

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**TURNPIKE AUTHORITY RECEIVES FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL PERMIT
FOR MONROE CONNECTOR/BYPASS**
Authority Awaits Judge's Ruling Before Toll Financing

RALEIGH — The N.C. Turnpike Authority announced today the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers gave final environmental approval to the Monroe Connector/Bypass by issuing the 404 permit. The 404 permit is needed when a road project crosses water or wetlands. The next step in the process is to sell the toll revenue bonds for financing, but the Authority will wait until the Judge rules on a lawsuit before advancing the financing, right-of-way and construction.

“We are pleased with the permit and anxiously await the Judge’s decision, said David Joyner, NCTA executive director. “We are extremely optimistic about the ultimate outcome of the ruling, but we take our fiscal responsibility to the citizens of North Carolina very seriously and out of respect for the judicial process, we will wait,” Joyner said.

“It is a shame that this project, which is the number one transportation priority for Mecklenburg and Union county, is delayed because of a lawsuit without merit. We are confident in the integrity of our studies and we look forward to our day in court.”

The Turnpike Authority has been working on the environmental planning documents for the Monroe project for more than four years, held numerous local meetings, and collaborated with various transportation planning and environmental agencies. The Authority has incorporated many unique environmental features that are designed to avoid and minimize impacts to the federally-protected Carolina heelsplitter mussel, as well as wetlands and streams. The Authority is proposing to construct bridges, in lieu of other drainage structures such as culverts and implement buffer requirements along streams in the Goose Creek watershed.

The Southern Environmental Law Center filed the lawsuit on November 2, 2010 on behalf of the Clean Air Carolina, N.C. Wildlife Federation and Yadkin Riverkeeper. U.S. District Court Judge James Dever III denied the SELC request for an injunction. The Judge is expected to rule on the merits of the case this summer. The Authority will release a revised project timetable following the Judge’s ruling.

The 19.7-mile Monroe Connector/Bypass toll road is set to open to traffic in December 2014. It will be the state’s second toll road. A copy of the 404 Permit can be found on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers website at

<http://www.saw.usace.army.mil/wetlands/projects/monroebypass/MonroeConnectorBypass%20Permit.pdf>

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