

## **NORTH CAROLINA**

### **CRAVEN COUNTY**

The Highway 70 Corridor Commission of North Carolina, Inc. met on Thursday, September 17, 2015 at 1:30 p.m. in Ballroom C in the New Bern Riverfront Convention Center, 203 South Front Street, New Bern, North Carolina.

#### County members present:

Carteret County – Myles Stempin and Dave Whitlow  
Craven County – Don Baumgardner, Bobby Darden, Tom Mark, Jack B. Veit and Danny Walsh  
Johnston County – Ted Godwin and Frank Price  
Jones County – None  
Lenoir County – John Craft and Mark Pope  
Wayne County – Jack Best, Chris Boyette, Joe Daughtery and Bill Pate

#### Other persons present:

North Carolina Board of Transportation – Hugh Overholt and Gus Tulloss  
Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director – M. Durwood Stephenson  
North Carolina Department of Transportation – Jeff Cabaniss, Charles Cox, Haywood Daughtry,  
Munah Gwyan, Rob Hanson, Jiles Harrell, Tim Little, Jammie Robbins and John Rouse  
James City – Craig Allen, Melvin Cooper, Vivian Stevens, William Stevens  
Craven County Commissioner – Steve Tyson  
Down East RPO – Patrick Flanagan  
Eastern Carolina RPO – Lauren Tuttle  
MCAS Cherry Point – Tyler Harris  
Havelock – Karen Lewis and Katrina Marshall  
Neighborhood Solutions, LLC – Jumetta G. Posey  
New Bern Area MPO – Maurizia Chapman and Kim Maxey  
Three Oaks Engineering – Craig Young  
Wayne County – Marcia R. Wilson  
Citizens – Don Black, Sombra Boyd, Ophelia Davis, Hal James and Raynor James

### **Call to Order**

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Chairman Ted Godwin called the meeting to order.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Vice-Chairman Tom Mark welcomed everyone to Craven County for the meeting.

### **Approval of the Agenda**

Upon motion of Highway 70 Corridor Commission Vice-Chairman Tom Mark and seconded by Craven County Member Jack B. Veit, the members of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission unanimously approved the agenda as presented.

## **Approval of Minutes**

Upon motion of Carteret County Member Dave Whitlow and seconded by Wayne County Member Bill Pate, the members of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission unanimously approved the minutes of the meeting on July 16, 2015.

## **North Carolina Board of Transportation Member Reports**

North Carolina Board of Transportation Member Hugh Overholt welcomed everyone to Craven County. The North Carolina Department of Transportation is waiting for the North Carolina General Assembly to complete its work and to see if a bond will be put before the voters of North Carolina, which includes transportation projects. The budget this year has more direct funding for the North Carolina Department of Transportation since it curtails approximately \$250 million in highway funding to the General Fund. Stopping the transfer of money is a huge deal. There will also be an enhancement of the motor vehicle fees to bring in more revenue. The status of the bond is somewhat questionable with transportation projects. He encouraged everyone to talk with their representatives in the North Carolina General Assembly to include transportation projects in the bond. The original bond included \$1.2 billion for transportation projects. The enhancements will not total \$1.2 billion. There will be additional monies for bridges and maintenance, but the engineers will be somewhat limited in how they can spend the money. He believed we did as well as could be expected with the exception of the bond. The North Carolina Department of Transportation still needs more money for transportation infrastructure. The budget did contain \$35 million for the Port of Morehead City. The budget limited the money available for light rail funding in the Raleigh-Durham area.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Chairman Ted Godwin questioned if it was perceived the proposed bond stood a better chance of passage without the inclusion of transportation projects.

North Carolina Board of Transportation Member Hugh Overholt stated the North Carolina Department of Transportation received \$10 billion in the budget to meet its needs. In his opinion, the North Carolina General Assembly believed it took good care of the North Carolina Department of Transportation's needs in the budget.

North Carolina Board of Transportation Member Gus Tulloss stated former North Carolina Department of Transportation Tony Tata stepped down several months ago. Governor Pat McCrory appointed North Carolina Deputy Secretary of Transportation Nick Tennyson as North Carolina Secretary of Transportation, who hit the ground running and has done an excellent job. North Carolina Department of Transportation Chief of Staff Bobby Lewis has done a good job working with the legislators. The Goldsboro Bypass construction is coming along well. Industry will locate in eastern North Carolina when bypasses are completed in Havelock and New Bern. He commended the North Carolina Department of Transportation staff for the job they are doing.

Wayne County Member Joe Daughtery questioned if the \$35 million for the Port of Morehead City was earmarked for a specific project.

North Carolina Board of Transportation Member Hugh Overholt stated the \$35 million for the Port of Morehead City was not earmarked for a specific project. Dredging is needed at the port. The Port of Wilmington also received \$35 million.

### **Havelock Bypass Update**

North Carolina Department of Transportation Eastern Region Project Development Section Head Rob Hanson updated the members of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission on the Havelock Bypass. The next major step needed for the Havelock Bypass is approval of the final Environmental Impact Statement by the Federal Highway Administration, which will hopefully be signed by the end of September. The travel time experts are currently examining the technical data showing the travel time reduction the bypass will create, which was provided by the North Carolina Department of Transportation in late August. The North Carolina Department of Transportation received several comments from the Federal Highway Administration requesting additional information. Our consultant responded to the Federal Highway Administration review promptly. It is anticipated the Record of Decision will come five months after receipt of the Final Environmental Impact Statement approval. The Record of Decision is a pivot document, which allows acquisition of right of way. Like the Final Environmental Impact Statement, the Record of Decision must be approved by the Federal Highway Administration. If the Final Environmental Impact Statement is received by the end of September, the Record of Decision is anticipated in February 2016, right of way acquisition is anticipated to begin in May/June 2016 and construction is anticipated in May/June 2018.

A design public meeting was held on August 31, 2015. In general, there was support for the project. There were comments on design elements at the north and south terminus, which the public wanted to be tweaked. Some citizens were concerned about the coordination of the Slocum Gate project and the Havelock Bypass project. Citizens owning property in the path of the proposed Havelock Bypass were concerned about the delays the project has experienced over the years. Citizens living at the Lake Road interchange were concerned about the traffic on the two lane road. The public comment period for the Havelock Bypass project closes September 28, 2015. Afterwards, the project team will decide how to address each comment.

Craven County Member Danny Walsh thanked North Carolina Department of Transportation Eastern Region Project Development Section Head Rob Hanson for coming to Havelock. It made a tremendous difference to have the person in charge of project answering the questions. He questioned if the date of the Havelock to Beaufort freeway had been changed.

North Carolina Department of Transportation Eastern Region Project Development Section Head Rob Hanson stated a freeway from the Havelock Bypass to Beaufort is an unfunded project. There is a feasibility study for the general cost.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson thanked everyone for the resolutions in support of the Havelock Bypass.

North Carolina Department of Transportation Eastern Region Project Development Section Head Rob Hanson stated the Final Environmental Impact Statement will be open for public comment when it has been approved. There will be an Executive Summary available.

### **James City Project Update**

North Carolina Department of Transportation Eastern Region Project Development Section Head Rob Hanson updated the members of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission on the James City project. US Highway 70 is planned to be upgraded to a freeway with service roads at James City. He introduced Neighborhood Solutions, LLC President and CEO Jumetta G. Posey. Neighborhood Solutions, LLC takes the time to understand each community and their unique situation before recommending a solution.

Neighborhood Solutions, LLC President and CEO Jumetta G. Posey stated work in James City began in July 2015. Currently, focus group meetings are being held in James City and the surrounding areas. The project team determined it would be best to take the outreach method as a two prong approach. In the beginning, the team wanted to hear what had happened in the past and hear the concerns and problems of the residents and businesses, before showing any designs. Individual formal and informal stakeholder meetings were held initially with landowners, property owners and business owners. This week focus group meetings are being held. The majority of comments received thus far relate to the understanding that something must be done about the congestion and safety along US Highway 70 in the James City area. Concerns from the community heard thus far included construction causing current businesses to close; lack of sidewalks to and from US Highway 70, especially at Williams Road and accessibility in and out of Brice's Crossing. Keeping through traffic on US Highway 70 out of the James City corridor is a separate issue and is not being addressed in these improvements.

The next phase will be the design phase. There will be meetings on October 13, 14 and 15, 2015 to encourage people in the various locations to attend. Neighborhood Solutions, LLC will show people what has been heard. This will enable the design engineers to incorporate the comments in their designs. Outreach efforts will be ongoing to keep up the momentum.

In response to a question from Highway 70 Corridor Commission Chairman Ted Godwin, Neighborhood Solutions, LLC President and CEO Jumetta G. Posey stated the attendance at the focus group meetings was not as good as she had hoped. She wants a cross section of input. Smaller businesses will be contacted again. Outreach methods include flyers, mailers, email and the website. Citizens and business owners are informed by the outreach method they select.

Craven County Member Danny Walsh recommended the James City improvements be made now because the Havelock Bypass has been on the drawing board for 35 years. A bypass around James City is a long way down the road.

Neighborhood Solutions, LLC President and CEO Jumetta G. Posey stated their efforts are trying to help citizens and businesses understand improvements on US Highway 70 in the James City area need to be made now.

Craig Allen stated he believed there should only be one focus group meeting for everyone to hear the same thing at the same time. The concerns should not be segregated.

Neighborhood Solutions, LLC President and CEO Jumetta G. Posey stated the meetings were separated because of different concerns. Businesses have different concerns. Brice's Crossing is concerned about its one access to US Highway 70. James City residents have historical concerns and current problems. Neighborhood Solutions, LLC wanted everyone to have an opportunity to voice the specific concerns and problems of their constituency before the concerns and problems were collated. At the meeting in October, there will be a list of concerns from each of the communities. There is a need to understand and focus before the concerns are put together. Shared concerns are the goal.

Craig Allen stated he was from the area. Persons, including retirees moving into the area, have different concerns than those of the locals. He wanted the persons, who moved into the area, to know about the concerns of the James City residents. Local people have different opinions about the community. When improvements were made to US Highway 70 previously, the James City residents were uprooted and the boundaries changed. The North Carolina Department of Transportation forced traffic to turn on Williams Road. Each community has officers or representatives, which can take information back to the residents.

In response to a question, Craig Young with Three Oaks Engineering stated the limit of this project is from the Neuse River Bridge to Garner Road. There are future projects being looked at in the prioritization process within North Carolina Department of Transportation including other intersections between Garner Road and the Havelock Bypass. The project team will discuss extending the public outreach to include the people who travel along the project area.

North Carolina Department of Transportation Public Involvement Group Leader Jamille Robbins stated commuters using this section of US Highway 70 can provide comments online on the project website.

Melvin Cooper stated he is with the James City Highway Committee. Neighborhood Solutions, LLC has listened to the comments from the residents and neighborhood. James City is a historical site with a long history. The residents have had to swallow the changes, which have come to the area, versus asking the residents what they would like to happen. Numerous James City needs are not being met. James City residents will look at the design suggestions because they are not against progress. James City needs sidewalks, proper lighting and parks and wants the needs without uprooting the residents. Accidents occur regularly at Williams Road due to no left hand turn, which creates a bottleneck at the intersection. Therefore, traffic is still going through businesses to access Old Cherry Point Road and something needs to be done to alleviate this situation. He was concerned about construction hindering the residents. James City has proposals to make. We want to make sure the James City boundaries remain. He commended Neighborhood Solutions, LLC for the manner in which it was reaching out to the area and determining how the residents are thinking about their neighborhood.

Hal James stated he worked with the James City Foundation and was interested in the history of James City. Previously, the residents and businesses in the area were not given the opportunity to express their concerns or to provide input. Today, the concerns are about safety and access to residents and businesses. He suggested a meeting to explain the project and providing drawings for people to study. The project needs to be followed closely.

Neighborhood Solutions, LLC President and CEO Jumetta G. Posey stated the project was designed for the residents and businesses to share their concerns and problems first. The project was designed to develop trust and dialogue. The concept is designed to solve the problems. She requested everyone allow the process to work and see if the fears will dissipate. She appreciated everyone's comments. She asked everyone to continue to be involved throughout the entire process.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated he could not disagree with the James City community that the previous plan to improve the area did not work for the community. We have the correct approach now to address the problems. Now, most of the telephone calls he received are positive and appreciative we are listening to the residents and businesses. We are trying to make a safe passage for everyone with the least impact. He appreciated the efforts of Craig Young with Three Oaks Engineering, North Carolina Department of Transportation Eastern Region Project Development Section Head Rob Hanson and his team and Neighborhood Solutions, LLC President and CEO Jumetta G. Posey and her staff. We understand the history of James City and the concerns of James City. The message and plan of action is correct.

Melvin Cooper stated the James City Highway Committee members elected officials to represent them and to be their voice. The residents and businesses are kept informed.

### **Financial Report**

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson reported as of August 31, 2015 there was an account balance of \$273,765.34.

### **General Remarks**

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson thanked Don Black for his articles promoting the US Highway 70 Corridor Commission agenda in the *New Bern Sun Journal* and *The News & Observer*.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated the SPOT 4.0 Subcommittee has continued to meet as Eastern Carolina Council Planning Director Patrick Flanagan outlined at the July meeting. The priority projects are being re-examined to determine if any adjustments could be made to maximize scoring. The final assessments were submitted to the North Carolina Department of Transportation earlier this month. We are hopeful the revised scoring criteria will be beneficial for our rural eastern North Carolina projects.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated the North Carolina General Assembly passed a budget. Although transportation did not make it into the bond proposal, it appears transportation for the ports, roads and bridges did fairly well; however, light rail did not fare well. Transportation got a new revenue boost by stopping the \$216 million transfer from the Highway Fund to the General Fund. The budget also raises the Department of Motor Vehicle fees, which will provide an estimated \$700 million more for roads and bridges. New construction projects will receive approximately \$337 million from the new funds over the next two years. Critically needed bridge replacements will get an additional \$147 million. Road resurfacing will receive approximately \$147 million and the state ports will receive \$70 million. Transportation appears to be a big winner in the final state budget.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated several years ago we expended considerable effort on stopping wind farm projects that would impact military operations. The apparent victories at the time were seemingly short-lived. A massive proposed \$400 million wind farm project near Elizabeth City seems likely despite concerns by the United States military that the wind farm turbines would likely disrupt military radar equipment. As we learned in our last battle, the military cannot oppose renewable energy projects even if there is an adverse impact on their operations. The military can discuss impacts with the Spanish developer, Iberdrola Renewables, but cannot terminate the project. Since the military is prohibited from opposing the project, it becomes our role to voice opposition and concern once again and we will do so.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated the North Carolina General Assembly passed legislation in 2011 allowing four demonstration coastal projects to construct groins or jetties to aid in minimizing shoaling. Applications have been submitted by Figure Eight Island, Ocean Isle Beach, Holden Beach and Bald Head Island. There is a provision in the budget to lift the cap on the number of terminal groins. Another issue of interest is establishing a special fund for dredging is allocation of 1% of gas tax revenues statewide for dredging at our ports. This is critical since federal dollars for dredging are declining. The 1% allocation would generate an estimated \$11 million a year for dredging.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated Congress returned to work after Labor Day following the August recess with several key deadlines. The federal budget expires at the end of this month without a continuing resolution or a new budget, which is most unlikely. The Highway Trust Fund, which provides approximately 25% of our transportation dollars, will be out of money on October 29, 2015. In July, Congress approved a three month \$8 billion funding gap measure to keep the Highway Trust Fund liquid until October 29, 2015. At that time, Congressional leaders promised to negotiate a long-term new transportation bill of five to six years in order for the states to plan long range for road and bridge projects. It should be noted this has not happened since 2005 and is deemed unlikely even by most of our Congressional delegation he spoke with. Although a Congressional spokesman has indicated transportation legislation is on the radar prior to year-end, Congressional members informed him it would probably be after the 2016 Presidential election before a fully funded transportation bill would be passed. However, some Congressional members recently informed him the 1,000+ page legislation introduced may be passed early next spring. The legislation entitled *The Road Act* (H.R. 22) does include *The Military Corridor Transportation Improvement*

Act on Page 159-160. Interstate designations for US 64/17, US 70 and I-795 are specified. There is also language with a deadline for improvements for I-95. He will stay in touch with our Congressional delegation and hope the new transportation bill is passed sooner, rather than later. The bill would be a tremendous boost to infrastructure in general and to our agenda.

### **Division 2 Update**

North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 2 Engineer John Rouse updated the members of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission on the following projects:

- Gallants Channel Bridge – profile of the bridge will take shape this fall. Traffic pattern on the bridge anticipated in September 2016. The contractor is on an aggressive schedule.
- Slocum Gate Improvements – construction of flyover on existing US Highway 70 at Slocum Gate. Right of way acquisition is currently underway. The project is scheduled to be let in 2017.
- Havelock Bypass – design public hearing held several weeks ago. There were some issues on the eastern end, which need to be addressed.

### **Division 4 Update**

North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 4 District Engineer Tim Little updated the members of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission on the following projects:

- Goldsboro Bypass western section – anticipated completion October/November 2015. Additional signs are being erected.
- Goldsboro Bypass eastern section – anticipated June 2016 completion. Trying to make up for bad weather with more aggressive schedule.
- Pine Level – Median cross-over closures and upgrades of two intersections to interchanges. The project is underway. Culvert is being constructed. The estimated completion date is July 2017.
- Bridge rehab project at prison in Johnston County – traffic shifted down to one lane on westbound lane. Completion scheduled for November 2015.

### **Other Business**

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Chairman Ted Godwin stated there are a lot of people from Johnston County to Cedar Island, who have an interest in US Highway 70 as it relates to economic development. US Highway 70 is not just a route to get to the beach. Last month Johnston County announced a \$1.8 billion business expansion with 700 high paying jobs. The expansion would not have happened if Johnston County was located 1½ hours from an interstate highway. The vision statement of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission is *To partner with local, regional and state government agencies to effectively support initiatives enhancing safety, mobility and economic vitality along the Highway 70 corridor through land use planning, transportation improvement and economic development strategies.* He told the attendees from James City the Highway 70 Corridor Commission is a lobbying group, who cannot do a lot, but does have a lot of friends. The members are happy to provide this forum for the exchange of ideas and cooperation.



Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated the Eastern Carolina RPO examined the intersection at Little Baltimore. Safety concerns have been expressed when high speed vehicles from the Goldsboro Bypass encounter their first traffic signal at Little Baltimore. The project is generally described on the prioritization list. The project needs to be addressed.

North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 2 Engineer John Rouse stated we need to make sure we are addressing all of the current issues at the Little Baltimore intersection, including the interconnecting driveways.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated a North Carolina Department of Transportation employee was killed in the Goldsboro Bypass work zone. He commended the Wayne County Sheriff's Office and Lenoir County Sheriff's Office for having manned vehicles in the work zones.


Highway 70 Corridor Commission Chairman Ted Godwin invited everyone to visit the Highway 70 Corridor website at [www.super70corridor.com](http://www.super70corridor.com).

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission will take place on Thursday, December 3, 2015 at 12 noon at the MDS Center, 206 Skyland Drive, Smithfield, North Carolina. Lunch will be served.

### **Adjournment**

At 3:00 p.m., Highway 70 Corridor Commission Chairman Ted Godwin adjourned the meeting.

  
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Marcia R. Wilson