



Welcome to the first Citizens Informational Workshop for the NC 107 Connector project, Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) project No. R-4745. **Our goal tonight is to seek your help in identifying transportation needs along NC 107 in northern Jackson County and to help you better understand the project process.** This meeting is one of many opportunities you will have to interact and communicate with the project team. Project team members from the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and Ko & Associates are pleased to be here to answer your questions and get your opinions and comments. Maps of the area identifying the project study area, community points of interest, and traffic information are available for review. Information on NCDOT’s process for getting a project from its initial conception to construction is also available.

We encourage you to give us your opinions and comments concerning the NC 107 Connector project. Your input helps guide our planners and engineers to develop transportation solutions that complement the community’s goals and visions. A comment form is included with this handout. You may leave the comment form here with us tonight or e-mail or mail it to us later. Our contact information is printed on page 11 of this handout.

Why You’re Here Tonight

- Tell us what’s wrong with NC 107
- How would you fix it?
- Learn the difference between a Comprehensive Transportation Plan, Feasibility Study, & TIP Project
- Learn how NCDOT projects progress from planning to construction

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Visit Our Four Information Centers



- NCDOT Project Processes
- NC 107 Connector
- NC 107 Feasibility Study
- Jackson County Comprehensive Transportation Plan



Jackson County Comprehensive Transportation Plan, NC 107 Feasibility Study, and NC 107 Connector

What's the Difference?

Comprehensive Transportation Plans (CTP) serve as a guide for the future of transportation in large areas - usually counties or sprawling urbanized areas. CTPs are developed by local leaders and representatives from NCDOT during the earliest phases of NCDOT's project process. It is the place where projects are born. The plan's purpose is to evaluate the transportation network of the *entire area* (including roads, buses, railroads, etc.) and identify places that need improvement. From this evaluation a transportation wish list is developed. Local leaders and NCDOT personnel come up with projects they think will help improve the transportation system and prioritize them.

Comprehensive Transportation Plans

- Evaluate all modes of transportation for a *large* area
- Identify the area's transportation needs
- Prepared by local leaders & NCDOT
- Birthplace of transportation projects

The **Jackson County CTP** will evaluate Jackson County's transportation system, identify transportation needs, and recommend possible solutions. The CTP was initiated in 2004 as a result of growing traffic congestion along major thoroughfares, particularly NC 107. County commissioners appointed the Jackson County Transportation Task Force to guide the development of the CTP. Representatives from the municipalities, the county, WCU, SWCC, and members of the community with differing transportation views are members of the Task Force. When completed, the CTP will be adopted by the county, municipalities, and NCDOT.

Feasibility studies are often prepared by NCDOT for projects that have been identified as possible transportation solutions by local leaders. The study takes the idea that was first considered in a comprehensive transportation plan or thoroughfare plan and looks at it a bit more closely. A feasibility study documents the transportation need, investigates *possible* alternatives, and establishes a preliminary concept with associated costs and impacts if the project were to be funded. A feasibility study is not the product of exhaustive environmental and design investigations.

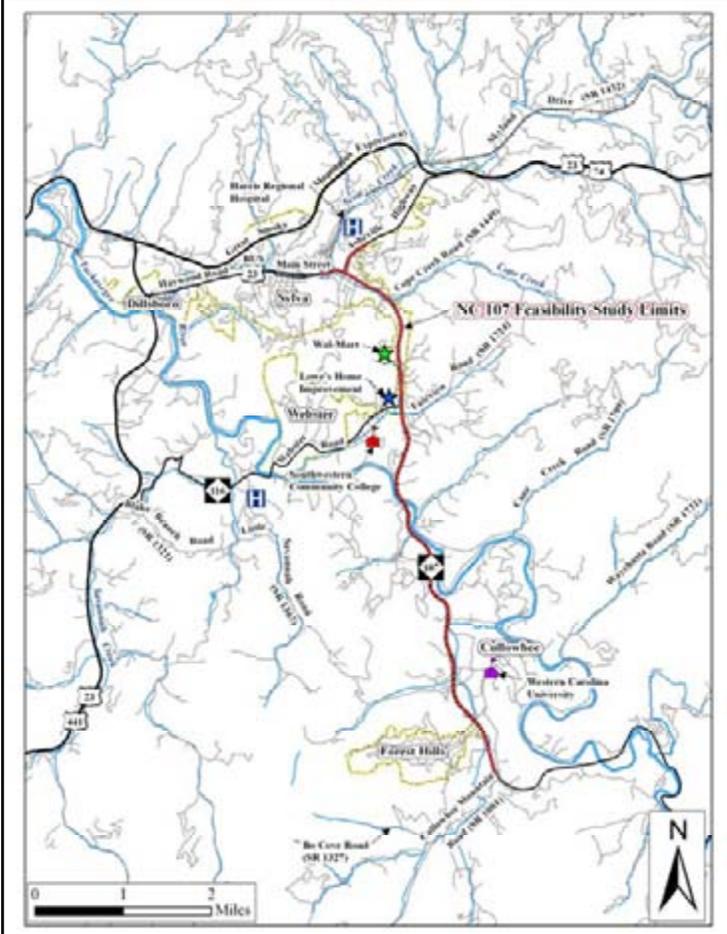
Feasibility Studies

- Examine concepts developed in local transportation plans
- Establish a preliminary concept
- Investigate possible environmental impacts
- Estimate preliminary concept costs

NCDOT initiated a **NC 107 feasibility study** (FS-0814A) to investigate ways to improve traffic conditions along existing NC 107 between Sylva and Western Carolina University. Planners and engineers will develop concepts, or alternatives, that will relieve traffic congestion. Each of these will be compared based on impacts to the human and natural environments, costs, and constructability. Alternatives will be evaluated for their feasibility. Unlike most other feasibility studies, NCDOT will seek public input while developing the NC 107 feasibility study.

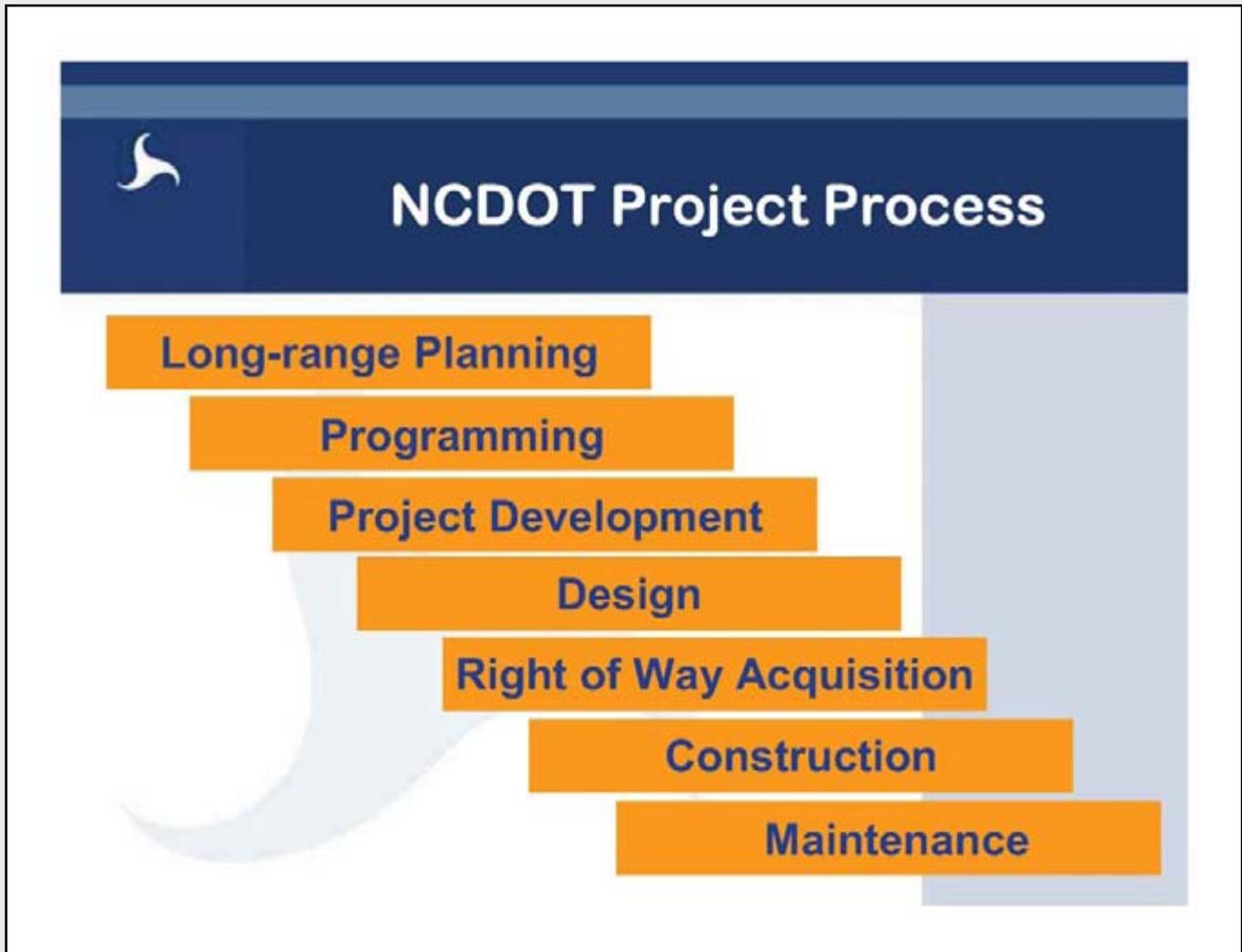
Project development begins once a feasibility study is complete and a project has been determined to be environmentally- and economically-feasible to construct. During this phase, the purpose and need for the project is documented. After the purpose and need has been established, the project goes through a series of detailed studies where alternatives are developed and impacts associated with each alternative are determined. The alternative that meets the purpose and need and minimizes environmental impacts is then selected as the preferred alternative. The whole process is recorded in an environmental document that undergoes scrutiny from the public and federal, state, and local governments before it is approved.

The **NC 107 Connector** (TIP No. R-4745) has been identified by local leaders as a project that could help ease traffic problems in Jackson County, and a feasibility study has been conducted for the project. Now, we are in the process of beginning the detailed environmental studies. In the coming months, the project team will define the purpose and need of the project and begin developing alternatives that meet that purpose and need. ***Alternatives will not be limited to those involving roadways on new location.*** We will also evaluate whether or not improving existing facilities meets the purpose and need.

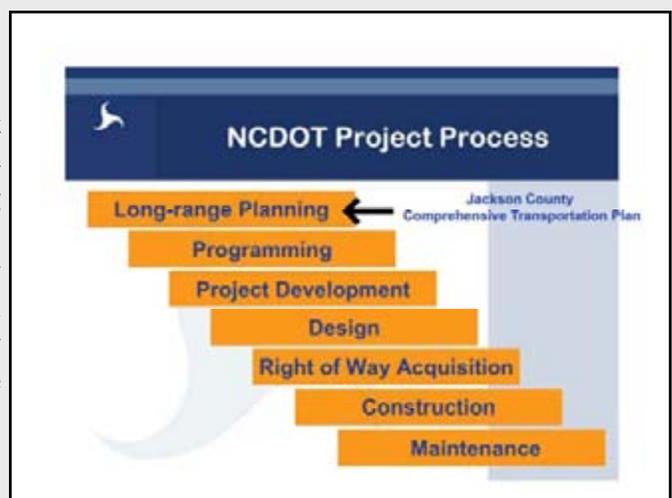


NCDOT Project Process

Each of the three projects, the Jackson County Comprehensive Transportation Plan, NC 107 Feasibility Study, and the NC 107 Connector, are in different stages of the NCDOT project process. Taking a transportation project from an idea to construction is not a simple accomplishment. NCDOT follows a process that involves identifying a need, conceptualizing ideas, assigning funding, planning, designing, buying land, building, and maintaining.



Long-range planning involves looking at an area’s transportation system (including not only roads but also other modes such as public transportation, bike and pedestrian facilities, railways, etc.), evaluating that system, and identifying transportation needs. Local leaders usually are the ones that initially identify the transportation needs through local transportation plans. **The Jackson County Comprehensive Transportation Plan is in the long-range planning step.**



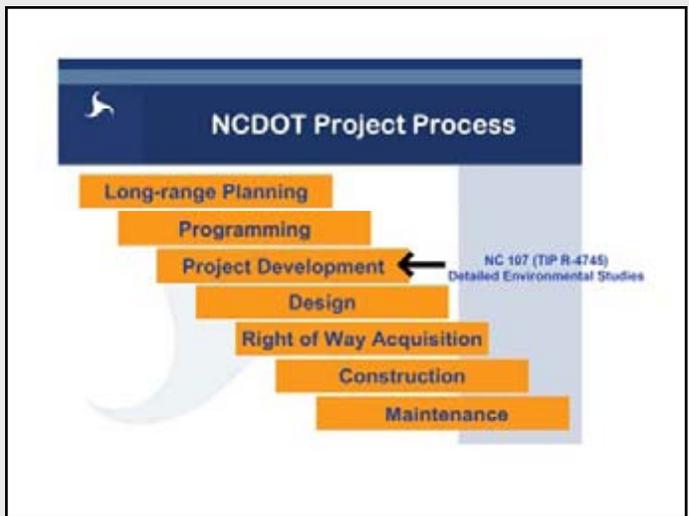
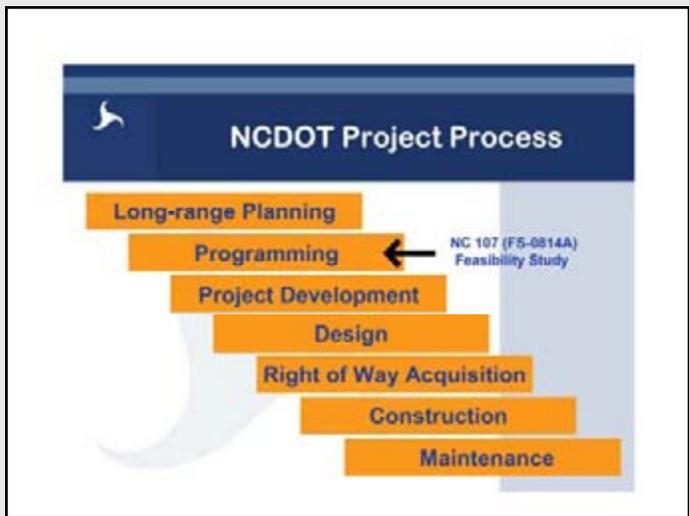
Programming is the step where projects are added to the NCDOT Transportation Improvement Program, funding is provided, and schedules are set. Feasibility studies are often prepared for projects during the programming step. **The NC 107 Feasibility Study is in the programming step.**

During the **project development** step, the purpose and need of a project is determined and additional studies are prepared. These studies, often federally mandated, identify and evaluate possible alternatives and then compare each based on impacts to the natural and human environments and costs. Information is gathered from resource agencies (US Fish and Wildlife, US Army Corps of Engineers, Division of Water Quality, etc.), local officials, and the public and used to evaluate the alternatives. Ultimately, a preferred alternative is selected that minimizes impacts to the natural and human environments. **The NC 107 Connector project is in the project development step.**

The **design** phase involves engineers developing preliminary designs for each alternative studied during project development. Once the preferred alternative is selected and approved, final designs are prepared for right of way acquisition and construction.

Right of way acquisition is the step where NCDOT purchases property required to build the project. NCDOT compensates affected property owners and provides relocation assistance to those displaced by the project.

Construction brings the project to reality, and the **maintenance** phase ensures the transportation facility remains safe and effective.



NC 107 Connector

NCDOT will be studying ways to improve safety for motorists by improving traffic flow and reducing congestion along NC 107.

Transportation related issues along NC 107 were first recognized in the 1980s. Traffic conditions and accident rates continued to worsen as the corridor became densely developed with retail stores and the population of Jackson County climbed. With increased commercialization of property along NC 107, traffic congestion became critical in the 1990s, prompting Jackson County Commissioners to request a change in the County’s thoroughfare plan. One of those changes included a “Southern Loop” so that through traffic could bypass the central business districts of Sylva and Dillsboro.



In 2000, local officials requested NCDOT perform a feasibility study for the “Southern Loop.” This study (FS-0114C) recommended a multi-lane roadway on new alignment connecting US 23 / 441 south of Dillsboro to the Great Smoky Mountains Expressway (US 23 / 74) east of Sylva. The new roadway would divert through traffic away from the commercial corridor and central business districts; therefore, reducing traffic congestion in these areas. Upon completion of the feasibility study in 2003, the “Southern Loop” was added to the TIP. In 2008, at the request of the Southwestern Rural Planning Organization (RPO), NCDOT removed the western half of the proposed roadway (from US 23 / 441 south of Dillsboro to NC 107) from the TIP and changed the name from “Southern Loop” to the NC 107 Connector.

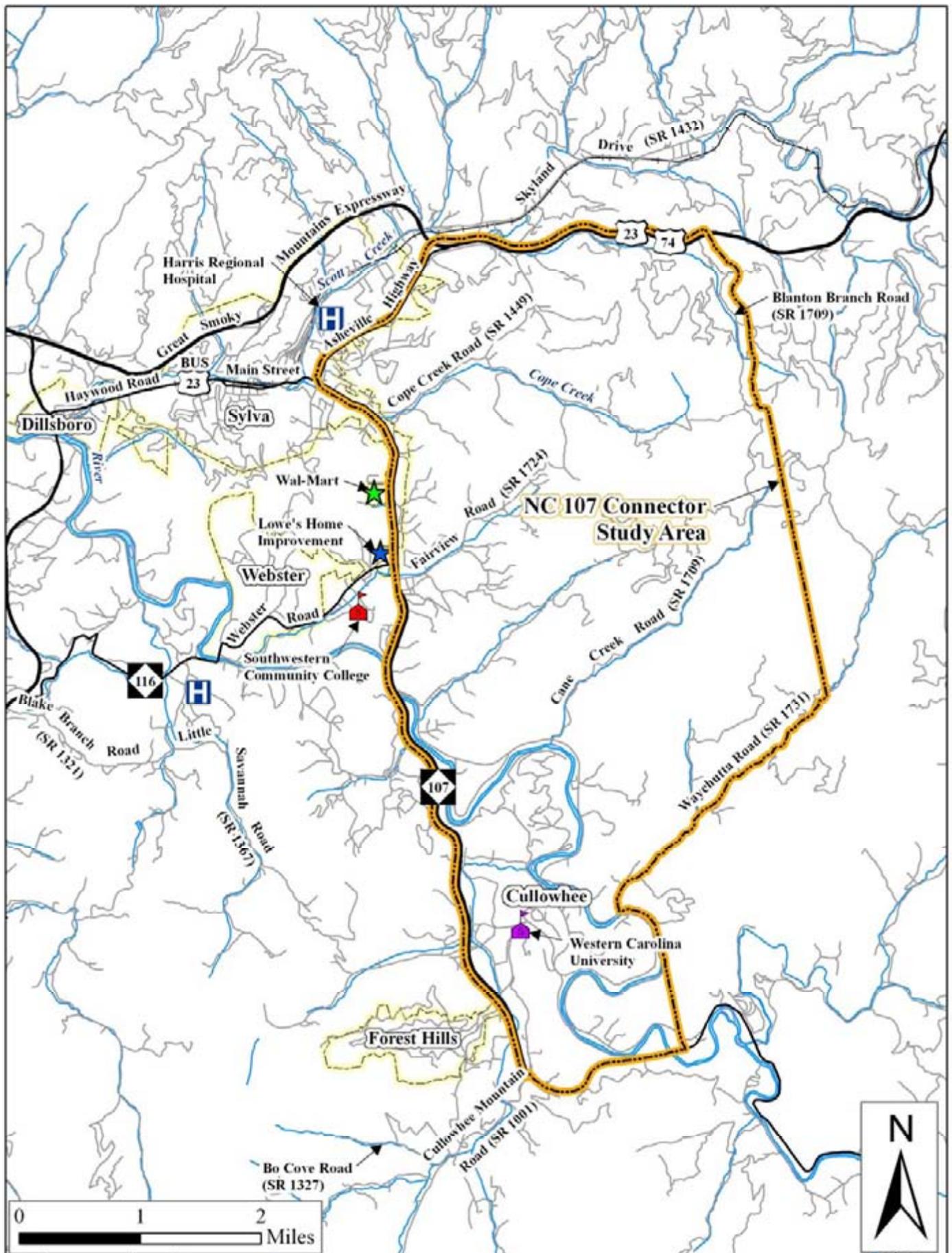
In addition to new location alternatives, *other alternatives will be considered* including:

- Improving existing roadways;
- Traffic systems management (TSM) which could involve optimizing existing traffic signal timing or improving timing sequencing, widening intersections to add turn lanes, combining and eliminating driveway accesses, and other similar capacity improvements, and;
- Multi-modal options.

The alternatives studied could also include a combination of these options (i.e. improving an existing roadway combined with a new roadway on new location, or TSM combined with multi-modal).

LOOK FOR OUR PROJECT WEBSITE COMING SOON !

- ◆ **Get updated project information**
- ◆ **Submit your comments anytime**
- ◆ **Find out about upcoming events**
- ◆ **Access project documents and maps**
- ◆ **Keep in touch with the project team**
- ◆ **Learn about the project processes**



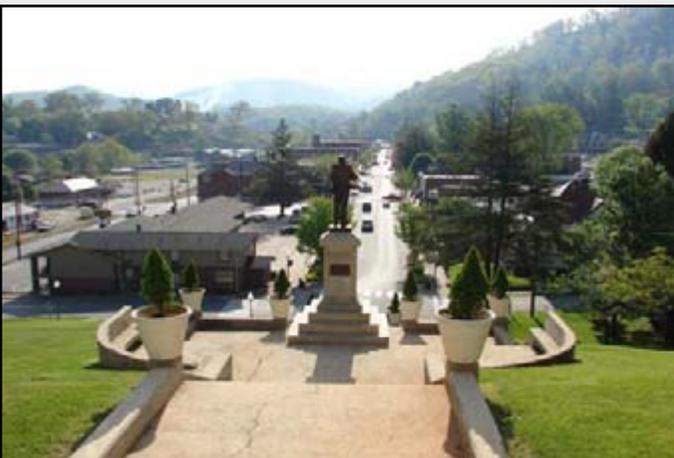
Public Involvement

Why is it so important? Public involvement plays an important role throughout the life of a project, and NCDOT is committed to providing you ample opportunities to stay involved with the NC 107 Connector project. The project team considers public input when developing and evaluating alternatives. With this knowledge, for example, team members will be able to avoid local historic sites, or a favorite fishing spot, or widening secondary roadways that citizens do not want widened.



Public involvement is welcomed during every phase of a project from long-range planning to construction, and it is never too late to express your opinions to the project team. However, there is more flexibility to implement opinions earlier in the process. That’s why it is so important that you give us your feedback now during this very early stage of the NC 107 Connector project.

We have already started a mailing list to keep the you posted on the progress of the project and informed of upcoming events. If you have not already, please take a moment to add your name to the mailing list tonight. You may also contact us after the meeting (our contact information is printed on page 11 of this handout). In the coming months we will be sending out our first newsletter, getting a project website online, and scheduling more meetings with the public and local officials.



GET INVOLVED !

- ◆ **Let us know what you think**
- ◆ **Fill out a comment form**
- ◆ **Call, e-mail, or write us**

WHAT’S NEXT ?

Project Schedule

- ◆ Purpose & Need - **Early 2009**
- ◆ Citizens Informational Workshop - **Fall 2009**
- ◆ Identify Alternatives - **Late 2009**
- ◆ Citizens Informational Workshop - **Early 2010**
- ◆ Draft Environmental Impact Statement - **Spring 2012**
- ◆ Public Hearing - **Summer 2012**
- ◆ Select Preferred Alternative - **Fall 2012**
- ◆ Final Environmental Impact Statement - **Summer 2013**
- ◆ Right of Way Acquisition - **2015**
- ◆ Construction - **After 2015**

Frequently Asked Questions

Will alternatives other than a new roadway through undisturbed land be considered?

Yes, **other alternatives besides those on new location will be considered** during the project development stage of the NC 107 Connector project. The project team will also investigate alternatives such as improving existing roadways, connecting secondary roads, optimizing traffic signals, and multi-modal options.

Why was a corridor selected in the feasibility study?

A corridor for the NC 107 Connector project has not been selected. The corridors shown in the feasibility study were developed as concepts only to evaluate the viability of a roadway on new location. Detailed designs and environmental reviews were not performed. The feasibility study concluded a route on new location could be built for a reasonable cost and be compatible with the environment. During the project development phase for the NC 107 Connector project, new location alternatives will be developed based on much more detailed environmental information and will be considered for further study only if they meet certain environmental criteria.



What are the differences between the Jackson County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP), the new NC 107 feasibility study, and the NC 107 Connector, and where does each project fit within NCDOT's project process?

- The CTP is being developed by local leaders in conjunction with NCDOT and will evaluate Jackson County's transportation system and its future needs. It is in the long-range planning phase of NCDOT's project process.
- The feasibility study is in the programming phase and will look at viable options for relieving traffic congestion along existing NC 107 from Sylva to WCU. This study will not evaluate alternatives on new location but will consider the effects on traffic congestion with and without a NC 107 connector in place.
- The NC 107 Connector project is in the project development stage of NCDOT's project process. Detailed environmental studies will be conducted to evaluate and compare not only alternatives on new location, but also alternatives that improve existing facilities, create inter-connectivity of secondary roads, and introduce other modes of transportation.

Will my opinion count?

Yes, **your opinion counts.** In fact, we strongly encourage you to give us your opinions and comments in any manner you choose. Our project team will rely heavily on input from the public while developing alternatives for the NC 107 Connector project. Local knowledge is the key to finding a solution that will most closely fit into the goals and visions of the community.

ADD YOUR NAME TO OUR MAILING LIST !

- ◆ **Receive up to date project news**
- ◆ **Find out about upcoming events**
- ◆ **Keep in touch with the team**

Notes

NOTICE OF A CITIZENS INFORMATIONAL WORKSHOP FOR
THE PROPOSED NC 107 CONNECTOR

TIP Project No. R-4745

Jackson County

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) will hold the above Citizens Informational Workshop on Thursday, December 4, 2008, between the hours of 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. at The Ramsey Center in the Hospitality Room, Western Carolina University located at 1601 Ramsey Center, Cullowhee, 28723.

Interested individuals may attend this workshop at their convenience during the above stated hours. The purpose of this workshop is for NCDOT representatives to provide information, answer questions, and accept written comments regarding this project. Please note there will be no formal presentation.

NCDOT is beginning the environmental and design studies to determine how best to address the congestion issues along the US 23 Business/NC 107 Corridor from east of Sylva to Cullowhee. The Citizens Informational Workshop is being held to provide the public an opportunity to participate in the planning process. Comments and information received will be taken into consideration as work on the project continues.

Anyone desiring additional information may contact Mr. Ryan L. White, Project Development and Environmental Analysis Branch at 1548 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1548, phone (919) 733-7844 ext. 245, fax (919) 733-9794 or email: rlwhite@ncdot.gov.

NCDOT will provide auxiliary aids and services under the Americans with Disabilities Act for disabled persons who wish to participate in this workshop. Anyone requiring special services should contact Mr. White as early as possible so that arrangements can be made.