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### ***What is the NC 119 Relocation project?***

The NC 119 Relocation Project, also locally referred to as the “Mebane Bypass”, is the potential relocation of existing NC 119, from I-85 southwest of Mebane to existing NC 119 just south of Mrs. White Lane (SR 1918) north of Mebane in Alamance County. The route being considered is approximately 5.6 miles long. The project is included in the North Carolina Department of Transportation’s Draft 2009-2015 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) as TIP Project No. U-3109.

The relocation of NC 119 was first presented in the Alamance County Urban Area Thoroughfare Plan in 1990 (now referred to as the Burlington-Graham Urban Area Thoroughfare Plan). In subsequent updates to the plan, the NC 119 relocation has remained among the highest priority projects for the Burlington-Graham Metropolitan Planning Organization (BGMPO), which provides guidance on transportation goals and objectives for Alamance County, its cities, towns, and villages.

The North Carolina Department of Transportation initiated planning and environmental studies for this project in 1994 and the first citizens’ informational workshop was held in January 1995. Since then, two more citizens informational workshops have been held (June 1996 and July 2003) as well as several small group meetings in various communities. A Pre-Hearing Open House and a Corridor Public Hearing were held on January 15, 2008. Planning studies in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) are ongoing.

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### ***What type of roadway is being considered?***

The cross section being considered for the new roadway is a four-to six-lane median divided facility with two to three lanes in each direction of travel and a grass median. The proposed facility is **NOT** an interstate, but will be similar to a parkway. Partial control of access is proposed; therefore, access to the facility will be provided at existing and future intersections. Landscaping in the median may also be provided. Approximately 150 to 300 feet of right of way would be required to build the proposed road on new location. A bridge is proposed over the railroad, US 70, and Holt Street. To limit impacts to properties along US 70, an access road to connect US 70 with the new facility, instead of an interchange with ramps, is being studied.

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### ***What is the Transportation Improvement Program and how does a project get included?***

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is the North Carolina Department of Transportation’s 7-year plan for the improvement of state-owned and maintained transportation facilities. It includes roads, ferries, public transportation, aviation, and passenger rail projects, and is updated every two years.

The process for adding projects to the TIP begins at the local level. Local roadway needs are identified in a Thoroughfare Plan prepared by the region’s Metropolitan or Rural Planning Organization (MPO or RPO) in consultation with NCDOT. Mebane, as well as all of Alamance County, is part of the Burlington-Graham Metropolitan Planning Organization (BGMPO). The MPO prioritizes projects in the Thoroughfare Plan, with input from citizens and local officials. Based on the projected availability of funds, the North Carolina Board of Transportation, in coordination with the MPO and RPO’s, decides which projects will be included in the TIP.

For more information on the roles and responsibilities of the Burlington-Graham MPO, please visit their web site at [www.mpo.burlington.nc.us](http://www.mpo.burlington.nc.us) .

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### ***Why is the project needed?***

The proposed relocation of NC 119 would provide Mebane and eastern Alamance County with a primary north/south route to meet both local and regional needs. Additionally, the proposed project would provide safety benefits to local and regional commuters and could potentially encourage economic development.

**Relieve Congestion** - The relocation of existing NC 119 is needed to relieve current and future traffic congestion in downtown Mebane. NC 119 currently serves dual functions of providing the primary regional north-south route through Mebane and the primary north-south access to downtown Mebane (Main Street). Since the early 1990's, the Mebane area has experienced considerable growth due to its proximity to both the Triad and Triangle areas. Predicted growth is expected to overload existing NC 119, a mostly two-lane facility that travels through neighborhoods as well as the Central Business District (CBD) of Mebane. NC 119 runs concurrent with US 70 in the heart of downtown Mebane, with the railroad to the south and many shops and businesses to the north. Widening the existing facility to adequately accommodate future traffic will impact a substantial number of homes, businesses and historic properties in downtown Mebane. The new facility would provide another option for commuters to reach western Mebane or to avoid the CBD, thereby reducing congestion through downtown.

**Provide Access** - The new road will provide access to the local area, including the North Carolina Industrial Center located between I-85 and US 70. The project will also provide eastern Alamance County with a primary north-south route that avoids the CBD of Mebane.

**Additional Benefits** - The railroad next to US 70 through Mebane is part of the future Southeast High Speed Rail Study Corridor between Washington, DC and Charlotte, NC. The new facility would provide a bridge over the railroad next to US 70. Currently, all road crossings of the railroad in Mebane are at-grade, causing considerable back ups when a train occupies the tracks. The new road would provide a safer crossing over the railroad.

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### ***What is the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor?***

The Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor (SEHSR) is one of five originally proposed high speed passenger rail corridors designated by the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) in 1992. The corridor was designated as running from Washington, DC through Richmond, VA and Raleigh, NC to Charlotte, NC with maximum speeds of 110 mph. It is part of an overall plan to extend service from the existing high speed rail on the Northeast Corridor (Boston to Washington) to points in the Southeast.

At this time, the selected corridor for the SEHSR utilizes the existing rail line through downtown Mebane. For more information on the Southeast High Speed Rail, please visit their web site at [www.sehsr.org](http://www.sehsr.org) or call the toll free project hotline at 1-877-749-7245.

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### ***Why not construct a "Bypass" East of Mebane?***

The Burlington-Graham Urban Area Thoroughfare Plan currently identifies highway needs to the west and east of Mebane. The strategic location of Mebane between two metropolitan areas, the triad to the west and the triangle to the east, shows a strong attraction for traffic to the west and east. Therefore, both western and eastern needs are identified in the Thoroughfare Plan. However, based on traffic forecasts completed for potential western and eastern routes, the western route would be more effective in reducing traffic congestion along existing NC 119. Furthermore, the area northwest of Mebane is currently more developed than the area northeast of Mebane (in Orange County). Based on projected land use plans, the development trend to the north

and west of Mebane is likely to continue. The potential western route will also provide better access to the North Carolina Industrial Center (NCIC). For those reasons, the Burlington-Graham Metropolitan Planning Organization has placed a higher priority on addressing the transportation needs in central and western Mebane.

### ***What is the Current Status of the NC 119 Relocation Project?***

The NC 119 Relocation Project is a federally funded project in NCDOT's Draft 2009-2015 TIP and is referenced as TIP Project No. U-3109. NCDOT representatives conducted engineering, environmental, and community studies to determine the impacts of the various alternatives on the human, physical, and natural environments. A federal Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Section 4(f) was issued for agency and public review in October 2007. The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Section 4(f) was issued in June 2009. A Record of Decision (ROD) was issued in December 2009 that identifies the selected alternative for the proposed Relocation of NC 119 and includes comments on the FEIS.

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### ***What is an Environmental Impact Statement?***

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is a detailed report that describes the impacts of a proposed project on the human and natural environments. Several alternatives are typically evaluated. A team of engineers, planners, scientists, and biologists performs the analyses of the project alternatives.

An EIS is required under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 for major projects, programs, or actions that involve federal funding, permitting, or other involvement by a Federal agency. All EIS's prepared by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the North Carolina Department of Transportation include the same five primary chapters: 1) purpose and need for project, 2) alternatives considered, 3) existing conditions in the human and natural environments, 4) adverse and beneficial environmental consequences of the alternatives, and 5) public and agency coordination.

There are three (3) main documents produced in the EIS process. The first document is the Draft EIS (DEIS). The Draft EIS evaluates the impacts of several alternatives in detail. Following a review and comment period for the Draft EIS and a Public Hearing, a preferred alternative is selected. The Final EIS (FEIS) discusses the reasons for the selection of the Preferred Alternative, and responds to the comments on the Draft EIS. Finally, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) issues a Record of Decision (ROD) that documents the selection of the Preferred Alternative.

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### ***What are the Project Alternatives?***

Since planning studies were initiated for the project in 1994, a total of ten (10) preliminary study alternatives have been developed. Based on coordination with federal, state, and local agencies, as well as the public, seven (7) alternatives have been eliminated from further study due to community and environmental impacts. Currently, three corridors are being studied in detail (see map). The three Detailed Study Alternatives, along with the No-Build Alternative, which is used as a basis to compare the other options, are evaluated in the Draft EIS. All alternatives considered, including those eliminated early in the study process, are addressed in Chapter 2 of the Draft EIS.

All three Detailed Study Alternatives begin at the existing NC 119/I-85 interchange (Exit No. 153), then continue north to cross US 70 just west of Craftique Furniture Company. Alternative 8 passes through the critical watershed for the Graham-Mebane Reservoir, Alternative 9 passes through the critical watershed area and crosses the historic boundary of the Cates Farm, and Alternative 10 crosses the historic boundary of the Cates Farm but is outside of the critical watershed area. All three Detailed Study Alternatives tie into existing NC 119 just south of Mrs. White Lane (SR 1918).

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## ***What are some examples of potential impacts to the Natural, Physical, and Human Environments that will be evaluated in the DEIS?***

**Streams and Wetlands** - Permits from the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the NC Department of Environmental Resources, Division of Water Quality (NCDENR-DWQ) will be required for stream and wetland impacts. As a condition of the permits, the NCDOT may be required to compensate for stream and wetland impacts. These measures could include restoring or enhancing degraded streams and wetlands in the project area watershed.

**Floodplains and Floodways** – 100-year floodplains are land areas adjacent to streams that are subject to flooding from a storm of such intensity that it has a 1% chance of occurring in any given year. The floodway is the stream channel and adjacent area where the water is likely to be deepest and fastest. This area needs to be free of obstructions to allow floodwaters to move downstream. Bridges and/or culverts needed for the proposed project will be designed so that no increases to the extent and level of flood hazard risk would result from the project.

**Rare and Protected Species** - Federal law (under the provisions of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended) requires that any action likely to adversely affect a species classified as federally-protected be subject to review by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Other species may receive additional protection under separate laws. Plants and animals with federal classifications of Endangered (E), Threatened (T), Proposed Endangered (PE) and Proposed Threatened (PT) are protected under provisions of Section 7 and Section 9 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. *Currently, the USFWS do not have any species listed for Alamance County.*

**Noise** – Computer models are used to predict design year traffic noise levels along the proposed project and additional studies will be done to evaluate areas where noise barriers would be reasonable and cost effective. The final decision whether or not to construct noise barriers will be made following the selection of the Preferred Alternative.

**Air Quality** - Computer models based on projected peak hour traffic are used to evaluate any negative effect on air quality in the area as a result of the proposed project. The project is located in Alamance County, which has been determined to be in compliance with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. This project is not anticipated to create any adverse effects on the air quality of this attainment area.

**Relocation of Homes / Businesses** – Relocation studies were conducted by the NCDOT Right of Way Branch to estimate the number of residential and business relocations that would be necessary to implement each alternative. Final impacts will not be determined until after the selection of the Preferred Alternative during the final design stages of the project. Displacement impacts would be mitigated through implementation of the NCDOT relocation assistance programs. It is the policy of the NCDOT to ensure that comparable replacement housing for residents and suitable locations for displaced businesses would be available prior to construction of projects.

**Community Impacts** – Community impact assessment is a process that evaluates the effects of a proposed transportation action on a community or communities. The assessment process is an integral part of project planning and development. The assessment of community impacts, along with other relevant environmental impact studies, helps shape project decisions and outcomes. Information gained from this process is used continuously throughout the project to mold the project and to provide documentation of the current and anticipated social environment of the project area with and without the proposed transportation action. Potential mitigation is investigated for unavoidable impacts to communities as part of this process.

Potential effects on neighborhoods and the various communities in the project area are identified during the community impact assessment process and are evaluated in the Draft EIS. Impacts can be both positive and negative, and are often subjective and difficult to quantify. Community cohesion impacts could include the effects of neighborhood division, social isolation, changes in the community character, increased/decreased neighborhood or community access, and shortened travel times. Input provided by the affected communities play a key roll in identifying these impacts.

**Minority and low-income populations** - Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and related statutes, requires there be no discrimination in federally-assisted programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability. In addition, a 1994 Presidential Executive Order requires federal agencies to make environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing the effects of all programs, policies, and activities on “minority populations and low-income populations”. There are three (3) fundamental environmental justice principles: 1) to avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations, 2) to ensure full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process, 3) to prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

**Historic Resources** - This project is subject to compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's Regulations for Compliance with Section 106. Section 106 requires that if a federally-funded, licensed, or permitted project has an effect on a property listed in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation will be given an opportunity to comment. Potential historic architectural and archaeological resources within the proposed project corridor are assessed and evaluated in the DEIS.

In addition to the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 4(f) of the US Department of Transportation Act (1966) also affords protection to significant historic properties that may be affected by federally-funded transportation projects.

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### ***Who decides if the project should proceed?***

There are multiple points at which the decision whether to proceed with a particular project or not can be made. The initial point at which this decision is considered is at the local level during formation and approval of the local area TIP. Regarding the NC 119 Relocation project, the Burlington-Graham MPO has continued to include the project in the local TIP as a high priority since its inclusion in 1992.

The project will be further considered by the North Carolina Secretary of Transportation, the Division Administrator for the Federal Highway Administration as the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements are completed. At these times, impacts of the project alternatives can be evaluated against the benefits to determine whether or not to proceed with the project.

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### ***Who selects the alternative that will be built?***

The NC 119 Relocation project is a federally-funded project. Therefore, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is the lead agency in charge of the project. FHWA, in consultation with the NCDOT, will select the Preferred Alternative. The FHWA and NCDOT will consider the following when making the decision:

- The information contained in the EIS
- Input received from the public before and during the Draft and Final EIS review period
- Input received from local, state, and federal agencies before and during the Draft and Final EIS review period, including the following:

US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)  
US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)  
US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)  
NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources (NCDENR)  
NC Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC)  
State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)  
Burlington-Graham Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (BGMPO)

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### ***Why do the Project Development studies take so long?***

Any agency that proposes a project with federal involvement, such as federal funding, must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Under the NEPA, an agency must study the adverse and beneficial impacts of reasonable alternatives that meet the project's purpose and need. This process requires numerous engineering, community, and environmental studies. Also, NEPA requires extensive public and agency involvement. The NCDOT strives to maintain a reasonable schedule for all its projects while ensuring full compliance with NEPA.

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### ***How does this project affect me as a property owner?***

Impacts to specific homes or properties cannot be determined until a preferred alternative is identified. Following the completion of the Draft EIS, a Public Hearing Map was presented at the Corridor Public Hearing held on January 15, 2008. The maps showed the preliminary engineering roadway designs within each of the three Detailed Study Corridors. Property boundaries were also shown on the Public Hearing Map. The exact locations and amounts of property required for rights of way will not be determined until after the Record of Decision.

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### ***What is the process for Property Acquisition and Relocation?***

Private property in the path of the selected alternative for the NC 119 Relocation project will be purchased by the NCDOT as right of way. The NCDOT pays fair market value for all property purchased. Licensed real estate appraisers determine a fair market value at the time of purchase. This is the same type of appraisal that is required when selling, buying, or refinancing a property.

For renters and home owners who must relocate because of the project, the NCDOT has several programs to minimize the inconvenience of relocation: relocation assistance, relocation moving payments, and relocation replacement housing payments or rent supplements. The relocation program will be conducted in accordance with the Federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 and the North Carolina Relocation Assistance Act. A relocation officer will be assigned to the project. The relocation officer will assist homeowners, renters, and owners of displaced businesses, non-profit organizations, and farm operations in searching for and moving to replacement property.

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## Glossary

<b>BGMPO</b>	Burlington-Graham Metropolitan Planning Organization
<b>DEIS</b>	Draft Environmental Impact Statement
<b>NCDENR</b>	NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources
<b>NCWRC</b>	NC Wildlife Resources Commission
<b>NEPA</b>	National Environmental Policy Act
<b>SHPO</b>	State Historic Preservation Officer
<b>TIP</b>	<a href="#"><u>Transportation Improvement Program</u></a>
<b>USACE</b>	United States Army Corps of Engineers
<b>USEPA</b>	United States Environmental Protection Agency
<b>USFWS</b>	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
<b>CDB</b>	Central Business District
<b>ROD</b>	Record of Decision
<b>DWQ</b>	NC Division of Water Quality
<b>CIA</b>	Community Impact Assessment
<b>FEIS</b>	Final Environmental Impact Statement
<b>LEDPA</b>	Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative
<b>Circumferential</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. [n] a road that takes traffic around the edge of a town</li><li>2. [adj] lying around or just outside the edges or outskirts; "circumferential highways around cities"</li></ol>

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