

# **Fire Tower and Portertown Road Widening Project (STIP Projects U-5870 & U-5785) Responses to Comments Received**

## **Introduction**

An open-house public meeting was held on Thursday, September 22, 2016, at the Pitt County Community Schools and Recreation Building at Alice Keene Park to provide the public with information about the proposed project to widen Fire Tower Road and Portertown Road in Greenville, NC (STIP Projects U-5870 and U-5785). The meeting was advertised in the local paper and on the project website (<https://www.ncdot.gov/projects/FireTowerPortertownWidening/>), and postcard announcements were mailed to approximately 1,160 nearby property owners. The meeting was attended by 210 members of the public. A local officials meeting held earlier in the day was attended by 18 representatives of the City of Greenville, Pitt County, Greenville Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and Greenville Utilities Commission.

A looping slide show presentation provided background information about the need for the project, the proposed design, and the project schedule. Large maps of the proposed project were on display, and NCDOT and consultant staff were on hand to answer questions and listen to input from citizens. Two NCDOT Right of Way staff were also on hand to answer questions about the NCDOT right of way acquisition process. Meeting attendees were invited to provide written comments at the meeting, through mail or email, or online via the NCDOT project website. A total of 117 comments were submitted to NCDOT prior to the meeting, at the meeting, or during the following 30-day public comment period.

Due to the number of comments received, the project team assigned each comment to one or more of 14 general categories (below), and summarized similar comments within each category. Responses to these summarized comments are provided in this document.

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### **Category A – Comments Requiring Individual Response and Comments Noted**

These comments included questions/issues about project website, questions about meeting time/location, address corrections, requests for meetings/phone calls, and specific questions about individual property impacts. This category also includes comments forwarded to the project team by someone other than the author. (In all cases, the author submitted their own comment, which was logged separately.) Last, this category includes comments noted without a specific response, such as statements that property owner wants to be compensated for any taking of right of way.

Comments in this category were responded to individually or were noted by the project team.

### **Category B – Statements of Opposition to the Project**

Seventeen comments were received stating specific opposition of the project. Note, this does not include comments about issues/concerns with project impacts that do not state person is opposed to project generally.

### **Category C – Statements of Support for the Project**

Three comments received stating specific support of the project. Note, this does not include comments agreeing that improvements are needed, but disagreeing with the project as it is proposed.

### **Category D – Need for the Project**

#### *1) Why is this project needed? / Why was it prioritized?*

The Greenville Urban Area Thoroughfare Plan, adopted by the Greenville Urban Area MPO in December 2004 and the NCDOT Board of Transportation in February 2005 shows that the recommended improvements for Fire Tower Road (SR 1708) and Portertown Road (SR 1726) are for four travel lanes with bicycle and pedestrian accommodations throughout the project study area.

In 2013, the improvements on Fire Tower and Portertown Roads were prioritized by NCDOT using the process defined in the Strategic Transportation Investments (STI) law. STI uses the Strategic Mobility Formula to allocate available transportation funds based on data-driven scoring and local input. The projects ranked above others within NCDOT's Division 2 based 50 percent on data (for congestion, benefit/cost, safety, freight and military, and accessibility/congestion) and 50 percent on rankings by local planning organizations and the Division.

- 2) *Statements agreeing that the project is needed.*

Comments noted.

- 3) *Who will this project benefit? The project benefits people traveling through corridor rather than people living along it.*

This project will benefit all vehicle and bicycle users of Fire Tower Road and Portertown Road within the project corridor. While residents along the corridor will bear the direct impacts of the road widening, they will also experience a less congested roadway and greater mobility.

- 4) *Statement that other projects in Greenville should be a higher priority (e.g., Grimesland Bridge Road repair; sidewalks where pedestrians cross busy streets; bridge over train track on Arlington Boulevard; widen Arlington Boulevard; repaving needs throughout City).*

As noted above, projects U-5870 and U-5785 were prioritized by NCDOT using the data-driven process defined in the state STI law.

Several comments suggested that other transportation needs should be a higher priority than the Fire Tower Road and Portertown Road Widening Project, including several located on City of Greenville streets, such as Arlington Boulevard. Improvements to city-owned streets are funded by the City of Greenville, as opposed to state routes like Fire Tower Road and Portertown Road, which are maintained by NCDOT. NCDOT funds resurfacing of state roads through its three-year Highway Maintenance Improvement Plan (HMIP), which is funded separately from the STI process. Therefore, funding for the U-5870 and U-5785 projects is not drawing funds away from either city or state resurfacing funds. Other STI projects that are currently funded and are in some stage of development are as follows: U-2817 (Evans Street/Old Tar Road Widening from Red Banks Road to Worthington Road), U-5875 (Allen Road Widening from Statonsburg Road to Greenville Boulevard), and U-5917 (Fourteenth Street Widening from Fire Tower Road to Greenville Boulevard). All of these projects propose widening to four lanes with a median and add bicycle facilities.

For more information on STI, visit

<https://www.ncdot.gov/strategictransportationinvestments/>.

For more information on the City of Greenville's five-year resurfacing plan, visit

<http://www.greenvillenc.gov/government/public-works/street-maintenance>.

For more information on NCDOT's HMIP, visit <https://connect.ncdot.gov/resources/Asset-Management/HMIP-Plans/Pages/HMIP.aspx>.

- 5) *Concern that project is being fast-tracked to support traffic movement from Highway 11 to 10th Street to allow people to bypass Greenville Blvd and get to new developments on 10th Street more quickly. Was this part of the shopping center development deal?*

Projects U-5870 and U-5785 were not prioritized to facilitate traffic reaching new developments,

nor are they associated with the development of the new shopping center. Please refer to the responses above that address the need for the project.

6) *Why not enforce existing speed limits to improve safety instead of building this project?*

The purpose of this project is not only to improve safety, but also to reduce congestion within the project corridor. That goal cannot be accomplished without adding to the capacity of the road.

**Category E – Project Development Process**

1) *Why were adjacent property owners not consulted prior to the public meeting?*

Property owners located directly along the project corridor were mailed notification letters on December 1, 2015, prior to the initiation of field studies in the project corridor. Also during December 2015, the Greenville Urban Area MPO advertised the acceleration of the schedule for the U-5785 and U-5870 projects in local newspapers, and solicited written comments for a 10-day period beginning on December 21, 2015. No public comments were received regarding the projects.

Prior to the September 2016 public meeting, postcards announcements were sent to owners of all properties accessed via Fire Tower Road and Portertown Road. These announcements were mailed to approximately 1,160 property owners.

2) *Property owner did not receive postcard notice about meeting.*

Current Pitt County tax property records were used to send the postcard notices about the meeting. If you did not receive the mailing, please verify that your address in the county records is current.

3) *Why was bridge over Hardee Creek not replaced with enough width for this project? Why pay twice for improvements to the bridge?*

The existing bridge over Hardee Creek was replaced prior to the funding of projects U-5870 and U-5785; therefore, there were no funds available to construct a wider bridge at that time. It should be noted, however, that the existing bridge will remain in use, carrying two through lanes of traffic and a left turn lane onto Williamsbrook Lane. The new bridge will carry an additional two lanes of traffic. Minor modifications will be made to the existing bridge.

4) *What is the timeline for right of way and construction?*

Right of way is scheduled to begin in late 2017. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2019.

- 5) *My property was accessed without my permission to dig holes for this project.*

NCDOT has contacted all affected property owners to clarify the right of access, respond to concerns regarding backfilling of holes, and advise of future access needs.

**Category F – Draft Designs (including Access Changes & Roundabouts)**

- 1) *Were any other options/alternatives considered for this project?*

There are significant constraints within the project corridor, including residences and businesses, intersecting streets, a property listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and the existing bridge over Hardee Creek. Due to the large number of constraints, the designs were developed as a single “best fit alternative” with goal of minimizing the number of properties impacted. As part of the minimization effort, the median was reduced from the standard 23-foot to 16-feet.

- 2) *Why is the proposed widening on one side of the existing road and not the other?*

As noted in the response above, the object of the design team was to minimize property impacts within the constraints of the project. In locations where the designs require right of way from one side of the existing road and not the other, it is either because the impacts would be greater on the opposite side of the road or because constraints precluded widening onto the opposite side.

- 3) *Why does the widening take right of way from properties in the jurisdiction of Pitt County, but not properties within the Greenville city limits?*

Jurisdiction was not a factor in developing the designs. Please refer to the responses above regarding the design process.

- 4) *Specific request that NCDOT should move the proposed road to the south and have the State of North Carolina purchase the entire properties from 2350 to 2508 on the south side of Fire Tower Road. Associated request to add additional U-turn bulb to accommodate this.*

This suggestion was reviewed by the project design team and it was determined that shifting the road south in this location would create a skew at the signalized intersection at 14<sup>th</sup> Street, as well as potentially impact the New Destiny Pentecostal Holiness Church and the historic Red Banks Church. To address the concerns of property owners in this location, right of way has been reduced by 10-feet, where possible, to minimize impacts to the front yards of the 12 properties. The revisions will be presented at the next public meeting.

5) *What is the rationale for a raised median versus a center turn lane?*

*Opposition to median; requests for four lanes with no medians/left-turns.*

*Opposition to median; requests for center turn lane instead.*

*Opposition to proposed typical section; requests for 3-lane roadway.*

*Opposition to proposed typical section; requests for median similar to Fire Tower Road west of Charles Blvd.*

The U-5870 and U-5785 project designs include a raised 16-ft median to enhance safety in the project corridor. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has identified that medians can provide the following safety benefits:

- They may reduce pedestrian crashes by 46 percent and motor vehicle crashes by up to 39 percent.
- They may decrease delays (by greater than 30 percent) for motorists.
- They allow pedestrians a safe place to stop at the mid-point of the roadway before crossing the remaining distance.
- They enhance the visibility of pedestrian crossings.
- They can reduce the speed of vehicles approaching pedestrian crossings.
- They can be used for access management for vehicles (allowing only right-in/right-out turning movements).
- They provide space for supplemental signage on multi-lane roadways.

Source: [http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/provencountermeasures/fhwa\\_sa\\_12\\_011.cfm](http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/provencountermeasures/fhwa_sa_12_011.cfm).

6) *Can the median width be reduced to minimize impacts? A 16-foot median is too wide. What is width of median on Elm Street between 10<sup>th</sup> Street and Greenville Boulevard – does not appear to be 16-feet, but seems adequate for traffic control?*

The median proposed for this project has been minimized to the maximum extent possible with the goal of providing safety and congestion benefits. (Refer to the response above for information on the safety benefits of medians.)

Elm Street between 10<sup>th</sup> Street and Greenville Boulevard has a 14-foot median, two 11-foot lanes, bike lanes, and on street parking. This design does not provide the width needed to include turning lanes within the median. Instead, breaks in the median are provided for turning vehicles and vehicles traveling behind turning traffic must slow down or change lanes. The anticipated traffic volumes along Fire Tower Road and Portertown Road are greater than on Elm Street and the narrower median design would not provide the safety and congestion benefits associated with the 16-foot median design.

7) *Why do the designs include roundabouts and not stop lights? Preference for stop lights. Concerns about roundabouts not being safe (especially two-lane roundabouts) and/or people not knowing how to use them.*

FHWA has documented the safety benefits provided by roundabouts and notes they are also more efficient, less costly, and more aesthetically appealing than conventional intersection designs. The FHWA Office of Safety identified roundabouts as a Proven Safety Countermeasure because of their ability to substantially reduce the types of crashes that result in injury or loss of life. Roundabouts are designed to improve safety for all users, including pedestrians and bicycles. Most significantly, roundabouts reduce the types of crashes where people are seriously hurt or killed by 78-82% when compared to conventional stop-controlled and signalized intersections, per the AASHTO Highway Safety Manual. Source: <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/intersection/innovative/roundabouts/>

Within the project corridor, the existing roundabout at Fire Tower Road and Portertown Road has substantially reduced “target” crashes in comparison to the previous traditional intersection. Target crashes are frontal impact crashes such as left turns, head on, and angle crashes. NCDOT evaluated the period from November 1, 2012 (after the roundabout was constructed) through June 20, 2016, and compared it to the period from December 1, 2008, through July 31, 2012. Although the total number of all crashes at Fire Tower and Portertown Roads did not change at all between the two periods (at 31 crashes each), the number of target crashes dropped from 15 to 1 (a reduction of 93.3 percent). This represents a substantial improvement in overall safety.

Further evidence of the safety benefits of two-lane roundabouts can be found in Lenoir County. NCDOT recently collected crash data at the intersection of King Street, Tiffany Street, and NC 11 (Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard) in Kinston to evaluate the benefits of a two-lane roundabout that was constructed to replace a traditional intersection. Total crashes for the five year period after the construction of the roundabout (August 2011 to August 2016) dropped to 5 from 8 during the five year period prior to construction (May 2006 to May 2011).

The traffic capacity analysis for the Fire Tower Road and Portertown Road project projected that the roundabouts will function acceptably in the future with future traffic volumes. Although traffic signals may also work at the roundabout locations, it is becoming more common to install roundabouts over traffic signals where they are appropriate because of the safety benefits of roundabouts (as described above). During off-peak hours, roundabouts can substantially reduce travel delay and drivers on side streets do not have to wait to turn out as they would at a signal.

- 8) *Changes in access will inconvenience people living along the project. Distance between left turns is too far.*

Due to high volume of traffic flowing through the project study area, the median and turn lanes have been placed to maximize the safety of travelers using the corridor, enabling them to avoid turning left across bi-directional traffic. The locations of left turns and U-turns were based on traffic counts and maintenance of the interconnectivity of neighborhoods.

The project team recognizes that new travel patterns will cause a change for residents and other users of the Fire Tower and Portertown Roads corridor. With this increase in travel distance will

come multiple positive benefits, notably improvements to safety and mobility. Drivers will experience less time spent queuing while waiting to make turns and experience a less congested roadway.

9) *Removal of left turns will impede emergency responders.*

The proposed changes in access are not anticipated to change emergency response times. Emergency vehicles (e.g., fire/rescue) are designed to be able to traverse the raised median in certain locations because of the way the median will be constructed and the design of their vehicles.

Representatives from EMS and fire/rescue were invited to comment on the project. At this time, they have not indicated any concerns about the potential designs.

10) *Specific requests for left turn (out) or U-turn access:*

- a. *Holly Hill Road* – Due to the sharp turn on Portertown Road just north of Fire Tower Road, there are sight distance and safety concerns with allowing a median opening at Holly Hill Road. In addition, there are fewer numbers of residences along this road, and median openings were placed at cross streets with higher traffic volume.
- b. *Cardinal Drive* – Like Holly Hill Road, Cardinal Drive intersects the project corridor at a location with design concerns related to sight distance and safety. In addition, the number of residences along the road is smaller than other locations where median openings were provided.
- c. *Entrance to Willow Run* – There is insufficient turning traffic out of the entrance to Willow Run to require a left turn out of the intersection. Additionally, left turns are more hazardous than requiring traffic to turn right and use the U-turn bulb to the east.
- d. *Bell's Fork (Harris Teeter)* – Improvements at this location are under evaluation as part of the additional intersection improvements at Charles Boulevard, and will be presented at the next public meeting.
- e. *King George Road / Robin Road* – Lefts are allowed out of King George Road; vehicles on Robin Road can travel in the opposite direction (south/west) to access roundabout; therefore, no edits have been made to the designs.

11) *Requests for additional roundabouts:*

- a. *Lee Street & Fire Tower Road*
- b. *Mary Beth Drive & Fire Tower Road*
- c. *14<sup>th</sup> Street & Fire Tower Road*
- d. *Bells Fork Road & Charles Blvd*
- e. *Fire Tower Road & Charles Blvd*

The project team assessed the locations above and determined the following:



For Lee Street and Mary Beth Drive, a roundabout is not appropriate because the traffic volume on Fire Tower Road is so high that traffic on the side streets could potentially have trouble finding an acceptable gap in traffic to pull into the roundabout. This could cause excessive queueing on the side streets, especially Lee Street, which leads into a large neighborhood.

For the remaining three intersections (14<sup>th</sup> Street and Fire Tower Road; Bells Fork and Charles Boulevard; and Fire Tower Road and Charles Boulevard), the traffic volumes do not support a roundabout. There is too much traffic at these locations for a roundabout to work efficiently at moving vehicles through the intersection; the delay would be longer than a traditional signalized intersection.

*12) Do roundabouts accommodate tractor trailers?*

Yes, the roundabouts will accommodate tractor trailers.

*13) Concerns about waits at roundabout due to unbalanced traffic flow.*

The traffic analysis took volumes into consideration and made sure traffic flows smoothly with roundabouts included in the designs.

*14) Designs should address elevation offsets at neighborhood entrances.*

The designs take the elevation offsets at the entrances into consideration; all grades tie back together.

*15) How will NCDOT ensure the new road does not crack and sink due to soil compaction?*

Soil samples have been taken along the corridor to evaluate the types of soil and their conditions. This information will be used to design a roadway that will be adequate to carry the vehicular loads on the roadway. Inspection of the work during the contract will be performed to ensure the roadway is built in accordance with the design.

*16) Requests related to Bells Fork Shopping Center (Harris Teeter):*

- a. Left-in requested from Fire Tower Road*
- b. Widen curb cut to property owned by TPW Commercial Properties*
- c. Full access traffic signal at Kittrell Road & Fire Tower Road*
- d. Realign Kittrell Road to the east to intersect Bells Fork Road further east*
- e. Full access traffic signal at Bells Fork Road and Charles Boulevard*
- f. Maintain existing full access signal at Fire Tower Road and Charles Blvd (do not restrict left turns)*
- g. Maintain existing storm water pond*

The project team is evaluating additional intersection improvements in the vicinity of Charles Boulevard and Fire Tower Road, which includes the area around the Bells Fork Shopping Center. These requests will be evaluated during that assessment and updated designs will be presented at the next public meeting.

*17) Comments/requests related to access at Pinewood Memorial Park:*

- a. Opposition to removal of left turn existing the memorial park onto Portertown Road; left turn with access to stop light is safest for access to 10<sup>th</sup> Street*
- b. Statement that NCDOT blocked access to one of the entrances to the memorial park on Portertown Road without prior notice*
- c. Statement that better access has been given to Walmart*

The designs do not include a left turn out of the memorial park onto Portertown Road because vehicles can turn right onto Portertown Road and travel one-tenth mile west to the roundabout at Eastern Pines Road, where they can turn around and commence traveling east on Portertown Road. In addition, vehicles existing the park have two existing exits onto 10<sup>th</sup> Street.

NCDOT's removal of the left-in access to the Pinewood Memorial Park property just east of the railroad crossing on Portertown Road was part of a set of intersection improvements at 10<sup>th</sup> Street and Portertown Road. These improvements were required to address the additional traffic generated by development of the Walmart shopping center. Funding for these improvements was required of Walmart in order to obtain an NCDOT driveway permit and approval of the site plan by the City of Greenville. Information about the site plan and associated improvements were shared with the public several times in 2008 and 2009, both at City Council meetings and in the news media, while Walmart petitioned for its second location in Greenville.

The proposed designs for the widening of Fire Tower Road and Portertown Road provide access based on accommodating traffic in the project corridor. Decisions were based exclusively on traffic operations and safety concerns.

**Category G – Right of Way & Property Impacts**

- 1) *Statements of opposition to loss of property or relocation due to project. The project has property impacts on too many residents.*

The following design changes were made to minimize property impacts and will be presented to at the next public meeting:

- a. Where possible, right of way (ROW) was minimized from 110-ft to 100-ft in order to minimize impacts.

- b. Shift of designs at 14<sup>th</sup> Street to minimize ROW needed from properties along Cleere Court
  - c. Retaining walls have been added at several locations to minimize property impacts (these locations will be presented on the maps at the next meeting)
- 2) *Statements that NCDOT should purchase all properties adjacent to the roads and not leave residents who have frontage losses.*

NCDOT's policy is that the acquisition of property in excess of that required for the necessary right of way, slope, utility easements, and drainage easements should be limited to those situations where the excess area is considered uneconomic to the owner because of the project, or where it is in the best interests of the Department to reach a settlement which includes the acquisition of the excess area.

- 3) *How much notice will be given for businesses to relocate?*

Residential owner-occupants and residential tenants will have a minimum of 90 days written notice to vacate from the date a comparable replacement dwelling has been provided by a ROW Agent, and the offer of relocation benefits has been made. Business owners and tenants will have a minimum of 90 days from the date of notice of eligibility is provided.

- 4) *Will I be compensated for the loss of business due to this project?*

Loss of business, good will, or the interruption of business are considered non-compensable damages by law and are, therefore, not included in the appraisal of real property required for the project.

- 5) *My property is not shown as a relocation, but I am concerned it will not be livable / safe with the road so close to the house.*

NCDOT will negotiate with property owners for the purchase of real property based on fair market value. Where only a part of a tract is to be acquired, the measure of damages is the difference between the fair market value of the entire tract immediately prior to the acquisition and the fair market value of the remainder immediately after the acquisition, with consideration being given to any special or general benefits resulting from the utilization of the part taken for highway purposes.

If a property owner believes their property should be acquired due to undue hardship on account of one or all of the following reasons: health, safety or financial reasons; they may request this of NCDOT in writing with supporting documents that show that remaining on the property poses an undue hardship to the property owner, as compared to other property owners located within the corridor. Merely being located within the corridor is insufficient to qualify for a hardship acquisition. Please contact the NCDOT Division 2 ROW Office for more

information about this process at (252) 364-9030.

- 6) *How will NCDOT determine how I will be compensated for impacts to my residential property (including increased flooding risk, lost property value, loss of peace and quiet, loss of mature trees)?*

See responses above for information on the ROW process. More information can be found at <https://connect.ncdot.gov/business/ROW/Pages/default.aspx>

- 7) *I will not have room to park my vehicles after right of way is taking from my front yard. What will NCDOT do about this?*

See above. Issues related to driveways and parking are handled during ROW and final design.

- 8) *Request for retention wall in area behind Willow Run.*

Retaining walls have been added to the designs beginning on the eastbound (right) side of Portertown Road across from Brook Creek Lane east to across from Rhema Street. This location is behind the Willow Run neighborhood.

- 9) *Specific concerns with impacts to St. Timothy's church. Can coordination with Pitt County Historical Society take place so that designs can shift off of St. Timothy's church? Also, can curves be used to minimize impacts to church? Can median be reduced in this area? When church sanctuary was built in 2003, the church was under the impression proposed ROW for widening road would be at least 30 feet from the sanctuary. Concerns future widening (after this project) will cause relocation of St. Timothy's church.*

In response to concerns from the church, NCDOT has reduced the required ROW by 10-feet in the vicinity of the church. It is not possible to use curves in the roadway designs to shift towards the Pitt County Historical Society property to reduce impacts to the church because the added curves would conflict with the goal of the project to improve safety. In addition, the median has already been reduced to the minimum width possible; any further reduction would remove the capacity to build the required turn lanes.

The project team will work to determine what information was shared with the church regarding the road widening in 2003. In addition, the noise study described in Section J below will address questions related to potential noise impacts to the sanctuary.

- 10) *Specific requests to not impact or move historic farmhouse property owned by Brianna Williams & John Hager.*

Shifting the designs north to protect the property in question would have resulted in multiple relocations on the north side of Fire Tower Road. Therefore, this request will not be accommodated.

If there are buildings and/or other improvements located on land needed for the project, property owners will be given first option to retain these improvements. Property owners may keep the buildings and/or improvements considered as real estate at the appraised retention value and move the buildings and/or improvements on remaining property outside of the acquisition areas, or they may choose to move the buildings and/or improvements to a site located away from the proposed transportation project.

#### **Category H – Construction & Detours**

- 1) *How will residents/businesses be notified about upcoming construction and detour routes?*

Information about construction and detours will be shared through multiple outlets, including local news stations, EMS, schools, and businesses in the project corridor. In addition, project construction updates will be posted on NCDOT's online Traveler Information Management System (TIMS), which provides information on road construction, accidents, weather conditions, and other incidents that may affect travel time. TIMS also provides real-time travel information in major metropolitan areas through live traffic cameras and speed sensors. It can be accessed at: <http://tims.ncdot.gov/tims/default.aspx>

- 2) *How will properties be accessed during construction?*

NCDOT will work with the construction contractor to stage construction to ensure access to both private properties and businesses.

- 3) *What detour routes will be used during construction?*

Detour routes will be determined during the final design stage of the project.

- 4) *Concern residential neighborhood roads will be used as cut-through during construction.*

Detour routes will be clearly signed for traffic to use appropriate roads during construction.

- 5) *Construction will need to be done at separate times at Holly Hill Road and Cardinal Drive because a small wooden bridge connects the two sides of the neighborhood, but emergency vehicles cannot pass over it.*

Comment noted.

## Category I – Traffic / Speed Limit / Safety / Signage

- 1) *Traffic along the project does not warrant the proposed designs, especially along the Portertown section. There is no/limited congestion on Portertown Road.*

Part of the traffic analysis included a “future no-build” scenario (for the year 2040), which contains the existing road network with future traffic. The analysis indicates that the entire corridor will be congested and over capacity if the roadway is not widened. Additionally, projected traffic volumes are above the threshold for the capacity of a two lane road.

- 2) *Traffic is only a problem in morning and evening rush hour.*

Without the widening, traffic during peak hours is projected to be very congested and severely over capacity. Roadways are designed to accommodate the period during the day when there is the most traffic (peak hours).

- 3) *Please do not increase speed limit to 45 mph – keep at 35 mph for safety reasons. Have there been studies of the average current speed on the current roads? Vehicles already travel above 35 mph.*

NCDOT is evaluating whether to retain the posted the speed limit along Portertown Road at 35 mph. A decision will be presented at the next public meeting after completion of the analysis.

- 4) *Concerns higher speeds will result in cars running off road into homes. Additional traffic will make roads less safe, instead of more safe.*

The roadway designs account for the predicted speed and volume of traffic within the project corridor in terms of number of lanes, sight distance, curvature, and grade. In addition, the project will add a curb, which will be an obstacle to vehicles running off the road.

- 5) *Concerns U-turns will not be safe due to speeds on the road and/or lack of sight distance.*

The U-turns have been designed to provide adequate sight distance. Multiple studies have shown that making a U-turn is safer than turning left at a traditional unsignalized intersection with bidirectional traffic. There are numerous U-turn locations on 55 mph roadways around North Carolina that operate safely.

- 6) *Concerns about direct driveway access to roads with greater traffic speeds.*

The additional lane added in each direction will allow for easier passage around slower moving vehicles turning into driveways or side streets.

- 7) *The project will increase traffic on King George Road.*

The project is not anticipated to increase traffic on King George Road. The median restrictions

(no left in) may actually reduce traffic on King George Road, especially traffic heading north on Portertown Road to north on King George Road.

8) *Can we just add turn lanes and not additional lanes?*

The predicted traffic volumes on Fire Tower and Portertown Roads indicate the need for two through travel lanes as added by the designs. A single through lane is not adequate to carry the traffic volumes even with the addition of turn lanes.

Part of the traffic analysis included a “future no-build” scenario (for the year 2040), which contains the existing road network with future traffic. The analysis indicates that the entire corridor will be congested and over capacity if the roadway is not widened. Additionally, projected traffic volumes are above the threshold for the capacity of a two lane road.

9) *Are there plans to install a stop light at the entrance to Cherry Oaks north and south?*

No.

10) *Need second turn lane at Fire Tower Road and Arlington Blvd.*

Plans are currently being developed to address traffic at this intersection.

11) *Project will cause a traffic bottleneck at Portertown and 10<sup>th</sup> Street.*

The Fire Tower Road and Portertown Road project does not include substantial improvements to the intersection of Portertown Road and 10<sup>th</sup> Street other than adding a second southbound lane coming out of the intersection. The traffic analysis indicated that this intersection will operate unacceptably in the future. Although some alternative intersection ideas were considered, ultimately no changes were recommended because there are several signals to the east and west along 10<sup>th</sup> Street that impact traffic operations at the intersection. This entire corridor will be studied in the future as a separate project to determine what needs to be done to accommodate future traffic volumes.

12) *Please add signage so trucks know speed limit / passing through residential neighborhood.*

All appropriate signage will be added during the final design stage of the project.

13) *Please add signage or additional education materials explaining how to use roundabouts.*

Pavement markings will show drivers how to approach and use the roundabouts.

14) *Project will increase trucks on road, causing greater safety concerns.*

The project area is primarily residential, so there are few destinations for trucks to go along this corridor. Truck traffic may increase, but it would likely increase whether or not the project is

constructed as other roadways such as Greenville Boulevard become more congested.

- 15) *Need to retain existing yield/island at 14<sup>th</sup> Street so it won't be difficult to get out of Cherry Oaks North neighborhood.*

The removal of this channelized turn should not affect any traffic coming out of Mary Beth Drive (Cherry Oaks North). It is not possible to keep the channelized turn due to right-of-way constraints.

- 16) *Crashes are caused by rear-ending, not due to left turning vehicles as mentioned in video. Please verify crash information.*

Crash history data comes from police reports. The numbers presented in the video shown at the public meeting have been verified by NCDOT. There are more rear end crashes than left turn crashes, but the percentage of left turn crashes is still substantial.

- 17) *Too much traffic is being directed to Kittrell Road with these designs.*

Plans are currently being developed to address traffic at this intersection. More information will be provided at the next public meeting.

- 18) *Tractor trailers should be prohibited from using the improved road.*

Fire Tower and Portertown Roads are identified on county thoroughfare plan as a major thoroughfare, which allows truck traffic. The project is in keeping with local plans.

#### **Category J – Property Values / Neighborhoods / Livability**

- 1) *This project will reduce property values along Fire Tower and Portertown Roads due to the road being closer to homes, noise impacts, and/or visual impacts. No one will buy my house after this project is constructed.*

NCDOT does not compensate property owners for speculative losses, which are considered non-compensable by law. As discussed above in Category G, for land that needs to be acquired for the project, NCDOT will compensate property owners for the purchase of real property based on fair market value. Where it may be relevant, the effect of the introduction of traffic noise from the use of the part taken for highway purposes may be considered in appraising the fair market value of the remainder. Its relevance depends upon highest and best use of the property.

- 2) *Changes in access will isolate neighborhoods.*

It is not anticipated that the proposed changes in access will alter existing origins or destinations of vehicles using the Fire Tower and Portertown Roads corridor. The changes would only change the routing of vehicles. It is expected that the addition of bicycle lanes will encourage



connectivity between neighborhoods in the project corridor.

- 3) *Additional traffic on these roads conflicts with project corridor being a “residential node” in the Greenville Horizon Plan.*

The characterization of the project area as residential in the Greenville Horizon Plan relates to land use recommendations, not traffic volume. The project was developed in coordination with the City of Greenville, via the Greenville Urban Area MPO, which has identified the project area as a major thoroughfare since 2004. The addition of bicycle lanes and curb and gutter design (which facilitates the addition of sidewalks) is in accordance with all local plans.

- 4) *Is the project compatible with land use / zoning plans? What land use / zoning protections will protect the project corridor from changing to commercial? Do not want change similar to Greenville Blvd or Evans Street.*

As noted above, the project is consistent with local plans. Land use and zoning along the project corridor is established by the City of Greenville Planning and Zoning Commission. The City of Greenville Future Land Use Plan Map indicates medium density residential development is planned for most of the project study area, with high-density residential planned near the railroad tracks. Commercial/office institutional development is shown for the parcels surrounding the intersections at both ends of the project.

Any changes to zoning within the project study corridor would require re-zoning approval by the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council; both meetings are open to the public for comment.

- 5) *Concerns about additional truck traffic not wanted in residential neighborhoods.*

As noted above, the project area is primarily residential, so there are few destinations for trucks to access along this corridor. Truck traffic may increase, but it would likely increase whether or not the project is constructed as other roadways such as Greenville Boulevard become more congested.

#### **Category K – Bicycle & Pedestrian**

- 1) *Requests for sidewalks along the entirety of the project. In particular, it was noted there is pedestrian traffic west of the Walmart on Portertown Road and that sidewalks are needed in that location.*

The construction of sidewalks as part of this project depends on the ability of the City of Greenville and Pitt County to assist with construction and maintenance costs. NCDOT has shared the public feedback about sidewalks with the City and County and will continue this coordination until a decision is made.

- 2) *Where will pedestrians cross the road? Please add pedestrian crosswalks.*

If sidewalks are constructed as part of the project (see above), pedestrian crosswalks will be added as part of the sidewalk improvements.

- 3) *No need for sidewalks once road turns into a freeway.*

Comment noted. NCDOT Complete Streets policy and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan for the Greenville Urban Area MPO support the addition of sidewalks along this project.

- 4) *No need for sidewalks at cost of impacting adjacent properties.*

Whether or not sidewalks are constructed, the berm is still required to accommodate the curb and gutter drainage system, as well as the potential for utility relocation. The addition of sidewalk would not create additional property impacts from what was shown on the designs at the public meeting.

- 5) *Bicycle lanes are not needed; they will not be used. Remove bicycle lanes to reduce adjacent property impacts.*

Although few cyclists use the existing project corridor due to the lack of bicycle accommodations, the route is considered important for future bicycle use and the addition of bicycle lanes is consistent with local plans. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan for the Greenville Urban Area MPO recommends the addition of bicycle lanes for the entire length of the project. In addition, the State Bicycle Route NC 2 (Mountains to Sea) runs on Fire Tower Road from East 14th Street to Portertown Road.

- 6) *Bike path doesn't connect to bike facilities at either end of project. Those streets are not safe for bikes.*

The number of bicycle facilities outside the project corridor should increase over time with the implementation of the Greenville Urban Area MPO's Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan and the NCDOT Complete Streets policy. In addition, several shared use paths are planned in the project area: Meetinghouse to Fire Tower will run on Fire Tower from Charles Boulevard to East 14th Street, 14th Street Trail will cross meet Meetinghouse to Fire Tower at Fire Tower and 14th Street, Hardee Creek will cross Portertown Road at Robin Road, and Hardee to Bells Fork Extension will cross Portertown Road at Hardee Creek. These planned paths are included in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan.

- 7) *Why not consider combined bike/pedestrian path to minimize footprint?*

This suggestion would not substantially change the anticipated impacts as a berm would still be needed along both sides of the road to accommodate the curb and gutter drainage system, as well as the potential for utility relocation. Adding a single 10-foot path would increase impacts

on one side of the road.

- 8) *Safety concerns about children getting off school buses needing to cross a four-lane highway.*

School transportation programs will change drop off and pick up patterns to accommodate the improved roadway. Children will not be required to cross a four-lane divided road to board or exit a school bus.

#### **Category L – Natural Resources / Flooding & Drainage**

- 1) *The project will damage streams/wetlands and/or wildlife habitat.*

The project is estimated to impact 590 feet of stream and 0.16 acres of wetlands. These impacts were calculated by determining the length of field-delineated jurisdictional stream channel and wetland areas within 25 feet of the project slope-stake line. Efforts will be made to avoid and minimize these impacts during final design. Where impacts are unavoidable, NCDOT will provide compensatory mitigation as part of federal and state permitting requirements. Mitigation will be provided through the North Carolina Division of Mitigation Services (DMS). The US Army Corps of Engineers, NCDOT, and NC Department of Environmental Quality entered into a memorandum of agreement in July 2003 that established procedures for providing compensatory mitigation through DMS (formerly the Ecosystem Enhancement Program) to offset impacts to streams and wetlands from NCDOT projects. The three parties agreed that mitigation for transportation projects should occur before impacts and using a watershed approach. Appropriate compensatory mitigation requirements for wetland and stream impacts from the Fire Tower Road and Portertown Road project will be determined in consultation with the appropriate federal and state environmental resource and regulatory agencies.

Based on field surveys of the project study area, the project is not anticipated to effect endangered or threatened species protected under federal regulations.

- 2) *Additional impervious surface will impact water quality and/or cause/increased flooding.*

Drainage designs will be developed prior to construction that will ensure the project will not result in additional flooding to adjacent properties. Multiple state and federal regulations will provide safeguards for water quality. In addition to Clean Water Act mitigation requirements for stream and wetland impacts (if needed), streamside riparian zones within the study area are protected under provisions of the Tar-Pamlico River Basin Rules administered by the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ). These regulations address stormwater requirements within the Tar-Pamlico River basin, including implementation of required stormwater management or treatment. Information about NCDOT's stormwater program can be found online at: <https://www.ncdot.gov/programs/environment/stormwater/>.

During project construction, NCDOT will minimize construction related impacts by 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, property, and natural resources.

- 3) *Existing drainage from Fire Tower Road causes property impacts at 107 Cherrywood Drive. Will project exacerbate this problem?*

This concern will be evaluated during the development of the drainage designs for the project.

- 4) *Concerns about impacts to pond in Holly Hills neighborhood.*

The highway storm drainage system design will include an evaluation of the downstream receiving channel or system to determine its adequacy. This evaluation will address pre and post runoff conditions of stormwater flow, velocity, and depth at the points leaving NCDOT rights-of-way.

- 5) *Request to see 401 Water Quality Certification for project.*

The water quality certification for the project will be completed during the final design stage of the public and made available at NCDOT's permit website:

<https://connect.ncdot.gov/resources/Environmental/Pages/default.aspx>

- 6) *Existing roundabout at Fire Tower and Portertown does not drain property.*

This concern will be evaluated during the development of the drainage designs for the project.

- 7) *Concerns about erosion/runoff at Cardinal Drive pond; do not compromise integrity of dirt wall (earthen dam).*

As noted above, the highway storm drainage system design will include an evaluation of the downstream receiving channel or system to determine its adequacy. This evaluation will address pre and post runoff conditions of stormwater flow, velocity, and depth at the points leaving NCDOT rights-of-way.

#### **Category M – Noise & Air Quality**

- 1) *Concerns about additional traffic noise for residential properties.*

NCDOT is completing a traffic noise study, which will address these concerns. Results will be presented at the next public meeting.

- 2) *Concerns about traffic noise for sanctuary at St. Timothy's church.*

The noise study currently underway will address these concerns.

- 3) *Concerns additional traffic will cause air quality impacts.*

With continued growth in the regions, additional traffic is anticipated whether or not the proposed improvements are completed. The project is anticipated to reduce traffic congestion and improve mobility, which should provide an overall benefit to air quality.

- 4) *What will noise levels be during construction and after project is constructed?*

The noise study currently underway will address these concerns.

- 5) *Requests for consideration of noise barriers.*

The noise study currently underway will address these concerns.

- 6) *Requests for protection from light impacts.*

Any determination regarding street lights for this project will be made by the City of Greenville. Please contact the City with any concerns regarding street lighting and how it should/should not be incorporated into the project. In addition, any requests for landscaping to shield residences from vehicle lights should be directed to the City.

#### **Category N – Visual Impacts / Landscaping**

- 1) *The project will change the current visual environment (residential, large trees, etc.). Requests for landscaping of median and right of way to match current visual environment, including large mature trees.*

Similar to sidewalk inclusion, the addition of landscaping is negotiated with municipalities. The public's requests for landscaping have been communicated to the City of Greenville, who will make the ultimate decision as to whether or not they will pursue an agreement with NCDOT to include landscaping as part of the proposed project improvements.

- 2) *Damage to neighborhood entrances needs to be repaired / enhanced (e.g., requests for landscaping, replacement signs, entrance islands).*

A design revision to the plans presented at the public meeting in September 2016 will provide a replacement entrance island and sign at the Willow Run neighborhood. The design team will look at other entrances and whether other islands can be retained. Any changes will be presented at the next public meeting.

- 3) *Need a privacy wall for Willow Run neighborhood due to loss of buffer space.*

Replacement of any privacy walls impacted by the project will be negotiated with the appropriate property owner(s) during the right of way stage of the project.