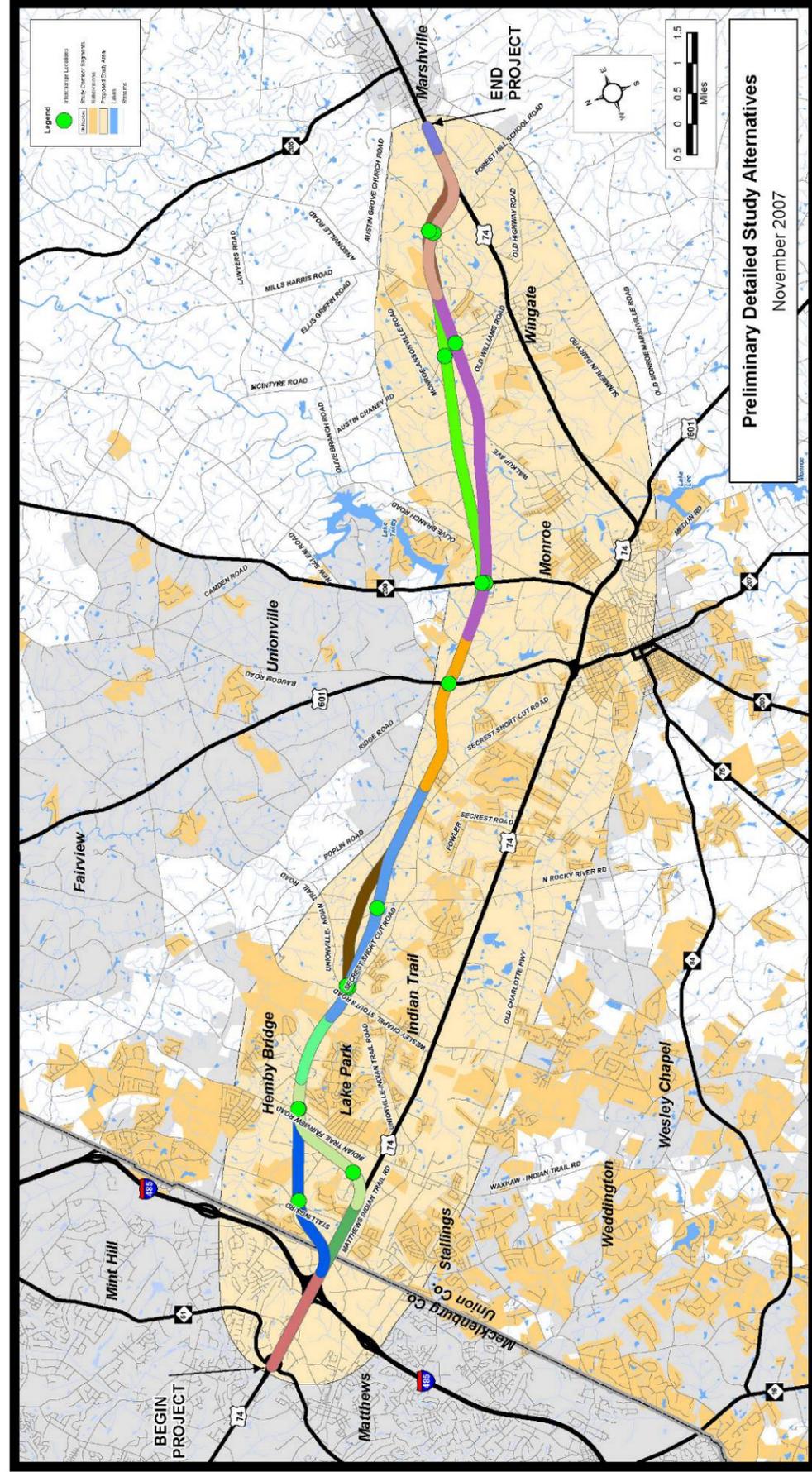


This map shows all the preliminary study corridors that entered the alternatives screening process.



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PRELIMINARY DETAILED STUDY ALTERNATIVES



This map shows the study corridors that made it through the alternatives screening process and that NCTA recommends for detailed study.



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