

NC 119 Relocation Steering Committee Meeting
Mebane Arts and Community Center
November 13, 2008 7:00 PM

NC 119 Relocation Project
TIP Project U-3109

MEETING MINUTES

Prepared by Michael Baker Engineering, Inc.

The NC 119 Relocation Steering Committee held a meeting at the Mebane Arts and Community Center on Thursday, November 13, 2008, which was attended by members of the Committee, representatives of NCDOT and the consultant firms of Michael Baker Engineering, Inc., Gibson Engineers, PC, and RS&H, Inc, and other members of the community. Eight of the twenty members of the Committee attended the meeting. The meeting attendees are listed at the end of the meeting minutes. The following is a summary of the issues discussed at the meeting according to the meeting agenda.

Introduction

The meeting was opened by Leza Mundt, NCDOT Project Development Engineer for the NC 119 Relocation project, and a meeting agenda and handout were distributed to the attendees. Ms. Mundt stated that she was the new NCDOT Project Manager for this project, replacing Jennifer Fuller who took another position within NCDOT. The meeting attendees introduced themselves. A Project Fact Sheet handout was distributed that included a discussion of the preferred alternative selected, environmental impacts summary table, project schedule, overview of project history, current project activities, and the next steps in the project development process.

Current Project Activities

Ms. Mundt presented an update on the current project activities including: approval of the DEIS in August 2007 (made available to the public in October 2007); corridor public hearing held in January 2008; and a post hearing meeting in May 2008 where NCDOT evaluated comments received on the DEIS. NCDOT met with the Merger Team (review agencies) in June 2008 to select a Preferred Alternative, also called the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative (LEDPA). The main issues discussed at this meeting were impacts to the National Register-listed Cates Farm versus impacts to the Grahame-Mebane Reservoir water supply watershed critical area. The Merger Team selected Alternative 9 as the Preferred Alternative; a compromise since it minimized impacts to both the historic property and the watershed critical area. In addition, Ms. Mundt discussed several of the efforts undertaken to minimize impacts to the historic property, as well as the watershed critical area.

Ms. Mundt mentioned that the NCDOT is reviewing a draft of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and their goal is to have the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) sign the document in March 2009 and for it to be made available to the public shortly afterwards. At that time there will be a comment period where NCDOT will receive input on the FEIS. After the comment period is complete, a Record of Decision (ROD) will be prepared in Fall 2009 to address the comments. The Design Public Hearing will then be held in Winter 2009. Ms. Mundt then

reviewed the right-of-way and construction schedules for the funded portion of the project, Section A.

Aileen Mayhew added that based on public input, NCDOT is studying whether a traffic signal is warranted at the NC 119 / Mrs. White Lane intersection. In addition, a realignment of Woodlawn Road to connect to NC 119 will be developed to facilitate access in that area. Once the realignment design is complete, NCDOT will determine whether to add it to the proposed project.

Items that have been completed since the last meeting with the Steering Committee were discussed. These include: completion of several technical reports (end 2006/2007); three newsletters, most recently October 2008; Concurrence Point 2a Merger Meeting to discuss stream crossings and bridges; draft EIS; Corridor Public Hearing; and Concurrence Point 3 Merger Meeting to select a preferred alternative. Ms. Mundt added that the project website has information about the project and the public is welcome to submit comments or contact her directly.

The meeting was opened for questions and comments by the Steering Committee members. The following list is a summary of the comments and questions expressed at the meeting:

- A commenter indicated that it was good to see some of the project issues addressed; however, they questioned when the rest of the comments from the Steering Committee would be addressed, as well as comments received at the Corridor Public Hearing. NCDOT responded that the comments received at or following the Corridor Public Hearing will be addressed in the Post-Hearing Meeting Minutes and included on the project website.
- A commenter expressed concern that the closing of existing NC 119 near the northern project terminus would detach the White Level community from town; would limit the routes the community can use to get back into town to Mebane Rogers Road; and would increase the number of turns to get back into town. NCDOT explained why the tie-in near the northern project terminus cannot be shifted further south. Also, they explained that at this stage, the “big picture” does not include driveway connections.
- A commenter inquired about the total cost of the project to date and whether the project makes sense economically. NCDOT responded that all the project costs are an estimate and the longer the project takes, the more money is spent on it.
- A commenter inquired why the project is being studied on the west side of town and not the east. The commenter added that an alternative on the east side of town may be warranted based on the local thoroughfare plan. Another commenter stated that a Cabela’s store is coming to the Buckhorn Road area and asked if NCDOT could put the bypass in that area. NCDOT responded that alignments on the east side of town may be needed, but that would be a different project.
- A commenter noted that the NCDOT is studying a traffic signal at Mrs. White Lane and inquired why there is not a traffic signal at NC 119 and US 70. They suggested NCDOT install a stoplight to help the traffic situation before spending millions of dollars on the NC 119 relocation project. The commenter added that the City indicated that there would be no more traffic on the bypass than on existing NC 119. The citizens north of town will use the bypass, but would also use city streets, such as Fifth Street. However, the commenter added that the big problem is traffic from Mebane Oaks Road onto Fifth Street and they suggested an additional connection between these streets; but that connection would impact Bradford Place. The commenter added that the

project will remove through traffic from downtown and some businesses want that traffic. In response, a project team member noted that people will still go through town if there is a store/destination they need.

- A commenter questioned why the concern is traffic in the future when things haven't changed much since 1998; people want the small town feeling of Mebane. The commenter added that north of US 70, the only change in traffic has been Mill Creek. They stated that, "if you sit at Lowe's, there is only traffic at 6:30 pm and looking back ten years, there is no change in traffic, so why would the traffic change in the future?" The commenter added that the Mebane Oaks Road area is overdeveloped.
- A commenter inquired how much would the cost need to be for NCDOT to determine the proposed project unnecessary. The commenter stated that the only people that want the road are in Mill Creek and that there isn't much traffic from Caswell County.
- A commenter added that in the future, Mebane needs an underpass under the railroad. They added that there was a death at the Fifth Street railroad crossing. The commenter inquired how many grade crossing closures are included under this project. The response from NCDOT was that the project is proposing to close one grade crossing near the Lake Latham Road / US 70 / Holt Street intersection. As far as plans for future closings, the railroad in this area is not part of the Southeast High Speed Rail (SEHSR) project between Raleigh and Richmond, VA, but it is part of the SEHSR to Charlotte.
- A commenter asked if Holt Street would be directly connected to the project. NCDOT responded with information on the proposed design of the NC 119 Relocation overpass and stated that there would be no direct connection of the project with Holt Street. The commenter inquired where the West End and Holt Street traffic would go if the railroad crossing at Lake Latham Road is closed. NCDOT responded that Smith Drive would be connected to the proposed roadway and a connector would provide access from the proposed roadway to US 70. These connections would assist drivers from West End. The commenter added that closing the railroad crossing at Holt Street would put stress on people when they can't travel the way they have been driving for years. They noted that citizens use Holt Street to go into Burlington. Several commenters reiterated that Holt Street needs to be connected and requested that the railroad crossing remain open; otherwise, West End will be cut off from US 70.
- A commenter mentioned that the Mebane City Council requested the project and inquired whether Doug Galyon, NCDOT Board of Transportation, would benefit from the project. The commenter noted that in 1997, they met with Doug Galyon and was told that this road was for future development and not to relieve traffic in downtown; but the newspaper wouldn't call Mr. Galyon to confirm that conversation. The commenter asserted that there was a misconception from the beginning that there would be more traffic.
- A commenter stated that drivers would not go west to use the proposed roadway if they needed to go east to Walmart, McDonald's, the medical center, or future outlet stores. The commenter added that they very seldom go through Mebane to reach a destination.
- A commenter discussed the closing of Woodlawn Road. NCDOT responded that they are studying a realignment of Woodlawn Road to connect to the proposed roadway.
- A commenter expressed concern that traffic will still use Fifth Street instead of the proposed roadway because it is convenient.

- A commenter inquired why NCDOT is spending the money when the public doesn't see a reason for the project. The commenter felt that most people in Mebane don't want the project.
- A commenter inquired if NCDOT has met with downtown businesses. The Steering Committee feels that companies such as Ford and Southern States would not be in favor of the project due to the increased traffic the project would bring and the businesses having hard times. The commenter thinks that the Steering Committee is supposed to steer the public in the right direction and that taking traffic out of downtown will ruin downtown.
- A commenter had a question regarding why the road was going into Danville, VA, and about the trucks going through West End. The commenter stated that in 2025, there will be too much traffic going too fast.
- A commenter inquired about the long range plan for the area and expressed a desire to see land use issues with Fifth Street dealt with, such as zoning. The commenter feels that NCDOT is building the road and then the traffic will come.
- A commenter inquired about NCDOT's interpretation of the Public Hearing; noting that there were several negative comments made at the hearing. The commenter inquired whether a vote could be taken to decide if the project should be constructed. The commenter added that the people that support the project live along Fifth Street and in Mill Creek.
- A commenter mentioned that Mebane Oaks Road is five lanes near I-85/40 and dumps traffic onto Fifth Street. The commenter inquired whether the truck traffic could be taken off Fifth Street and directed to an alternative route. Another commenter added that the alternate route is by the Bradford community.
- A commenter added that when the road was first mentioned to West End, there was no choice whether it was coming or not. They stated that the West End Revitalization Association (WERA) stopped it because they believe the roadway violated civil rights of the citizens; then NCDOT started the planning over. They stated that the number of relocations in the Woodlawn area was never shared with the community.
- A commenter mentioned that NCDOT has to take what the City wants to the public. The commenter added that Mebane's problems are its own fault and no one else can be expected to fix the problems Mebane created. The commenter added that Mebane needs to get rid of its dead end streets. The commenter closed by stating that they hoped NCDOT ran out of money before the project is constructed.
- A commenter added that if NC 119 stops at US 70 (Section A), there will be nowhere for the traffic to go. They asserted that if the traffic goes back down US 70, there will be a traffic jam until Section B is constructed.

Radha Swayampakala discussed the traffic associated with the proposed project. He mentioned that for the section of Fifth Street south of US 70: in 1994 there were 9,000 vehicles per day (VPD) and in 2001 there were 12,000 VPD. This is an increase of approximately 30 percent. NCDOT looks at historic (past 25 years) traffic patterns to forecast future growth. Land use, jobs, number of employees, as well as other characteristics that would affect future traffic are considered. In 2005, there were 10,000 VPD and if no improvements take place, that number will increase to 30,000 VPD along Fifth Street. However, if the project is constructed, the 30,000 VPD will decrease to 20,000 VPD in 2030. Therefore, downtown will experience more traffic either way.

The traffic forecasts don't just take into account Mebane, but also areas east and west around town.

Future Activities

Ms. Mundt summarized the items required by the NCDOT: 1) providing cost information to those that requested it and 2) talking to the Rail Division regarding the crossing closure at Lake Latham Road and Holt Street. She also reiterated that one more Steering Committee meeting would be held before the Design Public Hearing, probably in Winter 2009.

Additional questions or action items as a result of the Steering Committee meeting included:

- A commenter requested a meeting to discuss the Woodlawn relocation and the proposed traffic signal at Mrs. White Lane, once those studies are completed.
- A commenter inquired what the Committee can do for NCDOT. NCDOT responded by requesting the Committee's assistance with the coordination with St. Luke's Christian Church. NCDOT asked the Committee to share the community's concerns with them and to assist with the distribution of the hearing minutes once the minutes are finalized. The hearing minutes will also be posted on the project website.
- The Steering Committee indicated that it was difficult to hear the speakers at the Public Hearing and requested that the next public meeting be held at a different location.

Ms. Mundt concluded the meeting by stating that the future project activities anticipated during the next several months involves the continuation of work on the preliminary design to incorporate several design revisions and preparation of the Final EIS for the project. She stated that NCDOT will continue to keep the community and the Steering Committee informed about the project through distribution of a newsletter in the future and information posted on the project website. Ms. Mundt stated that the Public Hearing Maps are located in the NCDOT District Office in Graham, off I-85/40.

The NC 119 Relocation Steering Committee meeting of November 13, 2008, concluded at approximately 9:00pm.

List of Attendees of the NC 119 Relocation Steering Committee Meeting
November 13, 2008

Steering Committee Members

Steve Cole (Co-Chair)	Woodlawn
Michael Jackson (Co-Chair)	White Level
Pat Brewer	Woodlawn
Melvin King	Woodlawn
Donald L. Tate	West End
Gail Thompson	West End

Other Community Members

Tony WiKent
DeAnna Kyles
Breanna Ellis

NCDOT Representatives

Leza Mundt	NCDOT-PD&EA Branch
Derrick Weaver	NCDOT-PD&EA Branch

Consultant Firms

Aileen Mayhew	Michael Baker Engineering, Inc.
Suzanne Unger Young	Michael Baker Engineering, Inc.
Mike Pekarek	Gibson Engineers, PC
Brian Speight	Gibson Engineers, PC
Radha Swayampakala	RS&H, Inc.