

The Study Team recognized the potential for competing visions among the various stakeholders throughout such a large corridor study area. The intent of the public involvement program was to initiate discussions with corridor stakeholders to determine respective perceptions of existing and future corridor conditions, and to gauge opinions on various broad improvement strategies. This collaborative approach encouraged early and open dialogue and provided a means to ensure broad corridor stakeholder representation.

The public involvement program for the US 64–NC 49 Corridor Study reached and involved a wide-range of corridor stakeholders, encompassing those who may be impacted by future improvements, who represent others who may be impacted by improvements, or who have a casual interest in the corridor through their respective area. The Study Team identified and involved local elected officials, organizations, agencies, area citizens, and transportation providers.

2.1 Public Involvement Plan

The objective of the public involvement program was to identify, inform, and involve stakeholders in an effort to develop study recommendations that are not based exclusively on technical information. As outlined in the study's *Public Involvement Plan (December 2003)*, the Study Team participated in special forums, techniques, and methods to meet the public involvement objective. During the study, the Study Team employed the following guidelines in meeting the public involvement objective:

- Soliciting participation throughout the study.
- Identifying and reaching groups who might be most impacted by potential roadway improvements.
- Encouraging a two-way communication (i.e. open dialogue of information, ideas, and values) between the Study Team and the stakeholders.
- Maintaining study update and findings through the media and project web site.
- Considering all reasonable and promising suggestions.
- Following up promptly on any study inquiries.
- Documenting public involvement activities and input.
- Providing opportunities and outlets for public information and input.

2.2 Public Involvement Plan Implementation

The approach for meeting the public involvement program objectives incorporated multiple components.

- Information gathering and documentation.



- Stakeholder identification.
- Database development and maintenance.

Activities and tools associated with each of these components are described in the following sections.

2.2.1 Information Gathering and Documentation

2.2.1.1 Stakeholder Identification

The Study Team developed a list of major stakeholders through research, meetings with agencies, and community contacts. Key stakeholders from businesses, special interest groups, and political jurisdictions were identified. Following the identification of the stakeholders, the Study Team initiated mechanisms in pursuit of information and feedback through stakeholder interviews and group outreach presentations, which are both described in Section 2.2.2.2 and 2.2.2.3, respectively.

2.2.1.2 Database Development and Maintenance

A project database of public and private sector interest groups and key stakeholders was developed. Stakeholder outreach and the resulting feedback obtained through brochure return cards and the study web site was documented in the project database. It is recommended that this database be used to disseminate project information in future phases of project development and continue to serve as a public interaction tracking mechanism.

2.2.2 Stakeholder Involvement

2.2.2.1 Corridor Development Team

The Corridor Development Team (CDT) was an advisory committee developed to oversee both technical and non-technical matters. The CDT was comprised of NCDOT staff-level individuals with a comprehensive knowledge of the regional study area, Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Rural Planning Organization (RPO) staff who work closely within the corridor study area, local elected/appointed officials, and local staff who represent a specific municipality along the corridor.

CDT members represented the following organizations:

- NCDOT Transportation Planning
- NCDOT Roadway Design
- NCDOT Traffic Engineering



- NCDOT Project Development and Environmental Analysis
- NCDOT Program Development
- Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Town of Cary
- Town of Apex
- Wake County
- Town of Siler City
- Chatham County
- Town of Pittsboro
- Piedmont Triad Regional Planning Organization
- NW Piedmont Regional Planning Organization
- Lake Norman Regional Planning Organization
- Cabarrus-Rowan Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Mecklenburg-Union Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Triangle Area Regional Planning Organization
- Rocky River Regional Planning Organization
- Federal Highway Administration (NC Division Office)

CDT members aided the Study Team in meeting the study objectives through their willingness to:

- Assist in developing the study goal and objectives.
- Review and comment on regional transportation objectives and priorities for the study.
- Use their knowledge of the study area to help generate viable alternatives.
- Act as a technical "sounding board" for potential strategies to be evaluated.
- Assist in developing measures and methodologies for testing strategies.
- Review and comment on the results of alternative evaluations.
- Assist in framing issues, alternatives, and next steps for stakeholders.
- Foster regional cooperation.
- Raise and discuss issues of concern.
- Help to anticipate community reactions.
- Reflect the range of affected interests.
- Help the Study Team establish a working relationship with communities affected by the project.
- Communicate project information and findings back to their respective organizations.

CDT meetings provided opportunities for the Study Team to present and discuss major work items, including problem identification, alternatives identification and evaluation, and overall study recommendations. The CDT meetings provided a forum to present findings and to solicit feedback on the viability and acceptability of key decisions and recommendations.



Brief descriptions of the CDT meetings are provided below with meeting summaries provided in **Appendix A**.

CDT Meeting # 1

CDT Meeting #1 was held on November 12, 2003 in Asheboro. This meeting served as a kick-off to the study and included a presentation and open discussion of the NCDOT Strategic Highway Corridors concept, the US 64–NC 49 Corridor Study scope and schedule, purpose of the CDT Committee, and draft study goal and objectives. The Study Team and CDT also discussed public involvement materials and activities, including CDT suggestions for potential stakeholder interview participants.

CDT Meeting # 2

CDT Meeting #2 was held on August 23, 2004 in Harrisburg. An open question and answer dialogue between the CDT members and the Study Team followed a formal presentation regarding study activities, including stakeholder interview results; demographics, land use, and economic development findings; environmental constraints; the transportation profile and travel demand findings; and alternatives identification and evaluation. The Study Team presented results of the preliminary alternatives evaluation.

CDT Meeting # 3

CDT Meeting #3 was held on November 10, 2004 in Mocksville. This meeting focused on an update of the description and evaluation of the study alternatives presented at CDT Meeting #2. The Study Team presented and discussed with the CDT committee members a recommended corridor vision based on the alternatives' evaluation results. The Study Team also presented information on the contents of the Problem Statement (see Chapter 4), current development patterns in the corridor study area, and models and precedents with regard to land use policy guidelines for the protection of long-term corridor mobility.

CDT Meeting # 4

CDT Meeting #4 was held on January 14, 2005 in Cary. The Study Team continued the discussion of the corridor vision and outlined a vision implementation strategy. The Study Team also presented land use policy guidelines and corridor preservation methods that may be used to support the corridor vision.

2.2.2.2 Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews were conducted as one of the first outreach activities for the US 64–NC 49 Corridor Study. The intent of these interviews was to ensure that study recommendations were sensitive to the concerns and issues of the corridor stakeholders.

These interviews were designed to do the following:

- Gather critical information on potential concerns, opinions, and issues of targeted groups.



- Obtain feedback on potential study options.
- Establish a connection with key individuals and groups.
- Identify key issues, opportunities, and concerns related to US 64–NC 49 Corridor Study improvement options.
- Identify additional groups/individuals that should be made aware of and/or involved in the process.

These interviews provided an opportunity to assess initial perceptions and opinions from a geographically and philosophically diverse sample of stakeholders along the corridor. It is anticipated that such stakeholders will play a key role in subsequent phases of the planning and project development process for this corridor. Interview participants included representatives from the following organizations:

- Chatham County Board of Commissioners
- Haw River Assembly
- Town of Apex
- Leith Management
- Town of Siler City
- Sierra Club, Orange-Chatham Group
- Chatham County Economic Development Corporation
- Saint Julia Catholic Church (Siler City)
- Asheboro City Council
- North Carolina Zoological Park
- Asheboro/Randolph Chamber of Commerce
- Klaussner Furniture
- Davie County Board of Commissioners
- Yadkin-Pee Dee Lakes Project
- Davidson County Board of Commissioners
- Statesville Chamber of Commerce
- Town of Mt. Pleasant
- Town of Harrisburg
- Stanly County Planning/Zoning Department
- Uwharrie National Forest

These 20 stakeholder interviews were conducted during a six-week period during January and February of 2004. The format of the interview was one-on-one sessions (except for two interviews with a request for an additional participant). Two members of the Study Team attended each interview, with one conducting the actual interview, and the other documenting key issues.

The following sections summarize the feedback obtained from these interviews. A complete summary and abstracts from these interviews can be found in the *US 64–NC 49 Corridor Study Stakeholder Interviews Summary Report (May 2004)*.



Feedback on Existing Corridor Conditions

Nearly all interview participants were familiar with the NCDOT Strategic Highway Corridors concept and the significance of US 64 and NC 49 in this planning initiative. There were key issues that emerged with regard to the perception of existing and future corridor conditions, as well as key issues confronting planning along the corridor. Feedback was similar among participants within each delineated public involvement cell.

Nearly all participants agreed that an increasing number of people are using the corridor for long distance travel. Participants agreed that the corridor is heavily used for local, commuting, and trucking travelers. Furthermore, most of the participants stated that the county or municipality they lived in or represented serves as a "bedroom community" for these regional commuters.

Although nearly all participants have noticed an increase in traffic on the corridor, not all said that this contributes to existing safety or mobility problems in their respective areas. A few general comments were made about high-speed travelers in specific areas of the corridor, including through Chatham County. A few participants attributed existing safety and mobility issues to truck conflicts, narrow and winding sections along some sections of US 64 and NC 49, and the presence of numerous driveways along the routes.

Some participants identified existing "hot spots" in their respective areas. They identified the following specific needs as critical:

- US 1/US 64 in Wake County was identified as an interchange that needs improvements.
- US 64 in Davie County (Mocksville) has major safety issues associated with heavy truck and vehicle conflicts.
- US 64 through Asheboro is heavily congested.
- Siler City has local and through traffic conflicts.
- The NC 49/NC 8 intersection was identified as "dangerous."
- The NC 49 intersection with Roberta Road deteriorates mobility through Harrisburg.
- The section of US 64 between Lexington and I-85 was noted as being "dangerous."
- NC 49 through Mount Pleasant has a school bus route along the corridor, raising safety concerns for school children.

Feedback on Future Corridor Conditions

While most participants stated that development in the region is inevitable, there were a number of differences expressed with respect to the nature of this desired growth. Nearly all participants noted that they are looking to expand their employment opportunities outside of manufacturing, including trying to attract larger companies. Nearly all participants stated that US 64 (NC 49 in the case of Harrisburg and Mount Pleasant) is a vital corridor for their future growth plans. While most of the participants said that areas along the corridor will continue to serve as "bedroom communities" for regional commuters, some participants



would like to see their county or municipality become more self-supporting with a mixture of residential and commercial/service growth available to encourage a reasonable tax base.

A few participants noted a strong desire to see the region as a whole become a major player in terms of being a tourism/recreational and cultural/historic destination. Although the region already possesses a number of major features (i.e. Badin Lake, Seagrove Pottery, Uwharrie National Forest, North Carolina Zoo, Jordan Lake, etc.), there is a strong desire to promote the concept of the area as a distinct region in terms of its geographic and economic significance. The Yadkin-Pee Dee Lakes Project, also known as the "Central Park Project", seeks to take advantage of the central portion of the area spanning Charlotte to Raleigh/Durham. The plan is to protect the natural, cultural, and historic resources of the region, while expanding the economic base by using these resources for "sustainable tourism" and recreation development. The idea is not to replace existing industries, but to supplement them with this type of tourism as a major economic industry for the region. The idea is to generate lifestyle jobs that attract hospitality resources for overnight visitors, not just day visitors.

Feedback on Study Options

Nearly all participants agreed that US 64 should be improved to a high-speed facility with full or limited control of access (these terms were explained to the participants). The majority opinion of the participants was that the corridor should be upgraded to a facility with full control of access, although they acknowledged that they had mixed feelings about the potential impacts of this facility type on smaller towns, such as Ramseur and Richfield. A few participants favored a new alignment roadway for their long-term needs, as they felt it will be needed to improve mobility through their respective city/town. For example, those interviewed in Asheboro consider the planned bypass as a welcome improvement. Participants in Pittsboro agreed that the Pittsboro Bypass has helped the historic downtown area by alleviating truck and vehicle conflicts in the area and by taking a significant amount of through traffic out of the central business district. Several participants noted that they liked the visual quality of the Pittsboro Bypass.

One participant felt strongly that improvements should only take the form of minor safety enhancements at strategic locations. A couple of participants indicated their desire not to see recommendations for improvements that would further restrict access through their respective area.

2.2.2.3 Group Outreach Presentations

A series of presentations about the US 64–NC 49 Corridor Study were given at selected local government or other committee meetings along the study corridor. Presentations consisted of a PowerPoint presentation, followed by a question and answer session. The presentation focused on introducing the concept of corridor planning studies, and presented the specific elements to be undertaken as NCDOT and its partners develop a long-term mobility vision for the US 64–NC 49 corridor.



Presentations were given to the following:

- Chatham County Commissioners
- Mecklenburg-Union County MPO
- Piedmont Triad RPO
- Davie County Commissioners
- Apex Town Council
- Cabarrus-Rowan MPO
- Northwest Piedmont RPO
- Rocky River RPO
- Siler City Town Council

2.2.3 Public Information Component

2.2.3.1 Study Brochure

A brochure that described the study scope, schedule, and process was produced at the beginning of the study. This brochure served as a partnering piece to the study's first PowerPoint presentation made at group outreach meetings and to the CDT. The brochure was provided in bulk to CDT members for their distribution to their staff and/or other interested parties within their community. The brochure offered the reader a "return card" to become part of the study database and highlighted contact information for the study project manager.

2.2.3.2 Media Relations Plan

The study's media relations plan served as a planning tool for NCDOT Public Information staff as they crafted messages and scheduled the timing of media relation activities for the study. Study media relations actions were intended to heighten general public awareness and understanding of long-range corridor studies in general and the US 64-NC 49 Corridor Study. Because the US 64-NC 49 Corridor Study was comprised almost entirely of technical information gathering and analysis, it was intended that public information (as opposed to public involvement) in the form of media relations would be used to play a pivotal general public information role.

2.2.3.3 Web Site

A project web site for the US 64-NC 49 Corridor Study¹ was linked to NCDOT's Strategic Highway Corridors site. Information provided on the web site includes the following:

¹ http://www.ncdot.org/planning/tpb/shc/cs/studies/64_49/



- Description of the 19-county study area with a downloadable map.
- Overview of study activities.
- Summary of study conclusions for Phase 1.
- Description of public involvement activities conducted as part of the study.
- Project management contact information.
- Mailing list enrollment form.
- All project documentation and presentation materials.

2.3 Future Public Involvement

The collaborative approach used in the US 64–NC 49 Corridor Study was welcomed and embraced by the project’s partners: members of the Corridor Development Team, participants in the stakeholder interviews, and audiences in local presentations. Their expectation of a process that continues this collaborative approach must be honored as NCDOT moves forward with the next phase of planning. The following are suggested guidelines to encourage consensus of desired outcomes on corridor improvements:

- Corridor(s) municipalities and NCDOT should continue to coordinate and maintain an open dialogue with respect to land use and transportation objectives for these corridors.
- Public involvement activities should include tools and methods to connect with other corridor stakeholders who are not familiar with the vision for the corridor.
- Once there is buy-in on the concept and location of specific alternatives, public involvement should incorporate ways to reach and involve other corridor citizens/stakeholders through all project stages.

2.4 Environmental Justice

In 1994, concern that minority populations and/or low-income populations bear a disproportionate high and adverse human health or environmental effects led President Clinton to issue Executive Order 12898. The Executive Order directed federal agencies, including the FHWA, to make Environmental Justice (EJ) part of their mission by identifying and addressing the effects of all programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations. Executive Order 12898 and the subsequently developed USDOT and FHWA Orders on Environmental Justice address persons belonging to any of the following groups:

- Black - a person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.
- Hispanic - a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.



- Asian - a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent.
- American Indian and Alaskan Native - a person having origins in any of the original people of North America and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition.
- Low-Income - a person whose household income (or in the case of a community or group, whose median household income) is at or below the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) poverty guidelines.
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander - a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

As part of the US 64–NC 49 Corridor Study, Environmental Justice populations as defined above were identified along the corridor. Detailed results of the EJ analysis are documented in the *US 64–NC 49 Corridor Study Environmental Justice Technical Memorandum, December 2004*. Special attention to Environmental Justice populations will be needed in future project development phases. Summaries of the characteristics of the minority and ethnic populations and low-income populations identified within the US 64–NC 49 Corridor are provided below along with specific public outreach technique recommendations based on these population characteristics.

2.4.1 Minority and Ethnic Populations

The following describes characteristics of the minority and ethnic populations identified within the US 64–NC 49 Corridor:

- The three primary minority and ethnic Environmental Justice populations within the US 64–NC 49 corridor are Blacks, Asians, and Hispanics.
- Notable concentrations of blacks reside in the Charlotte metropolitan area and the smaller urbanized areas of Lexington, Asheboro, Siler City, Cary, and Pittsboro.
- Hispanics populations are widespread throughout the corridor with the largest concentrations located in Siler City and Asheboro.
- All of the Asian concentrations of greater than five percent were located in Mecklenburg and Wake Counties in the urbanized areas of Charlotte, Cary, and Apex.
- There are very few Native Americans within the corridor.

A successful public involvement program that would mitigate potential Environmental Justice impacts is one that would target participation from Blacks, Hispanics and, to a lesser degree, Asians. Potential strategies to reach these populations include the following:

- In recognition that these populations may have low-literacy and limited English proficiency, appearing on minority radio and television programs.



- Advertising within the racial and ethnic print and electronic media. Advertisements targeting Hispanic participation would need to be in Spanish.
- Soliciting speaking engagements at local churches, civic groups, and neighborhood associations.
- Piggybacking on existing community events, fairs, and sporting activities.
- Working with local merchants to set up project input stations at business establishments frequented by these communities such as grocery stores, discount stores, barber shops, etc.
- Working with local schools to distribute information about the project to students for them to bring home to their parents or guardians.
- Conducting public meetings at convenient times (such as weekends) and places where these populations feel comfortable.
- Including Spanish-speaking staff to assist Hispanic attendees and make them feel welcome at public outreach events.
- Creating presentations that are predominantly graphic and not written.

2.4.2 Low-Income Populations

The following describes characteristics of the low-income populations identified within the US 64–NC 49 Corridor:

- The corridor has a lower concentration of persons living at or below the poverty level than the state as a whole.
- The distribution of persons living below the poverty level along the US 64–NC 49 corridor is fairly widespread. The largest concentrations of low-income population along the corridor are located in Mecklenburg, Iredell, Wake, Davidson, and Randolph counties.
- Only one of the census tracts characterized by notable concentrations of low-income populations was not also characterized by a notable minority population, which would indicate the presence of low-income Whites. This tract is located in Davie County.

Because nearly all of the low-income areas within the corridor are located within minority or ethnically populated areas, all of the public involvement strategies targeting minorities would likely apply to the low-income populations within the corridor. Potential public involvement strategies specifically targeted to attract low-income persons include the following:

- Working with local schools to identify low-income populations through the free and reduced price meals program.
- Working with social service agencies to understand the social and employment trends within a given area and to validate the identification of low-income populations.



- In recognizing that many low-income persons work nontraditional work hours, have limited personal transportation, do not own computers, or subscribe to newspapers, public outreach events should be scheduled accordingly to reach the greatest percentage of these populations.
- Offering or raffling free giveaways at public outreach activities to draw interest.