



# US 70 Corridor Commission

## **DIRECTOR'S REPORT FOR MONTH OF JUNE, 2013 M. DURWOOD STEPHENSON, DIRECTOR**

The promises of May became the realities of June: The uncharacteristically cool May has metamorphosed into a wet, sultry and hot typically southern summer. June has also been a period of transition and settling.

By the time you receive this report, summer will be in full swing. Our energy will be absorbed by the heat and humidity, but our enthusiasm for pursuit of our U.S. 70 agenda will be magnified by the endless traffic that crowds the corridor.

The Governor's Office and the North Carolina General Assembly continue to negotiate and debate a large number of diverse issues. The continued focus of the U.S. 70 Corridor Commission is transportation infrastructure and the assets of our region.

The Strategic Mobility Formula (HB 817) has now been settled and signed into law by Governor McCrory. The 40/30/30 plan will be divided into three categories: statewide with 40% of available transportation dollars; regional will receive 30% of available funds with the balance, 30% being allocated to local level. Statewide projects will be 100% data driven; regional projects will compete with 70% utilizing data and the remaining 30% as scored by area planning organizations. Local projects are to be scored based 50% on data and 50% on local rankings. NCDOT has suggested scoring criteria, but local organizations may provide an alternate if the regional planning organizations are unanimous in their final recommended scoring criteria. The scoring criteria will be evaluated by BOT at July meeting and after approval forwarded to N.C. General Assembly for final approval in August.

Despite some early differences of opinion, all 7 of the Eastern Coalition of MPO's and RPO's have unanimously agreed to scoring criteria that best represents Eastern North Carolina interests and assets. This is a remarkable achievement and the leadership of our planning organizations are to be commended for their diligence and foresight in effecting this change. The dedication to a regional agenda continues in evidence and is the primary factor in the success we have experienced in promoting an Eastern agenda.

**M. Durwood Stephenson**  
Director

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The swift and decisive action by Eastern Coalition of RPO's and MPO's marks a new day in internal co-operation of Eastern interests in establishing project scoring criteria under new transportation formula.

For many years the press has cited incompatibility among competing neighbors as a major factor in Eastern North Carolina's failure to advance commercial interests. A new day has dawned with leadership that understands the importance of regional co-operation and belief in the axiom – "a rising tide lifts all boats."

As we adjust to a new funding formula it is essential that we continue to think and act as a region in search of a better, brighter economic future.

A line has been drawn in the sand between what was and what must be and we now have an appreciation of recent achievements and a commitment to reach our full potential.

Haywood Daughtry has provided U.S. 70 Corridor crash data for period 2010-2012. A county by county analysis provided by Haywood is attached. Marcia has posted the information on our website.

On June 5, NC Board of Transportation U.S. 70 Corridor Committee chaired by Board Member Gus Tulloss was convened at Highway Building in Raleigh. I was a bit disappointed by the lack of attendance and participation by Corridor Commission Membership, but in retrospect I am at fault. In the past, Corridor Commission subcommittee attended these meetings. As you are aware, we do not currently have a subcommittee and I failed to properly encourage membership to attend. The meetings have always been open to all members, but most relied on respective area representatives of subcommittee to keep them informed. I assume the Board of Directors will be primary contact with the emerging organization now being formed and established by organizational committee and attorney Arey Grady. In any event, I will make certain that every Corridor Commission member is appropriately notified of future meetings by this BOT Committee. I am attaching a copy of minutes of the meeting which will provide current status of major corridor projects.

In concert with incentives of Governor McCrory and DOT Secretary Tata, The Council of State has approved a lease agreement between North Carolina State Ports Authority and Enviva Holdings, LP to construct a wood pellet export facility at the Port of Wilmington. This planned facility could create approximately 70 new jobs at the site and could support a minimum of 80 additional indirect jobs in logging and transportation. Transportation Secretary Tata said, "This is a great way to increase the State's global connection through our ports, supporting North Carolina businesses, expanding economic opportunities, enhancing port operations and bringing jobs to the Greater Wilmington area."

This project is outside the U.S. 70 Corridor, but it has been our mission and objective to support and encourage all commerce in Eastern North Carolina. Also, expanding economic opportunity at either port can only expose and enhance opportunity at both ports.

During the month, I have received several inquiries requesting list of duly appointed 20 members of U.S. 70 Corridor Commission. A current list is attached. Also, Marcia has posted the list on our website. I am attaching a copy of final list of U.S. 70 Economic Impact Study Steering Committee members. The members of steering committee were selected in accordance with motion by Commissioner Steve Keen and approved by full Corridor Commission on May 16. Study consultant, Cambridge Systematics, and Corridor Commission have planned 4 meetings of Steering Committee:

Study Kickoff – July 26, 11:00 AM, Morehead City  
Discussion late August, TBA  
Discussion late September, TBA  
Final meeting for Report Presentation, 6 months, TBA.

Hope many of you can join us in Morehead for kick-off on July 26. Formal notice to be posted on website with email invites week of July 15.

On June 27, I met with newly designated New Bern MPO to provide a brief presentation on U.S. 70 initiative. After the MPO meeting, I met with local TCC chaired by Commissioner Steve Tyson. Following the formal meetings, I met with local Craven County leadership. We discussed projects of local interest including proposed New Bern Bypass. Local leaders expressed considerable interest in U.S. 70 at Williams Road intersection.

According to 2013 Highway Safety Improvement Program covering 2009-2013 recently released by Haywood Daughtry, the U.S. 70/Williams Road intersection is the highest ranked (crash data) intersection in Craven County and along the U.S. 70 Corridor. We plan to re-explore previously designed interchange modifications. As frequently discussed improvements will be necessary even with a new route bypass.

As most of you are aware, the Governor is planning a reorganization of Commerce Department. The proposed plan stipulates a public-private partnership led by an independent 15-member private board. It is incumbent upon us to study, discuss, understand and plan for a new approach to economic development and to be an active participant in that process.

We have continued to promote the region's many assets: agriculture, military, tourism, North Carolina Railroad, Global Transpark, Ports and distinguished medical facilities including a teaching element and personal healthcare. We are also located in close proximity to 65% of the U.S. market who purchases and consumes 90% of our goods. Our region offers a high quality of life and a work force with a strong work ethic.

Despite these invaluable assets 47 out of 100 of North Carolina's counties lost population last year, all of those in the rural communities of our State.

As we explore reason and factors in our failure to accelerate or even to maintain commercial growth, it is obvious a lack of infrastructure, specifically freeway access must be noted. A second factor is probably a lack of matching skills for a work force that is noted for a background experience of hard work, but not currently properly trained for today's jobs.

The goal and objective of the Highway Trust Fund was to provide a 4-lane freeway within 10 miles of at least 70% of our population. Approximately 2.6 million people in our Eastern Coalition have not had that freeway access.

We must adapt to the vicissitudes of new economic policy in our State and a global economy that changes every hour of every day. The American economy is more dependent on the economic health of other countries and our citizens have less economic security than ever in our past. The pressing problems of a global world requires international collaboration.

So much has been accomplished in our region, not by magic bullets or the heroic acts of individuals, but by ordinary people working together toward shared goals. Our shared goals and agenda is a task for all of us in a united effort.

There is a great line from poet T.S. Eliot, "...when you think you have conquered success, you have lost." Yes, we have made great strides in pursuit of our agenda, but the game is changing and the path forward will be on a different path.

A final reminder of important coming events:

July 26, 11:00 AM Morehead City Economic Impact Study Kick-Off Announcement

August 15, 2:00 PM Corridor Commission meeting.

Thanks and keep plugging!

### Crash data (2010-2012)

- Corridor length 136.26 miles
- 4,929 crashes/overall crash rate 166.33 (per 100 MVMT)
- 32 fatalities in 31 fatal crashes/1.08 fatality rate (per 100 MVMT)
- 2,371 injuries
- 4.18 severity index
- Property damage costs: \$21,545,721

COUNTY	FATAL CRASH COUNT	INJURY CRASH COUNT	PERSONAL DAMAGE ONLY CRASH COUNT	TOTAL CRASH COUNT	FATALITIES	INJURIES	PROPERTY DAMAGE
Carteret	6	273	501	780	6	461	\$3,266,995.00
Craven	7	321	1019	1347	8	478	\$5,269,816.00
Johnston	4	342	909	1255	4	589	\$5,093,211.00
Jones	0	21	91	112	0	32	\$409,800.00
Lenoir	2	209	363	574	2	407	\$3,471,114.00
Wayne	12	255	594	861	12	404	\$4,034,785.00
Total	31	1421	3477	4929	32	2371	\$21,545,721.00

US 70 Corridor Committee

North Carolina Board of Transportation

Wednesday, June 5, 2013

Meeting Summary

The scheduled meeting of the US 70 Corridor Committee of the North Carolina Board of Transportation was held on Wednesday, June 5, 2013 in the Emergency Information Center (EIC) of the Transportation Building in Raleigh, North Carolina.

**Call to Order**

Chair Gus Tulloss called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. with the following members present: Hugh Overholt, Ferrell Blount, Jim Crawford and DOT Staff Contact Rob Hanson. Other guests and staff in attendance included:

M. Durwood Stephenson	US 70 Corridor Commission – Executive Director
Steve Keen	Wayne County Commissioner/US 70 Corridor Commission
J. Mac Daughety	Lenoir County Commissioner/US 70 Corridor Commission
Frank Price	Johnston County/ US 70 Corridor Commission
Jamie Shern	NCDOT – Environmental Program Manager
Debbie Barbour	NCDOT – Director of Preconstruction
Greg Thorpe	NCDOT – Manager of Project Development and Environmental Analysis Unit
Mike Bruff	NCDOT – Manager of Transportation Planning Branch
Neil Lassiter	NCDOT – Division 2 Engineer
John Rouse	NCDOT – Acting Division 4 Engineer
Ray McIntyre	NCDOT – Manager STIP Unit Eastern Region
Derrick Lewis	NCDOT – Feasibility Studies Unit Head



Shane York

NCDOT – Feasibility Studies

Matthew Potter

NCDOT – Project Development and Environmental  
Analysis Unit

Brooks Rainey Pearson

Southern Environmental Law Center

## **Introduction**

Mr. Tulloss thanked the meeting attendees for their presence at the US 70 Committee meeting. He acknowledged former Chair, and Board Member, Ms. McNairy's hard work and dedication to the US 70 Corridor Committee and noted his gratitude for being selected as Chair of the US 70 Corridor Committee. He reflected on the coalescence of the vision for eastern North Carolina transportation and infrastructure since the initial meeting of the US 70 Subcommittee in April, 2011.

Mr. Tulloss welcomed Mr. Blount and Mr. Crawford to the committee. Everyone present gave self-introductions with a brief synopsis of their title and organization.

Mr. Hanson noted that former Chair, Mrs. McNairy had a preference of keeping meeting minutes for the US 70 Corridor Committee meetings and asked if the new committee would like to continue the use of meeting minutes or rely on meeting handouts for documentation. Mr. Tulloss noted a preference to continue with meeting minutes for documentation purposes.

## **US 70 Commission Overview**

Mr. Stephenson also gave a brief overview of the US 70 Corridor Commission. The Commission is comprised of representatives from 5 counties (Carteret, Craven, Johnston, Lenoir, and Wayne). Each county is allotted 4 appointments each, for a total of 20 members. The Commission's ultimate goal is to promote and create a US 70 Freeway from I-40 to Morehead City that will aid in the revitalization of eastern North Carolina's economy.

Mr. Stephenson provided a list of 6 priority projects (for the revitalization of eastern NC) that have been prioritized by the Eastern NC MPO & RPO Coalition. The list identified the MPO & RPO's represented in the coalition as well as a description of the 6 projects.

Mr. Stephenson also talked about the Commission's recent agreement with Cambridge Systematics, Inc. for a US 70 Economic Impact Study. A steering committee will be developed to help guide the economic study. The committee will be comprised of one representative from each county and town, and one member from the Farm Bureau. The committee will be chaired by former NC Governor James G. Martin. It is anticipated

that the committee will meet 3 times (once during the first month, once at the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> month, and once at the end of 6<sup>th</sup> month).

Steve King discussed the I-795 to I-40 connector including its importance to the region and its support.

### **Funded US 70 Bypasses**

#### **Goldsboro Bypass (R-2554)**

- Mr. Hanson reported that construction is underway for all Sections.
- Estimated completion is summer 2015, based on current production schedule.

#### **Kinston Bypass (R-2553)**

- Mr. Hanson announced that Project Manager, Mr. Mark Pierce has left NCDOT to accept a position with a private engineering firm. Mr. Ted Devens is assisting as interim project manager.
- The project is utilizing upgraded GIS environmental information for alternative analysis. Field checks of data obtained through GIS modeling have shown positive results.
- Currently working on functional designs for each detailed study alternative. Functional design will include bridging decisions (as agreed upon by the Merger Team) for streams and wetlands.
- The Merger Team will meet June 13, 2013 to discuss how upcoming reports should be formatted. Since this is a GIS pilot project, the technical reports will need to be somewhat different than other projects.
- A Local Officials Meeting is anticipated in late 2013.

#### **Havelock Bypass (R-1015)**

- Mr. Hanson told the committee that project development is in the middle of the FEIS process.
- Due to US Forest Service property impacts a more extensive protected species survey is required. In addition to listed Endangered Species typically reviewed for any project, Proposed, Endangered and Threatened Sensitive (PETS) surveys are required.
- A Biological Assessment for the Red Cockaded Woodpecker is currently underway.



- The current schedule is for right of way acquisition in FY 2014 and Construction in FY 2016.
- Neil Lassiter noted that public comments relating to the recent US 70 median project have relented. He stated the local community would like to see the Havelock Bypass proceed as soon as possible.
- Mr. Overholt asked about US Forest Service coordination on the project. Mr. Hanson stated Forest Service reviews will be needed for upcoming reports and analysis. NCDOT is currently working on these deliverables.

### **Other US 70 Corridor Upgrades**

#### **US 70 Improvements near Wilson's Mill in Johnston County (W-5600)**

- Mr. Hanson specified that the project is in the early stages of the environmental planning process.
- There are currently no funds for right of way or construction, but planning studies are underway in case funds are identified in the future.
- Mr. Hanson indicated that the study will include a review of a full freeway design. However; the project scope will not eliminate all intersections. The two existing signals will be replaced with interchanges.

#### **US 70 Improvements near Pine Level in Johnston County (W-5107)**

- John Rouse explained that right of way acquisition is currently underway. It will take some time to complete due to the relocation of several businesses, residents, and two graveyards.
- Construction is scheduled for February 2015.

#### **US 70 improvements at Slocum Gate in Havelock, Craven County (R-5516)**

- Matthew Potter gave a brief overview of the project and a progress report.
- The project will help improve access to MCAS Cherry Point, via the Slocum Road Gate.
- Impacts will include relocation of entrance to MacDonald Downs neighborhood. Access will be relocated to Pine Grove Road, and the intersection of Pine Grove Road and US 70 will be upgraded to accommodate additional traffic.

- The second Citizens Informational Workshop is scheduled for June 25, 2012. A Local Officials Meeting will be held prior to the workshop.
- Mr. Potter noted that local support of the project is good and NCDOT staff will continue coordination with the City of Havelock, Craven County, and MCAS Cherry Point.
- The environmental document is on schedule to be completed fall 2013. Right of way acquisition is scheduled for early 2014 and construction in FY 2015.

US 70 improvements in the Town of Beaufort (Carteret County) including Gallants Channel Bridge Replacement (R-3307)

- Mr. Hanson explained that the project Let has been delayed until January 2014, due to complications with obtaining necessary US Coast Guard permits.
- US Coast Guard has required NCDOT to gather data regarding the mast heights of watercraft that traverse the area where the bridge is proposed. Vessel survey data gathering will continue through June. A Navigational Study will be completed and forwarded to the US Coast Guard this summer.
- The project continues to have support locally. A majority of the right of way has been purchased.

Feasibility Studies

- Derrick Lewis indicated a detailed feasibility study is underway for a possible new location section of US 70 extending around James City to the Havelock area. The study is expected to be complete in 2014.
- A feasibility study is also underway for the widening of existing US 70 causeway between Morehead City and Beaufort. The study is expected to be completed in early 2014.
- The feasibility study for upgrades to NC 241 in Duplin and Lenoir Counties is also underway. The final report is expected to be completed in late 2013/ early 2014.

The US 70 Committee meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

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