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Project Newsletter

Supplemental DEIS Available for Public Review and Comment

The purpose of this newsletter is to announce the availability of a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement for North Carolina Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) projects U-4751 (proposed Military Cutoff Road [SR 1409] Extension) and R-3300 (proposed US 17 Hampstead Bypass).

NCDOT and the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) have prepared a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) to present information about changes to the US 17 Hampstead Bypass design. The changes were based on input received from the public during the Draft EIS comment period and at the corridor public hearings held for the project.

A copy of the SDEIS is available for public review at the following locations:

- ◆ NCDOT Division 3 Office, 5501 Barbados Blvd., Castle Hayne
- ◆ Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, 305 Chestnut St., 4th Floor, Wilmington
- ◆ New Hanover County Planning Office, 230 Government Center Dr., Suite 110, Wilmington
- ◆ Northeast Regional Library, 1241 Military Cutoff Rd., Wilmington
- ◆ Hampstead Branch Library, 75 Library Dr., Hampstead
- ◆ The NCDOT project website at: <http://www.ncdot.org/projects/US17HampsteadBypass/>

The USACE Wilmington District has filed the SDEIS with the US Environmental Protection Agency. A Notice of Availability was published in the Federal Register during the last week of October 2013 to begin the 45-day public review period pursuant to regulations of the President's Council on Environmental Quality for implementing NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508).

The USACE has issued a local public notice announcing the release of the SDEIS. This local public notice can be accessed at <http://www.saw.usace.army.mil/Missions/RegulatoryPermitProgram/PublicNotices.aspx>. This public notice will direct interested parties to the Federal Register where the Notice of Availability is housed and back to the NCDOT Hampstead Bypass project page for review of the SDEIS document. It will also provide directions on how to comment through the USACE on the SDEIS.

The public is encouraged to contact NCDOT with comments and questions on the SDEIS. Written comments or requests for additional information can be forwarded to: Ms. Kim Gillespie, PE, NCDOT Project Development and Environmental Analysis, 1548 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1548 or klgillespie@ncdot.gov.

Written comments will become part of the project record. Please provide written comments no later than **December 13, 2013**.



Project Schedule

A tentative schedule is shown below. Please note that a number of factors can affect a project schedule, therefore, it may be subject to change.

- Complete Final Environmental Impact Statement
Winter 2014
- Complete State Record of Decision
Spring 2014
- US 17 Hampstead Bypass Design Public Hearing
Summer 2014
- Begin Right-of-Way Acquisition
U-4751 - 2014
R-3300 - 2017
- Start Construction
U-4751 - 2017
R-3300 - 2023

CONTACT US

There are several ways you can stay informed about the US 17 Corridor Study Project

If you need additional information or would like to discuss the project further, please contact:

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Toll Free Project Information Line: 1-866-841-4420

8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. weekdays

Project Website

Project mapping, newsletters and other project information is available on the project website: www.ncdot.org/projects/US17HampsteadBypass

Citizens Informational Workshop Held



NCDOT conducted a Citizens Informational Workshop on August 15, 2013, at Topsail High School in Hampstead. The workshop presented information on the preliminary design changes made in response to citizen concerns over access to US 17 expressed during the Corridor Public Hearings in October 2011. One hundred eighty-three (183) citizens registered their attendance at the workshop. Citizens had the opportunity to submit written comments and questions at the workshop or via mail and e-mail after the workshop, through September 23, 2013. Twenty-six written comments were submitted at the workshop and one written comment was submitted during the subsequent comment period.

Several comments were received expressing support for the additional northern interchange. Several comments were also received questioning the need for both an interchange west of Grandview Drive and an interchange north of the Topsail School complex. A brief explanation of the analysis used to determine the need for both interchanges is presented in the **US 17 Hampstead Bypass Revised Interchange Design** section on page 3 of this newsletter.

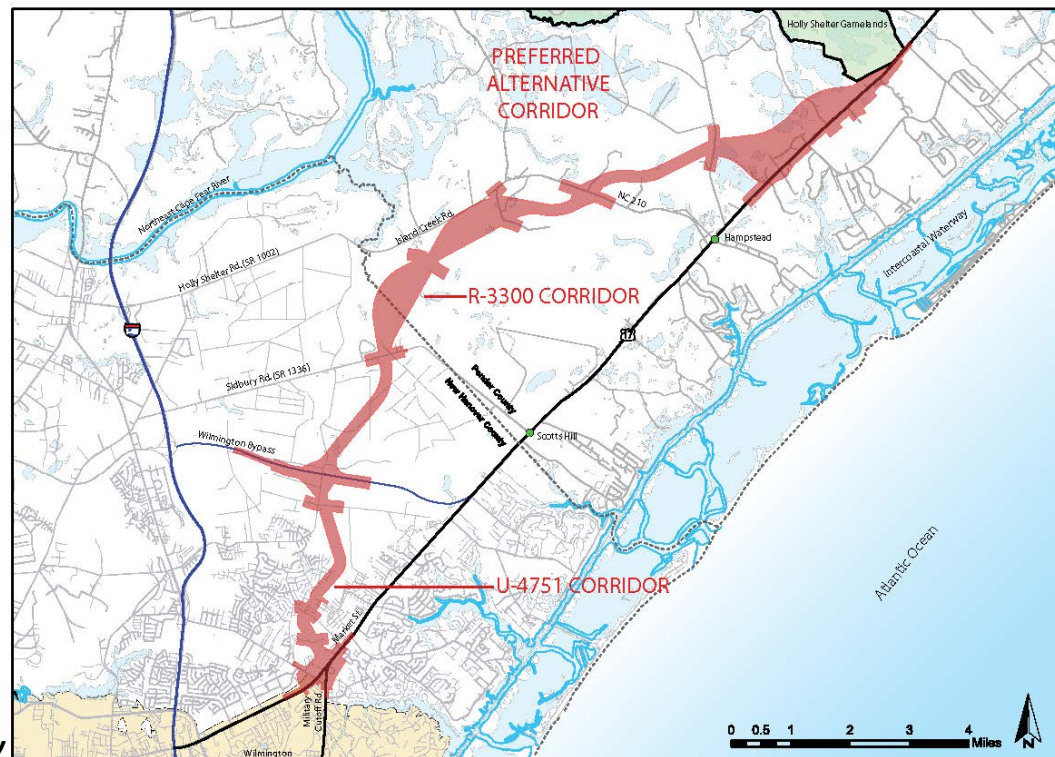
Other comments presented views on improvements to existing NC 210, project costs, impacts to individual properties, and support for and opposition to an interchange at Hoover Road.

US 17 Corridor Study Project Update

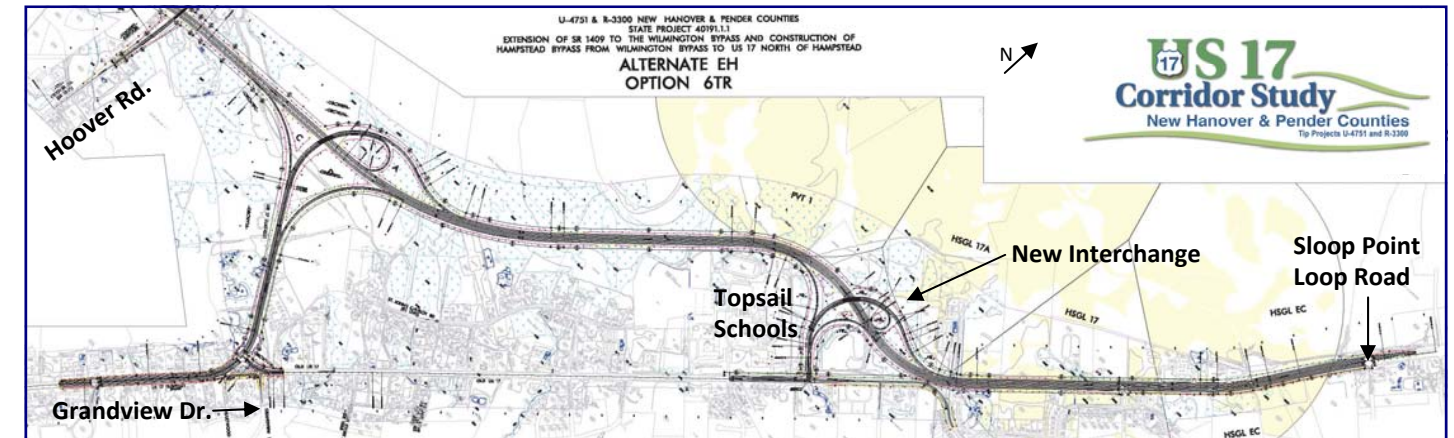
The North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT) Preferred Alternative for proposed Military Cutoff Road Extension and the proposed US 17 Hampstead Bypass is shown below.

The revised preliminary design for the northern end of the proposed US 17 Hampstead Bypass is shown on page 3. As discussed in the SDEIS, the revised design includes an interchange north of the Topsail Schools complex in addition to the proposed interchange south of the schools presented in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. NCDOT revised the preliminary design to include the additional interchange in response to citizens' concerns regarding access along existing US 17.

US 17 Corridor Study Preferred Alternative



US 17 Hampstead Bypass Revised Interchange Design

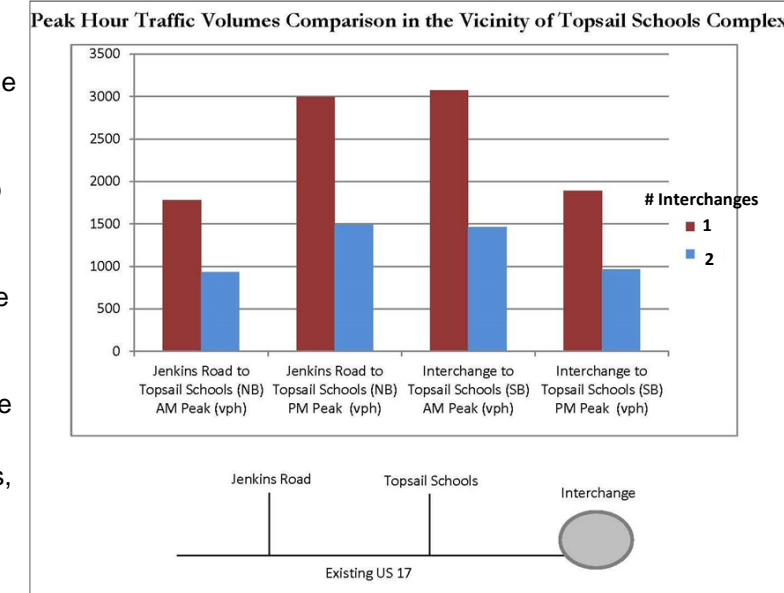


To analyze future transportation needs in a particular area, NCDOT relies on traffic models developed by regional planning organizations throughout the state. In the area of the proposed US 17 Hampstead Bypass, this model is developed by the Wilmington Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The Wilmington MPO updates the traffic model every four years with current socioeconomic data. The current traffic model is for future year 2035. Based on the frequency of updates to the traffic model, the traffic volumes used in the analysis for the proposed project represent current growth and traffic patterns in the area. The use of this model to perform traffic analyses for a proposed roadway project uses the best available data and is standard practice in North Carolina.

The interchange south of the schools (about 0.7 mile west of Grandview Drive) was shown on the public hearing map presented to citizens at the October 2011 corridor public hearings. At that time, the design did not provide access to the bypass for existing US 17 north of the schools. In their comments at the hearings, the public strongly specified maintaining access on existing US 17 was very important locally. In response to the public's demand for continued access on existing US 17, a local access interchange was added north of the Topsail Schools complex. The proposed interchange north of the schools uses a

reduced design to minimize impacts to red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) habitat and the community. This design is more appropriate for a local access interchange carrying a lower volume of traffic.

The results of the design year 2035 traffic analysis conducted for the proposed project indicate the interchange west of Grandview Drive must be retained to serve predicted future peak hour traffic volumes on existing US 17 in the vicinity of the Topsail Schools complex at an acceptable level of service. Without both interchanges, future peak hour traffic volumes on existing US 17 near the schools would more than double (see graphic below). This would lead to the signal at the schools complex operating at a "failing" level of service



and traffic backing up onto the bypass. To address this problem, NCDOT considered adding a third lane in each direction to existing US 17. However, the signal would still "fail" and there would be heavy traffic and congestion in front of the schools. In addition, a six lane roadway in front of the schools would make it more difficult to accommodate pedestrians and bicycles.

The Preferred Alternative design with interchanges west of Grandview Drive and north of the Topsail schools complex reduces the traffic volumes in front of the school complex, and eliminates the need for additional lanes on US 17, and results in an acceptable level of service at the schools.