



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
TURNPIKE AUTHORITY

BEVERLY EAVES PERDUE 1578 MAIL SERVICE CENTER, RALEIGH, N.C. 27699-1578
GOVERNOR

DAVID W. JOYNER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 1, 2009

Contact: Beau Memory 919-571-3006 or
Reid Simons 919-523-1662

**TURNPIKE AUTHORITY PUBLISHES GARDEN PARKWAY
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**
Transportation Agencies Recommend Alternative 9

RALEIGH —The North Carolina Turnpike Authority announced today the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Garden Parkway, also known as the Gaston East-West Connector. The Draft EIS identifies Detailed Study Alternative 9 as the Recommended Alternative. The Recommended Alternative is only a recommendation and is not a final decision.

“The Garden Parkway project continues to make progress with today’s release of the Draft EIS,” said David Joyner, Executive Director of the Turnpike Authority. “The collaborative effort between Turnpike Authority staff, the local citizens, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) has been essential in moving this project forward.”

Detailed Study Alternative (DSA) 9 begins at I-485 just west of the Charlotte-Douglas International Airport and moves northwest with an interchange at NC 273 (Southpoint Road), a corridor described locally as the “Northern Route.” From there, the project moves southwest with interchanges at NC 279 (South New Hope Road) and NC 274 (Union Road). It then moves west staying south of Union New Hope Road with interchanges at Bud Wilson Road, Linwood Road, Robinson Road and US 321. The project turns north with interchanges at US 29-74 and I-85 west of Gastonia. DSA 9 includes Corridor Segments K3C- K3B- K3A- K1A- J1f- J1e- JX4- J2d- J4b- J4a- H3- H2A.

“The public has played an active and critical role in shaping this document and the project,” said Joyner. “We will continue to involve the public as we complete the necessary steps to see this project financed, built and opened to traffic.”

The Draft EIS and a Citizens Summary are available on the project website at www.ncturnpike.org/projects/gaston. By mid-May, hard copies will be at the following locations: the Gaston County and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Departments; the Belmont Branch, Bessemer City Branch, Gaston County, Lowell Branch, Steele Creek Branch and Union Road Branch libraries; the Turnpike Authority office in Raleigh; the NCDOT Division 10 office in Albemarle and the NCDOT Division 12 office in Shelby.

The Turnpike Authority will hold several public meetings in the project area to give residents an opportunity to review and comment on the project. Pre-Hearing Open Houses are scheduled for June 22, 23, 24, and 25, 2009. Public Hearings are scheduled for June 23 and 25, 2009. Specific meeting times and locations will be announced on the project website and in public notices in local newspapers.

The public comment period on the Draft EIS and Recommended Alternative is open until Friday, July 17, 2009. Public comments should be mailed to Jennifer Harris, P.E., North Carolina Turnpike Authority; 1578 Mail Service Center; Raleigh, NC 27699-1578 or emailed to gaston@ncturnpike.org. Citizens can also call the project Hotline (1-800-475-6402).

Project Background:

The Garden Parkway has been studied for many years. In the 1990s, the Gaston Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (GUAMPO) led an extensive effort to develop a corridor location for the project to include in their Thoroughfare Plan. The corridor GUAMPO identified is one of the alternatives considered in the NEPA process. In 2006, the General Assembly designated the Garden Parkway as a candidate toll facility.

As proposed, the Garden Parkway will extend from I-485/NC 160 in Mecklenburg County to I-85 west of Gastonia. The total project is approximately 21.5 miles long and is expected to save travelers 20 to 30 minutes per trip. The project is estimated to cost between \$1.18 billion and \$1.52 billion. Due to the magnitude of this project, the results of the Preliminary Traffic and Revenue Study, and the resulting financial analysis, it was determined that building the project in phases must be considered.

Consequently in 2008, the General Assembly allocated gap funding for the project that is expected to be sufficient to build the facility from I-485/NC 160 in Mecklenburg County west to US 321, a distance of approximately 16 miles. This assumption, however, is dependent on market conditions and additional revenue forecasts. Nevertheless, the Authority continues to conduct the required environmental and engineering studies for the entire length of the project and will continue to pursue funding that will eventually allow construction of the entire facility. The Turnpike Authority anticipates selling bonds and beginning construction in 2011. The project is scheduled to open to traffic in late 2014.

Similar startup toll facilities across the U.S. charge tolls in the range of 10 to 20 cents per mile. Tolls will be paid through an electronic toll collection system, without the use of traditional toll booths. However, customers may pay cash, check or credit card to receive an electronic transponder that will automatically deduct the tolls from the customers account. For those without a transponder, overhead gantries with high-speed camera imaging systems will capture license plate information and drivers will be billed.

For more information on the Garden Parkway log onto www.ncturnpike.org/projects/gaston/

###