

NCTA Studies the 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.

US 74 and Chamber Drive looking East



US 74 is the primary transportation connection between Union County, the fastest growing county in North Carolina, and Mecklenburg County/City of Charlotte. The existing roadway is operating at or near capacity from I-485 to Carolinas Medical Center – Union at E. Franklin Street. There are 20 traffic signals along this segment of US 74; and over 52,000 vehicles, including a high percent of trucks, use this roadway daily. Previous traffic forecasts predict traffic volumes along US 74 to

increase by over 50% by 2025.

The Monroe Connector/Bypass project is a combination of two projects previously analyzed by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), the **Monroe Connector** and the **Monroe Bypass**.

Monroe Bypass

NCDOT's Monroe Bypass study addressed improvements in the US 74 corridor from just west of the City of Monroe, around the north side of Monroe, to just west of the Town of Marshville. Environmental and engineering studies for the project were completed in 1997. The preferred alternative was designed as a four-lane divided highway on new location. During the permitting process for the project, concerns were raised regarding impacts to the Carolina Heelsplitter mussel and the project was put on hold in 2001.

Monroe Connector

NCDOT's Monroe Connector study addressed improvements in the US 74 corridor from I-485 to US 601 in Monroe, and replaced the need for the part of the Monroe Bypass west of US 601, known as Section A of the Monroe Bypass. As the name suggests, the Monroe Connector would "connect" the

Monroe Bypass at US 601 north of Monroe to I-485 just east of the Town of Mathews. NCDOT began planning for the Monroe Connector in 1999 and completed a Draft Environmental Impact Statement in 2003. In 2005, at the request of the Mecklenburg-Union Metropolitan Planning Organization (MUMPO), the NCTA adopted the Monroe Connector as a candidate toll facility and the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was rescinded. The Monroe Connector is included in MUMPO's Long Range Transportation Plan as a toll facility.

Monroe Connector/Bypass

In 2006, MUMPO recommended that the Monroe Bypass and Monroe Connector be combined into a single environmental study and that the combined study be administered by NCTA. The NCTA Board adopted combining the Monroe Bypass with the Monroe Connector in November 2006.

The overall purpose of the project is to improve mobility in the US 74 corridor within the project study area. This would include providing a facility that serves high-speed regional travel, is consistent with Local and State transportation plans, and maintains access to properties along existing US 74.

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS !
Two Citizens Informational Workshops Scheduled in June 2007**

The workshops will be an open-house format with project maps and other information available for review. You are invited to drop in at any time to either workshop to ask questions and offer comments. NCTA, NCDOT and study team representatives will be present for one-on-one discussions about the proposed project.

These workshops are being held to update interested citizens with the proposed project and to gather input/comments on project purpose and need, project study area, preliminary study corridors and the toll aspect. MUMPO will also be gathering public input on financing options for the portion of the project east of US 601.

1 **Monday, June 25th, 2007**
4:00 pm to 8:00 pm

South Piedmont Community College
4209 Old Charlotte Highway
Monroe, NC 28110

2 **Tuesday, June 26th, 2007**
4:00 pm to 8:00 pm

NC Cooperative Extension Office
Union County Center
3230-D Presson Road
Monroe, NC 28112

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Jennifer Harris, PE
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In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), NCTA will provide auxiliary aids and services for disabled persons who wish to participate in the Citizens Informational Workshops. To receive special services, please contact Ms. Jennifer Harris by phone (919) 571-3000 or email monroe@ncturnpike.org. Please provide adequate notice prior to the date of the meeting so that arrangements can be made.

Monroe Connector / Bypass

CITIZENS INFORMATIONAL WORKSHOPS
How YOU can get involved...

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4:00 pm to 8:00 pm

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Monroe, NC 28110

2 **Tuesday, June 26th, 2007**
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Union County Center
3230-D Presson Road
Monroe, NC 28112

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

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Raleigh, NC 27699-1578
(919) 571-3000 phone
monroe@ncturnpike.org



Project Hotline: (800) 475-6402

**NORTH CAROLINA
TURNPIKE AUTHORITY
(NCTA)**

In October 2002, the North Carolina General Assembly established a law creating (General Statute 136-89.182) NCTA. NCTA is authorized to study, develop, construct, operate, and maintain up to nine toll roads in the state. The Monroe Connector/Bypass is one of NCTA's candidate toll roads. A *Preliminary Traffic and Revenue Final Report* was completed in October 2006 and can be found on the project website at www.ncturnpike.org/projects/monroe/documents.asp

The law prohibits NCTA from tolling existing roads. Toll revenue may be used by NCTA for administrative costs, project development, right-of-way, construction, operation, maintenance, debt service on revenue bonds, or related purposes.

Toll roads offer a choice. By leveraging private funds to pay for road construction, vital corridors can be built years earlier than if only traditional funds are used bringing much needed congestion relief sooner.

The NEPA Planning Process

The project planning process for transportation projects subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) can be generally summarized into the eight steps listed to the right. Currently, the project is working on **Steps 1, 2 and 3 (highlighted in yellow)**.

Project Schedule

- July / August 2007—Identify Detailed Study Alternatives
- July 2008—Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)
- November 2008—Identify Preferred Alternative
- June 2009—Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)
- July 2009—Record of Decision (ROD)
- August 2009—Environmental Permit Applications

Please visit the project website for project information and updates:
www.ncturnpike.org/projects/monroe

Preliminary Study Corridors to be Considered

The project development, engineering, and environmental studies for the project are being conducted in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

This project has a long history. Several alternatives had previously been evaluated and substantial amounts of data have already been collected. This information will be reexamined, and if determined to still be valid, will be included into this study to minimize duplication of previous work efforts.

In accordance with FHWA guidelines alternatives considered will include:

- **The No-Build or Do Nothing Alternative** (*maintains the current condition*)
- **Improve Existing Roadway** (*improves existing US 74 from I-485 to just west of Marshville by widening, creating a superstreet or converting it to a freeway*)
- **New Location/Improve Existing Roadways Combinations** (*involves building a portion of the project on new location and improving some combination of existing roadways (US 74, Old Monroe Road or Secret Shortcut Road) for the remainder of the project.*)
- **Build a New Highway** (*new multi-lane controlled access facility entirely on new location*)

THE 8-STEP PLANNING PROCESS

1. **Describe the transportation problem: Identify existing and future transportation problems, define study area, prepare a statement of Purpose and Need.**
2. **Identify alternatives to solving transportation problems: Prepare land suitability map, identify preliminary study corridors, conduct citizens informational workshop(s), select preliminary study corridors for detailed study in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).**
3. **Prepare engineering studies: Conduct detailed field studies, prepare environmental analyses of detailed study alternatives.**
4. Prepare Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).
5. Conduct corridor design public hearing and/or citizens informational workshops to present alternatives and solicit public input.
6. Review comments from the public and federal, state, and local agencies on DEIS and alternatives. Select preferred alternative.
7. Update and refine studies for the preferred alternative. Prepare Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).
8. Prepare Record of Decision (ROD). Conduct design public hearing for preferred alternative.

BEYOND

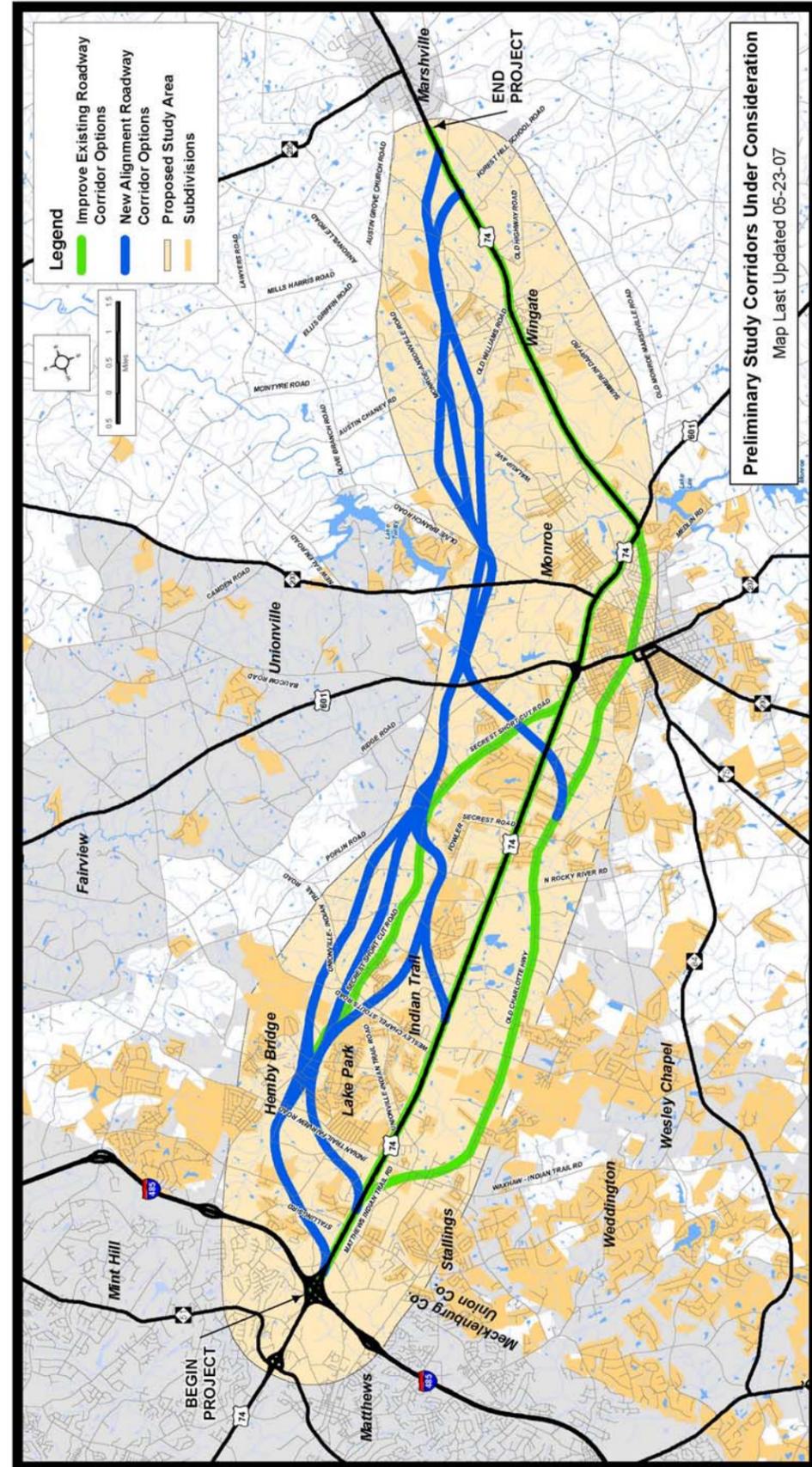
Following publication of the ROD, permits are acquired and final engineering design plans are prepared for the selected alternative, after which, right of way acquisition, utility relocations, and construction of the roadway can proceed.

MONROE CONNECTOR / BYPASS



Project Study Area and Preliminary Study Corridors

NC Turnpike Authority
May 2007



What Happens Next?

Each preliminary study corridor will be evaluated based on its ability to satisfy traffic needs and its potential impacts on the human and natural environment. Based on the evaluation and comments received from the public and local, state and federal agencies, the study team will identify the preliminary

study corridors to be studied in detail in the next step of the process.

In-depth engineering and environmental studies will be conducted on these Detailed Study Alternatives (Step 3 of the planning process). The results of these detailed studies will be

summarized in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Step 4).

Future editions of this newsletter will be prepared to inform you of the project's progress. Additional information can be found by visiting our project website at www.ncturnpike.org/projects/monroe.