



# US 70 Corridor Commission

## NOW AKA – INTERSTATE 42 CORRIDOR

### DIRECTOR'S REPORT

#### M. DURWOOD STEPHENSON, DIRECTOR

#### FOR MONTHS OF MAY & JUNE, 2018

The months of May and June 2018, not unlike the late Spring months of May and June 2016, have been noteworthy of achievements that offers promise and opportunities for our agenda and Eastern North Carolina. The similarities of weather patterns of 2016 and 2018 are eerily similar. The abnormalities and similarities of nature and the rare but continuous exhibition of celestial displays in the night sky are worthy of note. In earlier reports of 2018 (first 4 months) we noted the phenomenon of a super moon, blue moon and total lunar eclipse all taking place simultaneously for the first time in 152 years. Although not a rarity, June brings us a Strawberry Moon also known as a Hot Moon. The Strawberry Moon notes the beginning of summer, hence the term "Hot Moon." The designation of Strawberry Moon was made by Indian tribes in colonial times signifying the commencement of berry picking season.

Continuing the even years, 2016 and 2018, comparison of weather patterns: 2016 gave us a really bad weather spring rolling thunderously into summer and promises of record heat. Two years later (2018) our early spring witnessed record cold and rain-volumes followed by dangerously high rising temperatures.

Exiting the subject of Nature and celestial events not within the purview of humanity, our purposeful actions have provided good agenda outcomes.

In 2016, North Carolina voters approved a \$ 2 billion CONNECT NC BOND by a majority of 66% to 34%; a clear signal that the people of North Carolina opt for a future with more and better logistic opportunities. In May, 2018, Legislation was introduced (HB 1010) titled, AN ACT TO ENACT THE BUILD NC BOND ACT OF 2018, providing up to \$ 3 billion for the North Carolina Department of Transportation. The U.S. 70 Corridor Commission encouraged our Legislators to enact this funding tool for transportation (Copy of Resolution attached). In early June, the legislation passed the N.C. Senate by a vote of 47 to 0 (a recent record vote) and the N.C. House by a vote of 91 to 24. Governor Cooper signed the legislation into law on June 20.

The good news parallelism continued with Havelock Bypass discussions of 2016 between NCDOT and SELC culminating in construction agreements announced in 2018.

**M. Durwood Stephenson**  
Director

P.O. Box 1187 ❖ Smithfield, NC 27577 ❖ (919) 934-1249 ❖ [DurwoodUS70@gmail.com](mailto:DurwoodUS70@gmail.com)

We're already halfway through 2018. It means that right around the corner we will be celebrating the ending of a year and the commencement of another.

As we reach the mid-year point, we must not lose our focus nor is it a time to celebrate the great progress of our agenda, although admittedly there has been significant agenda progress worthy of note.

A major accomplishment was announced on June 5, thanks to the persistent efforts of NCDOT Chief Operating Officer, Bobby Lewis and the support of Senators Burr and Tillis, with a \$ 147 million (\$ 147,264.00) Infrastructure Grant for Eastern North Carolina. The U.S. Department of Transportation awarded the largest infrastructure project in the State to widen 25 miles of road along I-95 and upgrade U.S. 70 to Interstate 42 standards. In addition to expanding and improving I-95 and U.S. 70, the grant will provide 300 miles of broadband to connect Eastern North Carolina to telecom access. Work is expected to begin by 2020.

NCDOT Secretary General Jim Trogdon lauded Bobby Lewis for the grant award (Copy attached).

For the past 19 months N.C.D.P.S. Emergency Management and NCDOT have been researching primary causes and magnitude of Hurricane Matthew flooding of fall of 2016 along Neuse River Basin. With consultants AECOM and N.C. State University, the studies have focused on identifying and assessing mitigation strategies. A final report suggesting potential costs benefits flood solution was released by N.C. D.P.S. Emergency Management on May 1, 2018. A copy of the report is available at [https://files.nc.gov/rebuildnc/documents/files/neuse\\_mitigation\\_report.pdf](https://files.nc.gov/rebuildnc/documents/files/neuse_mitigation_report.pdf). The conclusions provided are similar to a Flood Study provided by U.S. Corps of Engineers in 1965. Unfortunately, those recommendations were ignored due primarily, we assume, to the tremendous estimated costs for those flood control recommendations costs that have escalated dramatically. Therefore, much of the flood control suggestions are doubtful.

In recent meetings with NCDOT/NCSU flood mitigation participants, our message has been let's identify and initiate affordable flood control measures.

We will soon witness a new Hurricane season with 30 identifiable storms predicted for the U.S.

Too many of our citizens remain in dire circumstances and deplorable living conditions imposed by Hurricane Matthew in Fall of 2016. As a State, we still have a huge challenge to return normalcy and safety to residents within the Neuse River Basin. BUT, the real challenge is to minimize future flooding in Eastern North Carolina.

As recently announced, the Havelock Bypass is back "on-track" and moving forward. We have been extending accolades to the staff of NCDOT and negotiating partners at SELC and their constituency as we should. The announced negotiated agreements will now allow this critical project to move forward, albeit several years past our hopes and needs.

As we continue to pursue transforming U.S. 70 into Interstate 42, it is incumbent upon us to address the challenges of developing the future Interstate.

The Interstate designation has a time-line to complete the transformation – and the clock is "ticking." In order to meet that schedule, it is imperative that we "short circuit" the approval process which means earlier discussions and negotiated agreements to meet the purposes of all partners.

On May 9, NCDOT Chief Operating Officer, Bobby Lewis; NCDOT Chief Engineer, Tim Little; NCDOT Division 4 Engineer, Ronnie Keeter; and I met SELC Senior Attorney, Kym Hunter, to begin discussions on upgrading U.S. 70 to I-42 in the Princeton area. It was rewarding and refreshing to engage in meaningful dialogue with partners that must be in one accord in order to secure all required project approvals. I am happy to report that there were general agreements on best possible route for the future Princeton Bypass. Perhaps this is the proper model going forward – to come together early in the planning process as advocates for the most favorable outcome rather than as adversaries.

In a June 7 live on-air telephone interview with radio personality, Lockwood Phillips, he suggested we change our name to Interstate 42 Corridor Commission. I appreciate the optimistic confidence of the idea.

General Hugh Overholt has graciously agreed to continue his service on the North Carolina Board of Transportation. His experience and understanding of the issues are invaluable to the citizens of North Carolina and especially to the future of Eastern North Carolina. He has endorsed and offered strong support to the U.S. 70 and U.S. 17 agendas. Marc and I are benefactors of his knowledge, influence and strong support of transportation issues in Eastern North Carolina. Thank you General Overholt for continuing to unselfishly share your time and knowledge.

The Carolina Connector, a CSX Intermodal terminal is back in the news thanks to the persistent efforts of Secretary Trogdon and his staff; although the planned project has been downsized after CSX halted its plans last year. Originally planned as a \$ 272 million facility, the plans now estimate the downsized facility will cost approximately \$ 160 million. NCDOT has committed \$ 118 million, but as Secretary Trogdon reminds us approximately \$ 10 million was investment already planned for area road improvements. Several of the area planned transportation improvements are to serve recently announced major road improvements for new economic development projects.

Carolinas Gateway Partnership CEO & President, Norris Tolson has successfully recruited major foreign investments providing the region with needed employment and the area roads will be necessary and mandatory for these new investments. Now they serve a double purpose.

The Carolina Connector will directly provide 1,300 new jobs for Rocky Mount, but it will also benefit the entire Eastern North Carolina region economically.

The interest, determination and passion for economic improvements in Eastern North Carolina were on display in Raleigh in late June as NC Rural Center President, Patrick Woodie and his staff followed their statewide, year-long listening tour with the second annual statewide advocacy event. President Woodie reported more than 450 people from 80 rural counties convened to discuss and explore issues of interest and necessary to improving rural economies.

The Record of Decision (ROD) for the complete 540 project has been received by N.C. Turnpike Authority from the Federal Highway Administration. Although not a project on our priority agenda, the connectivity provided by our road system is important for all regions of the State. This toll road is an important connection for our State transportation system and will be an important infrastructure addition for those of us east of that route.

We began a journey together more than 6 years ago with a stated mission to promote a Freeway along U.S. 70 from I-40 in Wake County from the port to Morehead City. Along the way, we began to dream bigger and as a support and promotion group convinced ourselves and our leaders and the leadership of NCDOT the possibility of an Interstate. Initially we were mocked and described as unrealistic. We prevailed and are continuing the fulfillment of that larger than life dream thanks to your determination and progressive leadership at NCDOT.

Initially a Freeway that became an Interstate was and is our stated priority – But as we have frequently stated, the real priority is a better Eastern North Carolina with adequate infrastructure to improve the quality of life for our citizens and our children and grandchildren.

As a formal Commission and a group of leaders and citizens of the East, we have steadfastly, tirelessly pursued every economic challenge and opportunity possible for our region.

My reports over the past several years have with every narrative equally promoted and encouraged all economic opportunities as we pursued the U.S. 70 agenda.

Our other promotions (other than U.S. 70) this year (2018) are:

- Atlantic Coast Pipeline
- CSX Intermodal HUB
- Technology
- Build NC
- Flood Control
- Transportation Funding

.....to name a few!

This report would not be complete without mention of the latest news on vehicles/travel of the future. Modes of transportation have gone through many evolutions in the last 150 years. We now have faster and more comfortable transportation options.

We have all heard the adage “history repeats itself.” How true. Glancing back at the history of transportation, early efforts to ween us from the primitive days of travel via horse and buggy first experimented with “horseless” options with electrically powered vehicles. At the turn of the century, electric vehicles represented approximately one-third of the “horseless” vehicles on the road.

Although electric vehicles were quieter, easier to operate and less pollutants (no exhaust fumes), the technology for internal combustion engines advanced faster than battery powered electric vehicles. The battery technology has now “caught-up” and is the future – but probably without the need for human drivers.

We have many challenges, but there are also countless opportunities. Let’s pursue them all. Keep grinding!



Durwood Stephenson <durwoodus70@gmail.com>

---

## INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT \$ 147 MILLION

---

**jim trogdon** <jim.trogdon@gmail.com>

Fri, Jun 8, 2018 at 5:57  
PM

To: Durwood Stephenson <durwoodus70@gmail.com>

Mr Durwood

Just returned from DC where we attended the official announcement for NC. Wanted to recognize the outstanding work of Bobby Lewis, Chief Operating Officer, who led our effort to make this possible. I can't recall a more transformative project for eastern NC in my entire tenure at NCDOT over the last three decades.

Please pass on to the entire Corridor Coalition. Bobby is irreplaceable here at DOT and in our state.

Regards

Jim Trogdon

[Quoted text hidden]



# US 70 Corridor Commission

## ***Resolution in Support of Build NC***

**WHEREAS**, U.S. 70 Corridor Commission of North Carolina, Inc. was established as a non-profit entity representing Eastern North Carolina by partnering with member counties Johnson, Wayne, Lenoir, Craven and Carteret as well as regional and state government agencies to support initiatives enhancing safety, mobility and economic utility along the Highway 70 corridor through land use planning, transportation improvements and economic development strategies; and

**WHEREAS**, the central focus of the U.S. 70 Corridor Commission understands the critical need for infrastructure investment in all regions of the state; and

**WHEREAS**, the North Carolina Department of Transportation has no tool to utilize the available financing capacity for transportation; and

**WHEREAS**, North Carolina communities of all sizes have identified transportation projects that are critical to their communities and funding is not available for all the projects needed;

**WHEREAS**, NCDOT needs a financing tool that can be utilized to sustain current level of transportation infrastructure investment; and

**WHEREAS**, NCDOT has improved processes which has accelerated 344 projects and allowed the department to add an addition 144 projects to the 10-year plan; and

**WHEREAS**, NCDOT increased project delivery which has resulted in more jobs for contractors, engineers, builders and skilled laborers across the state, including rural communities; and

**WHEREAS**, Communities are benefiting from this increased level of investment in North Carolina infrastructure; and

**WHEREAS**, Private sector partners must be able to build and sustain capacity to meet increased delivery; and

**WHEREAS**, Build NC is modeled after the successful federal GARVEE program; and

**WHEREAS**, Build NC will be able to fund projects in all 100 counties, unlike the GARVEE tool; and

**WHEREAS**, Build NC will provide stability for industry partners, support NCDOT in delivering more projects across the state, and offer a critical financing tool needed to keep North Carolina moving forward; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the U.S. 70 Corridor Commission of North Carolina fully supports Build NC and strongly requests Build NC be made into law in the 2018 General Assembly session.

Linda Rouse Sutton

Vice-Chairman, U.S. 70 Corridor Commission of N.C. Inc.

**M. Durwood Stephenson**  
Director

P.O. Box 1187 ❖ Smithfield, NC 27577 ❖ (919) 934-1249 ❖ [DurwoodUS70@gmail.com](mailto:DurwoodUS70@gmail.com)