



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

ROY COOPER
GOVERNOR

J. ERIC BOYETTE
SECRETARY

Comment Summary and NCDOT Response to Public Comments
September 2020 Virtual Public Outreach

STIP Project No. R-5777C, U.S. 70 improvements to upgrade to Interstate standards, construct grade-separated interchanges and parallel service roads from the Havelock Bypass to east of Thurman Road

A comment review meeting was held on Friday, October 2, 2020 via Microsoft Teams to address comments received following a virtual public outreach effort that NCDOT launched September 1, 2020. Postcards were mailed to approximately 2,590 property owners and tenants in the surrounding community inviting the public to view pre-recorded videos about two preliminary design alternatives, ask questions, and provide comments. A news release and geo-targeting on several social media sites were also used to direct the public to the project website for additional information and to provide comments. Comments were received during a fifteen-day comment period between September 1, 2020 and September 15, 2020.

Following the discussion of comments, the project team discussed selection of NCDOT's preferred alternative that will be included in the Type III Categorical Exclusion (CE) environmental document.

Virtual Public Outreach Summary

Participants: 36
Site Views: 225

Alternative Preference:

- **Alternative A – U.S. 70 Over Cross Streets – 8 responses in favor**
 - Important to elevate US 70 during hurricanes and flooding for use of US 70 as an evacuation route (x2)
 - Driving over a bridge with snow on it is difficult and these cross streets would be plowed after US 70, therefore traveling under US 70 and not on a bridge over US 70 would be safer
 - Bridges on cross streets will be unsafe for children
 - Less potential for vehicle crashes
 - More compatible for the moving of large military equipment or houses

- **Alternative B – U.S. 70 Under Cross Streets – 9 responses in favor**

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- More aesthetically pleasing
- Less complicated to navigate
- 1960's federal guidelines require all major travel roads be placed on ground level so that destruction of crossing roads would not create an impasse on the major route
- Perception that Alt. B will decrease traffic noise (x2)

Comments and Response Summary:

General Questions/Comments [2 comments]

Comment: The project is, I reluctantly admit, justified because Craven County and the state of North Carolina have allowed uncontrolled, unplanned development along the US 70 corridor for decades. From the early 1990s there has been a steady proliferation of stoplights, etc. and local contributions to traffic. In any case, it seems that this is a done deal.

Response: NCDOT works in partnership with local communities and planning organizations during the project prioritization process in order to plan and fund effective and needed projects. Projects are evaluated based on their merit through an analysis of the existing and future conditions, the benefits the project is expected to provide, the project's multi-modal characteristics, and how the project fits in with local priorities.

To read more about NCDOT's prioritization process and State Transportation Improvement Program, please visit NCDOT's website at <https://www.ncdot.gov/initiatives-policies/Transportation/stip/Pages/default.aspx>.

Comment: Please have your web contractor fix the public comment page so that others won't have to work as hard as I did to weigh in.

Response: Thank you for bringing this to our attention. We are continually trying to improve our public outreach efforts and project websites.

Design [5 comments]

Comment: How about put yield with blinker [no context provided]

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: I'm hoping there are other options besides putting a round-a-bout at the end of our road (Stately Pines Road).

Response: Both roundabouts and traditional (stop sign-controlled) intersections were initially considered at the ramp terminals for this project. Roundabouts at these intersections function properly from a traffic standpoint and have been approved for this project by NCDOT Congestion Management.

NCDOT builds roundabouts to improve safety for drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Roundabouts also help reduce the congestion and backups more typical of traditional intersections with stop signs or traffic signals. In addition, roundabouts are the preferred

treatment for evacuation and incident management by NCDOT because they function during power outages that can occur during weather events such as hurricanes. To read more about roundabouts, please visit the NCDOT website at <https://www.ncdot.gov/initiatives-policies/Transportation/safety-mobility/roundabouts/Pages/default.aspx>.

Comment: For the Beautification of the Area, I would recommend making 2 lane- One Way Boulevards out of Old Cherry Point Rd. and Airport Rd. With Clover Leafs at the Western End and Expressway access to the future Hwy 42 on the East End (that being at Brices Creek Baptist Church or Taburna.

Response: A connection of the parallel service road will be made to Old Cherry Point Road. Any additional improvements to Old Cherry Point Road or Airport Road are considered to be outside the scope of this project and would need to be evaluated under a standalone project. Connectivity to future I-42 from Taberna Way and Thurman Road will be provided as part of the adjacent NCDOT project, R-5777A&B.

Comment: I do hope the county and state will take measures to prevent the service roads from becoming a nightmare like highway 70 in James City, Havelock, and Morehead City.

Response: Parallel service roads are designed to provide local connectivity, access to residential and commercial properties, and to accommodate projected traffic volumes while also minimizing property impacts to the extent practicable.

Comment: The service road and ramps on the western side of Highway 70 at Stately Pines should be aligned more closely to the highway to save taxpayer money from increased cost of land acquisition and road construction. The eastern side is aligned more closely as should be the western side. This alignment would also be safer for residents such as me along the western service road nearest the new Havelock Bypass. This is because any railway accident or forest fire would require us to travel farther into the forest and completely adjacent to the railroad to escape any danger.

Response: The alignment of this interchange and service roads on both sides of U.S. 70 were developed in consideration of existing and future land use and constraints such as utilities and county well sites; and, through coordination with impacted property owners.

The designs that have been presented are preliminary and subject to change. As these designs are further refined, impacts to properties will be minimized to the extent practicable. All service road alignments are developed with the goal of providing a safe roadway for the traveling public and accommodating future projected traffic.

Traffic Noise [5 comments]

Comment: Question about or request for noise barriers along US 70 in the areas adjacent to residential development

- South side of the road between Camp Kiro Road and Thurman Road
- Neighborhood(s) on Fisher Avenue
- Stately Pines Road (x3)
- USFS Flanner Beach Recreation Area
- Communities near Fisher Road

During planning and design for highway projects, NCDOT must identify traffic noise impacts, examine potential noise abatement, incorporate feasible and reasonable noise abatement measures, and coordinate with local officials to provide helpful information on compatible land use planning and control. The procedures for doing this are stipulated by Federal regulation (23 CFR 772) and the NCDOT Traffic Noise Policy.

NCDOT has completed a preliminary traffic noise study (Traffic Noise Report) as part of the preconstruction analysis of this project in order to identify where noise impacts on noise-sensitive areas such as homes are predicted, and to determine if areas of the corridor preliminarily qualify for noise mitigation. Three noise walls have been deemed preliminarily feasible and reasonable in the Traffic Noise Report at the following locations:

- Noise Wall 2 – east side of U.S. 70, north of Camp Kiro Road, adjacent to Old Cherry Point Road (Figure 3, Page 37)
- Noise Wall 11 – east side of U.S. 70, south of Fisher Avenue, adjacent to Arabica Lane (Figure 8, Page 42)
- Noise Wall 14 – east side of U.S. 70, between Stately Pines Road and Fisher Avenue, adjacent Falcon Bridge (Figure 10, Page 44)

The full Traffic Noise Report has been posted to the project website and can be viewed at <https://www.ncdot.gov/projects/us-70-james-city-havelock-bypass/Documents/traffic-noise-report.pdf>. Additionally, the preliminary feasible and reasonable noise wall locations from this Traffic Noise Report have been added to the public meeting maps. These can be viewed on the project website at <https://www.ncdot.gov/projects/us-70-james-city-havelock-bypass/Pages/project-maps.aspx>.

A more detailed analysis will be completed during the project's final design once a preferred alternative has been selected. This final design noise analysis, which will be documented in a Design Noise Report, will recommend noise wall locations. Noise barriers preliminarily found to be feasible and reasonable during the preliminary noise analysis may not be found to be feasible and reasonable during the final design noise analysis due to changes in proposed project alignment and other design considerations, surrounding land use development, or utility conflicts, among other factors. Conversely, noise barriers that preliminarily were not considered feasible and reasonable may, during final design, be found to meet the established criteria and be recommended for construction.

Once recommended noise wall locations are identified during final design, all property owners and tenants who are benefitted by a wall will be asked to vote on the wall. At that time, NCDOT will contact property owners and tenants who are eligible to vote and explain the balloting process and what they are being asked to vote on. Only recommended noise walls that pass this voting process will be constructed.

An important concept in Federal regulation and in the NCDOT Traffic Noise Policy is the Date of Public Knowledge, which stipulates when NCDOT is and is not responsible for providing noise abatement. The Date of Public Knowledge of the location and potential noise impacts for this project will be the approval date of the Type III Categorical Exclusion (CE). The CE is expected to be approved in late 2020/early 2021. NCDOT is not responsible for evaluating or implementing any noise walls to protect developed lands that did not have building permits issued before the Date of Public Knowledge. NCDOT advocates use of local government authority to regulate land development, planning, design, and construction in such a way that noise impacts are minimized.

Environment [2 comments]

Comment: The Stately Pines interchange under either option will impact the headwaters of Otter Creek, an important waterway in terms of natural aquatic and wetland habitat, recreation, and ecosystem services lying mainly within Croatan National Forest. I hope the project will use all applicable best management practices to minimize the inevitable impacts of polluted runoff from roadways and sedimentation from construction activities and drainage features and mitigate any damages if necessary.

Response: Hydraulic analysis and designs are a standard part of NCDOT projects. These hydraulic designs will be developed during the final design phase of the project, prior to construction, and will ensure that the project does not result in additional drainage problems to adjacent properties. Additionally, a federal environmental document is currently being prepared for this project and will be completed before construction begins. This document will review the potential environmental impacts of the work to be performed along the corridor and includes, but is not limited to, watershed critical areas, high quality waters, outstanding resource waters, FEMA floodplains and hazard mitigation, and wetland and stream identification. Coordination with US Army Corps of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, and US Forest Service, among others, is involved in the development of this document. Environmental impacts and the minimization of impacts to jurisdictional resources are also a part of the evaluation criteria within the Design-Build process. This will require the use of best management practices for implementing erosion and sediment control measures on construction sites to prevent soil movement/loss in the first place, enhance project aesthetics, reduce complaints, and most importantly, eliminate appreciable damage to off-site receiving channels, properties, and natural resources.

Multiple state and federal regulations will provide safeguards for water quality throughout the project. In addition to Clean Water Act mitigation requirements for stream and wetland impacts (if needed), NCDOT has a stormwater program to protect and improve water quality while fulfilling NCDOT's mission of providing and supporting a safe and integrated transportation system that enhances the state. Details can be found online at: <https://www.ncdot.gov/projects/us-70-james-city-havelock-bypass/Documents/2020-09-29-stormwater.pdf>.

Comment: Property owner concerned about considerable noise during the years of construction of the interchange

Response: Construction of the proposed project will take approximately 2-3 years. Noise impacts due to construction were assessed as part of the Traffic Noise Analysis (TNR) that was completed for this project. Recommendations to mitigate temporary noise impacts during construction will be considered and implemented where feasible.

General Property Impact [3 comments]

Comment: The impact to business, traffic, and the general James City area and the huge price associated with these improvements are not worth the potential travel time savings.

Response: In May 2016, the U.S. 70 Corridor was designated as the Future I-42 between I-40 and Morehead City. In upgrading the corridor to interstate standards, this project is intended to improve regional mobility, assist economic development in primarily rural areas of eastern North

Carolina, provide a closer interstate connection to the Port of Morehead City, benefit military interconnectivity, and make the corridor safer by reducing intersections.

The project is currently funded in the 2020-2029 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) which identifies transportation projects that will receive funding from 2020 to 2029. Most of these projects were identified through a data-driven scoring approach called Strategic Prioritization, which includes a cost-benefit metric to determine how to effectively utilize available funding.

More information about NCDOT prioritization can be found at <https://www.ncdot.gov/initiatives-policies/Transportation/stip/Pages/about.aspx>.

Comment: It would be nice if the business that may or may not be affected by this change would be informed directly. Instead of waiting to hear from the landlords of our property that we rent. [did not provide specifics on which business or property]

Response: NCDOT makes every effort to notify property owners and tenants of project plans and public input periods. Initial public notification of this project occurred in June 2019 for the project's first public meeting. The meeting was advertised in local newspapers and TV stations, on NCDOT's public meeting website <https://www.ncdot.gov/news/public-meetings>, and by postcard announcements mailed to nearby property owners and current residents.

The initial intent was to present the further refined design alternatives to the public at an in-person public meeting in April 2020. However, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic forced a shift to virtual public outreach efforts. Approximately 2,500 notification postcards were mailed out on August 28, 2020 to those in the project area including both property owners and current residents/tenants. Geotargeting (social media and internet advertisement targeting based on geographic location) was also used to advertise this most recent outreach period to citizens in the area of this project. If you have concerns about this project, we encourage you to sign up for the project email list on the R-5777C PublicInput.com website.

Comment: How much of the Stately Pines Road is affected, from the current entrance now, to where your new road will be going in?

Response: Approximately 0.3 miles of Stately Pines Road will be impacted by the project ending at Robertson Lane. Stately Pines Road would be shifted horizontally to the south (approximately 475 feet at the greatest extent).

Other [1 comment]

Comment: Is there any plans for rest areas anywhere along your planned construction from James City to Morehead City?

Response: There are currently no plans to add rest areas along the corridor as part of this project. The addition of rest areas is outside of the scope of this project; however, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is responsible for the development of rest areas along highways and this comment will be passed along to FHWA's North Carolina Division Office for further consideration.

Preferred Alternative Discussion

Two preliminary design alternatives were developed and presented to the public for comment. Each alternative includes elimination of existing at-grade intersections, extension of service roads in some locations, and construction of new interchanges at three locations: Stately Pines Road, West Fisher Road/East Fisher Avenue, and West Camp Kiro Road/East Camp Kiro Road. The difference between alternatives is primarily at the interchanges, with Alternative A taking U.S. 70 over cross streets, and Alternative B taking U.S. 70 under cross streets. The alternatives were developed to allow a combination of alternatives be built along the length of the project (i.e. U.S. 70 over the cross street at one interchange location, while going under the cross street at another interchange location).

The project team reviewed and discussed the following information:

Public Preference

The public was invited to identify a preferred alternative at each interchange, allowing a combination of A and B as the preferred alternative. However, all those who indicated a preferred alternative selected either A or B, for the entire project. The public preference was nearly evenly split between alternatives. Of the 17 people who responded, 8 preferred Alternative A, while 9 preferred Alternative B.

Local Planning Organization Preference

The New Bern Area Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Down East Rural Planning Organization prefer Alternative A based on estimated costs and consistency with the adjoining U.S. 70 improvement project in James City (U-5713/R-5777A&B).

Impacts to Human & Natural Resources by Alternative

Impacts to Human and Natural Resources by Alternative		
Human and Natural Resources	Alternative A U.S. 70 Over Cross Streets	Alternative B U.S. 70 Under Cross Streets
Potential New Right-of-way (acres)	94.3	104.6
Potential Controlled Access (acres)	57.7	63.7
Temporary Construction Easement (acres)	0.7	0.7
Residential Relocations	33	38
Business Relocations	7	7
Farms	0	0
Non-Profit/Place of Worship Relocations	1	2
Streams (linear feet)	1,696	1,682
Wetlands (acres)	1.7	1.7

Estimated Costs by Alternative

Estimated Costs by Alternative*		
Cost Category	Alternative A U.S. 70 Over Cross Streets	Alternative B U.S. 70 Under Cross Streets
Utilities	\$29,657,290	\$31,037,552
Property Acquisition	\$26,454,935	\$29,130,480
Construction	\$124,400,000	\$147,000,000
Total	\$180,512,225	\$207,168,032

*NCDOT, June 2020. Costs are estimates and subject to change

Constructability and Flexibility under Design-Build Contracting

The design-build approach allows contractor to develop innovative designs to minimize impacts and costs. Requiring a commitment to an interchange design (e.g. U.S. 70 over cross streets vs. U.S. 70 under cross streets) removes that flexibility from the contractor. However, to protect human or environmental resources at specific locations, NCDOT can require a commitment that no changes be made.

Existing Land Uses

Stately Pines Road- most of the impacted land is undeveloped. Existing Stately Pines Road would be shifted to the south under both alternatives. Alternative B (U.S. 70 under Stately Pines Road) appears to offer greater flexibility for minimizing impacts in final design. In addition, traffic could be maintained on existing U.S. 70 during construction of the new interchange.

West Fisher Road/East Fisher Avenue- The Croatan National Forest ranger station office is located near the existing intersection and will need to be relocated nearby. The adjacent helibase and maintenance facility would remain in their existing locations. Extensive coordination with the US Forest Service (USFS) related to Federal land impacts has taken place and will continued throughout the completion of the planning process. Based on this coordination, Alternative A (U. S. 70 over West Fisher Road/East Fisher Avenue) would have fewer impacts on the ranger station relocation and helibase operations

Alternative B (U.S. 70 under West Fisher Road/East Fisher Avenue) would require a realignment of West Fisher Road to minimize property impacts to the community on the west side of U.S. 70. This alternative would also require a bridge over the North Carolina Railroad (NCRR) corridor, in addition to the interchange bridge over U.S. 70, resulting in additional costs and property impacts.

West Camp Kiro Road/East Camp Kiro Road- The NCRR is located in close proximity to U.S. 70 in this location. Alternative B (U.S. 70 under West Camp Kiro Road/East Camp Kiro Road) would require construction of a bridge that would extend over both U.S. 70 and the NCRR railroad.

Selection of Preferred Alternative

Based on the above considerations, NCDOT has determined that the preferred alternative is a combination of the following:

Stately Pines Road- **Alternative B**

West Fisher Road/East Fisher Avenue- **Alternative A with inclusion of a project commitment that no changes be made to this recommendation during the Design-Build phase.**

West Camp Kiro Road/East Camp Kiro Road- **Alternative A**

Cc: Comment Review Meeting attendees:

Jeff Cabaniss	NCDOT Division 2
Len White	NCDOT Division 2
Casey Whitley	NCDOT Division 2
Hon Yeung	NCDOT Division 2
Karen Capps	NCDOT Design Build
Lauren Haviland	NCDOT Communications
Tony Gallagher	NCDOT Public Involvement
Jamille Robbins	NCDOT Public Involvement
Mike Pekarek	Mott MacDonald
Karen Taylor	Three Oaks Engineering
Craig Young	Three Oaks Engineering
Diana Young-Paiva	Three Oaks Engineering
Robby Bessette	Three Oaks Engineering