

NORTH CAROLINA

LENOIR COUNTY

The Highway 70 Corridor Commission of North Carolina, Inc. met on Thursday, May 21, 2015 at 1:30 p.m. at the Woodmen of the World Center, 2602 West Vernon Avenue, Kinston, North Carolina.

County members present:

Carteret County – Robin Comer, Mark Mansfield, Myles Stempin and Dave Whitlow
Craven County – Donald Baumgardner, Bobby Darden, Tom Mark, Jack B. Veit and Danny Walsh
Johnston County – Ted Godwin, Zach Ollis, Frank Price and Don Rains
Jones County – None
Lenoir County – Mark Pope and Russell Rhodes
Wayne County – Chuck Allen, Jack Best and Joe Daughtery

Other persons present:

North Carolina Board of Transportation-Division 4 – Gus Tulloss
Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director – M. Durwood Stephenson
North Carolina Department of Transportation – Jeff Cabaniss, Charles Cox, Haywood Daughtry, Jimmy Eatmon, Rob Hanson, Bobby Lewis, Tim Little, Christopher L. Pendergraph, John Rouse and Jamie Shern
Senator Thom Tillis' Office – Austen Shearer
Congressman David Rouzer's Office – Dwight Williams
Lenoir County Commissioner – Roland Best
Capital Area MPO – Alex Rickard
Down East RPO – Patrick Flanagan
Eastern Carolina RPO – Rob Will
Havelock – Katrina Marshall
New Bern Area MPO – Maurizia Chapman and Kim Maxey
Three Oaks Engineering – Craig Young
Upper Coastal Plain RPO – James Salmons
Wayne County – Marcia R. Wilson
Kinston Free Press – Wes Wolfe
Vaughn & Melton – Dwayne Alligood
Citizens – Don Black and Ophelia Davis

Call to Order

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

Approval of the Agenda

Upon motion of Craven County Member Tom Mark and seconded by Wayne County Member Chuck Allen, the members of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission unanimously approved the agenda by adding US 70 Corridor Commission Crash Summary Data for 2012-2014 Presentation by North Carolina Department of Transportation Eastern Regional Field Operations Engineer P. Haywood Daughtry, III and by having Regional Representative Austen Shearer give the report from Senator Thom Tillis' Office.

Approval of Minutes

Upon motion of Johnston County Member Frank Price and seconded by Wayne County Member Joe Daughtery, the members of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission unanimously approved the minutes of the meeting on March 19, 2015.

North Carolina Board of Transportation Members Report

North Carolina Board of Transportation Member Gus H. Tulloss stated it is an exciting time to be involved with transportation, especially with the interest in the North Carolina General Assembly.

US Highway 70/Interstate 795 Interstate Designation Report

Regional Representative Austen Shearer with Senator Thom Tillis' Office stated on April 16, 2015 Senator Thom Tillis introduced *The Military Corridor Transportation Improvement Act of 2015*, a bipartisan bill that amends the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 to ensure the US Highway 70 Corridor in North Carolina would be part of the Interstate system once it is fully upgraded to interstate standards. The Military Corridor Transportation Improvement Act of 2015 would designate the following as high priority corridors:

- US Highway 117/Interstate 795 from US Highway 70 in Goldsboro to Interstate 40 west of Faison
- US Highway 70 from its intersection with Interstate 40 in Garner to the Port at Morehead City

If the corridors become part of the interstate system, they would result in improved access to military bases in eastern North Carolina and the Port at Morehead City, in addition to easing traffic congestion between Raleigh and eastern North Carolina. The legislation will help advance the North Carolina Department of Transportation Strategic Transportation Corridors Vision, which aims to provide North Carolina with a network of high priority corridors to promote economic development and enhance interstate commerce.

The Military Corridor Transportation Improvement Act of 2015 will probably be part of a broader transportation package with the funding from a federal pot of money. The bill is very important to Senator Thom Tillis.

US 70 Corridor Commission Crash Summary Data for 2012-2014 Presentation

North Carolina Department of Transportation Eastern Regional Field Operations Engineer P. Haywood Daughtry, III reviewed the US 70 Corridor Commission Crash Summary Data for 2012-2014.

There was an increase of 158 crashes over the three year period ending 2011 with 129 crashes in Johnston and Carteret counties. There were moderate increases in Wayne and Craven counties. There were decreases in Jones and Lenoir counties. There was the same amount of traffic corridor-wide for each three year period of time. Rear end crashes had a 60 crash increase, which is associated with driveways and intersections (places in which vehicles stop and start on the highway). Lane departures had a 109 crash increase.

James City Update

North Carolina Department of Transportation Eastern Region Project Development Section Head Rob Hanson introduced North Carolina Department of Transportation Eastern Region Project Development Group Supervisor Charles R. Cox and Three Oaks Engineering Transportation Planning Engineer Craig Young, who will be working on the James City project.

James City was established during the Civil War. US Highway 70 was commissioned in 1926 to run between Beaufort, North Carolina and Springerville, Arizona. Within the project corridor, US Highway 70 has been widened over time and now bisects James City. US Highway 70 serves as a primary east-west corridor traversing eastern North Carolina. The Neuse River Bridge opened in 1999.

In 2005 the US 70 Corridor Summit was held. Multiple studies have been completed with the project corridor. James City studies include a feasibility study by Kimley-Horn in 2010 and feasibility studies by the North Carolina Department of Transportation in 2012 and 2014. The US 70 Improvement Project is State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) U-5713 (US 70, SR 1124 Grantham Road to Neuse River Bridge, upgrade to freeway – Programmed for planning and environmental study only to expedite delivery of new Strategic Transportation Investments statewide project)

- 2010 Feasibility Study looked at two alternatives – bypass alternative and retrofit alternative. Recommended two “ramp-over” interchanges (US Highway 70 to be raised up and over the existing intersecting roadways) and numerous auxiliary improvements.
- 2012 North Carolina Department of Transportation Feasibility Study evaluated upgrading US Highway 70 to a freeway by providing interchanges at key intersections and parallel service road improvements. Recommended upgrading US Highway 70 to a freeway from US Highway 17/NC Highway 55 near New Bern to the proposed Havelock Bypass (R-1015), four lane freeway sufficient through most of corridor, James City area widened to a six lane highway and converting key intersections into interchanges
- 2014 North Carolina Department of Transportation Feasibility Study studied two alternatives, both primarily on a new location

The planning and preliminary engineering contract for the project was awarded in August 2014. The initial background data gathering is ongoing. The Internal Project Scoping Meeting was held in late January 2015. The Start of Study letters were mailed in April 2015. Public outreach will begin soon.

The James City project will have a phased approach.

Phase 1 – data collection, public involvement-listen and learn, no design

Phase 2 – develop options, public involvement-get comments, design and refine

The project study area, demographic study area and public involvement area were reviewed.

Work is beginning on the draft Community Characteristics Report. A field visit was conducted earlier this week. Input was solicited from a local planner, school, Emergency Medical Services and MPO and RPO coordinators. There is close coordination with Neighborhood Solutions as they map the project area. The draft is scheduled to be ready for internal North Carolina Department of Transportation review by mid-June. The report will be used to help guide the public outreach effort, as well as inform the project team of the various community features that need to be considered during the planning process.

The National Environmental Policy Act document and functional designs will be comprised of the following:

- Field surveys – natural resources (wetlands and streams) and cultural resources (historic and archaeological)
- Initial public outreach – one on one meetings, focus group meetings, stakeholder meetings and corridor-wide public meetings
- Traffic – updated traffic forecasts, analysis of existing and future traffic without any improvements and sets a baseline to test all alternatives

Three Oaks Engineering Transportation Planning Engineer Craig Young explained the role of Neighborhood Solutions, LLC in the James City project. The company works for public involvement and environmental justice on projects. The experienced experts worked on the Interstate 40 Business project in Winston-Salem, NC and Interstate 70 East in Denver, Colorado. Jumetta Posey is the founder of Neighborhood Solutions and Johnetta Perry is the Project Manager.

The public involvement approach for the James City project is:

- General concept is from small to big. One-on-one meetings with community, civic and religious leaders. Focus group meetings will be held based on the site visits. Stakeholder meetings to be held after the primary outreach effort. Corridor-wide public meetings will be held on three consecutive days. Information will be mailed out within the public involvement study area.
- Ability to tweak on-the-fly. One size doesn't fit all. Process will be adapted as information is learned.

The National Environmental Policy Act document is scheduled to be completed in 2019. These dates are from the 2016-2025 draft STIP. The project is likely to go Design Build in 2021, pending approval by the North Carolina Board of Transportation at its upcoming June 2015 meeting.

Craven County Member Jack Veit stated a delegation from Craven County met earlier and discussed the James City project with the consultants and North Carolina Department of Transportation staff members and thought the project was on the right track.

Report from North Carolina Department of Transportation Headquarters

North Carolina Department of Transportation Chief Deputy Secretary Bobby Lewis gave an update on transportation in the North Carolina General Assembly. He reviewed the following:

- Senate Bill 20 *An Act to Update the Reference to the Internal Revenue Code, to Decouple from Certain Provision of the Federal Tax Increase Prevention Act of 2014, to Modify the Motor Fuels Tax Rate, and to Make Certain Reductions within the Department of Transportation for the 2014-2015 Fiscal Year*
- Senate and House transportation budget meeting discussions including transfers from Highway Fund to the General Fund, short-term leases, long-term leases, insurance surcharge and DMV fee increases
- In March, the House and Senate agreed to put a floor under the gasoline tax, dropping it from 37.5 cents to 36 cents per gallon as of April 1st and eventually lowering it to 34 cents per gallon by late 2016. This was done to head off a scheduled July 1st decrease to about 30 cents a gallon.
- Discussion on highway use tax, but no action as of this time
- State Transportation Investments program is becoming efficient at prioritizing projects
- Statewide transportation needs
- Conversation about bonds, but origin of bonds is undetermined at this time.
- Discussion about debt service coming from the general fund
- Lots of transportation legislation has been introduced
- Caucuses are listening and confirming facts
- Currently, there is only one Highway 70 project in the Governor's Bond funding proposal, a \$12 million project in Craven County
- Conversation about looking at Strategic Transportation Investments program projects regionally or statewide
- Lots of budget discussions, but nothing in concrete at this time
- Governor Pat McCrory and the House and Senate leadership have been meeting more frequently

Wayne County Member Joe Daughtery expressed concern about the Strategic Transportation Investments program projects. There were needed adjustments to the Strategic Transportation Investments program, which are being made. First, our projects did not score well under the old ranking formula. Now we are taking projects as they were scored under the old system and put in as the bond projects. We need to look at the projects that will help our

region and there isn't a great deal of that. Governor Pat McCrory needs to coordinate the proposed bond projects with the legislature.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated he did not anticipate support for the bond issue in eastern North Carolina or in the far western sections of North Carolina.

Report Part C Harvey Parkway

North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 2 Engineer John Rouse stated Part C is the final leg of the Harvey Parkway in Lenoir County. The freeway section is funded and the draft Strategic Transportation Improvement Plan will be before the North Carolina Board of Transportation next month. Even though the Kinston Bypass was not funded in the State Transportation Improvement Plan, a lot of information and data was collected for the north alternatives of the Kinston Bypass, which were planned for the same area as Part C of the Harvey Parkway. It is hoped the Harvey Parkway schedule can be escalated by utilizing the information and data previously collected. Plans are to start the process on Part C of the Harvey Parkway next month.

Financial Report

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson reported as of April 30, 2015 there was an account balance of \$190,167.65.

Interstate Designations – What is Next?

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated H.R. 1844 *The Military Corridor Transportation Improvement Act of 2015* has been introduced. The bill amends the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, as amended, to declare as high priority corridors on the National Highway System as well as segments of the Interstate System: (1) US Highway 117/Interstate 795 from US Highway 70 in Goldsboro to Interstate 40 west of Faison in Sampson County and (2) US Highway 70 from its intersection with Interstate 40 in Garner to the Port at Morehead City.

North Carolina Department of Transportation Mobility and Safety State Traffic Engineer J. Kevin Lacy stated once the legislation has passed the House and Senate, the US Highway 70 becomes an official high priority corridor there are the following options:

- An interstate number must be picked to be reserved through the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, which usually meets every six months. Generally, two digit numbers goes through multiple states.
- Request a green future interstate shield sign to be placed along the interstate corridor. Under the current federal law, the signs must be taken down if the corridor is not upgraded to interstate standards within 25 years. There are no other repercussions, only the signs must be taken down.

The legislation can be attached to other bills with the support of other legislators. Today, there are fewer transportation earmarks.

Once the Interstate 795 connects to Interstate 40, it becomes an interstate loop. Interstate 795 would need to be changed to a 6, 8 or even number to follow the rules.

North Carolina Department of Transportation Mobility and Safety State Traffic Engineer J. Kevin Lacy stated upgrading a road to an interstate highway is expensive and usually doesn't provide additional traffic capacity. However, he did feel different about US Highway 70 because there are so many side streets interfering with the traffic flows. Interstates provide an economic benefit, especially when industries or companies are deciding on location benefits. An interstate highway is a federal highway decision, not a state or local political decision. Some companies might make a location decision based on the quality of the interconnectivity of transportation and the future of a corridor.

The Highway 70 Corridor has a lot of good features -- military installations, port and hospitals; but it also has a lot of surface streets, which hamper the flow of traffic. Over the past several years there has been a lot of attention to reduce the number of surface street miles and put more miles into a freeway standard highway.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated future interstate signs indicate future intentions and would be a morale booster for economic benefit in eastern North Carolina.

Resolution of Support for the Military Corridor Transportation Improvement Act of 2015

Upon motion of Wayne County Member Jack Best and seconded by Highway 70 Corridor Commission Vice-President Tom Mark, the members of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission approved and authorized a Resolution of Support for the Military Corridor Transportation Improvement Act of 2015, attached hereto as Attachment A.

Voting "Aye": Robin Comer, Mark Mansfield, Myles Stempin, Dave Whitlow, Bobby Darden, Tom Mark, Jack B. Veit, Danny Walsh, Ted Godwin, Zach Ollis, Frank Price, Don Rains, Mark Pope, Jack Best and Joe Daughtery.

Voting "Nay": Russell Rhodes.

Carteret County Member Robin Comer stated he thought the community supported the Port at Morehead City, but is conscientious about what goes at the port.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated money will need to be spent on the Port at Morehead City to upgrade it for more use. The Port at Morehead City cannot compete with deep water ports for the big cargo ships. There are opportunities for the Port at Morehead City as a niche Port.

Craven County Member Danny Walsh stated there was discussion about a storage facility in Havelock for smaller trains transporting goods to the Port at Morehead City from 12 midnight to 6:00 a.m.

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:

- Kinston Bypass – not funded in the State Transportation Improvement Plan. Draft Environmental Impact Statement has been completed and will be stored. Approximate right of way and construction cost of \$300-350 million for three sections. Project will be considered again next year.
- Havelock Bypass – final Environmental Impact Statement complete and waiting on approval from the Federal Highway Administration. The Raleigh office of the Federal Highway Administration wanted to make sure the Havelock Bypass project addresses certain legal issues, particularly issues related to a recent federal court in North Carolina. A Record of Decision is expected in fall 2015. Anyone wanting to sue on environmental document has 150 days after Record of Decision. Right of way acquisition is expected in fiscal year 2016.
- Slocum Gate Improvements – construction of flyover on existing US Highway 70 at Slocum Gate. Final project design completed with modifications made based on conversations with City of Havelock. Right of way acquisition scheduled to start next month. Let scheduled for June 2017.
- Gallants Channel Bridge – project is progressing well. The contractor will close Turner Street after Memorial Day weekend to start on Turner Street Bridge. Anticipated completion date is the end of 2016.
- Widening of Newport River Bridge – widen US Highway 70 from Morehead City Bridge to Radio Island Causeway and widen/upgrade bridge. Environmental studies will begin late this year. Construction anticipated starting in 2024. Project will require a lot of work.

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 late summer/early fall 2015. After section is opened, the Goldsboro Bypass will end at Wayne Memorial Drive. Construction is 86% complete.
- Goldsboro Bypass eastern section – anticipated spring/summer 2016. Construction is 70% complete.
- Pine Level – Median cross-over closures and upgrades of two intersections to interchanges. The project eliminates two traffic signals at locations of numerous severe accidents. The project was awarded to Flatiron Construction. The estimated completion is January 2018.
- Wilson's Mills – upgrade of two intersections to interchanges. Preliminary design underway and expected to be completed in June 2015. Right of way acquisition in fiscal year 2018. Construction scheduled for 2020.

Other Business

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated 12 resolutions in support of the Havelock Bypass were received and sent to North Carolina Department of Transportation Secretary Tony Tata and to our eastern North Carolina Congressional representatives. He encouraged the members to notify our legislative delegation members of their positions on issues.

Congressman David Rouzer's District Director Dwight Williams stated H.R. 1844 *The Military Corridor Transportation Improvement Act of 2015* needed the support of all of the North Carolina delegation members. He encouraged the members to contact Representative Virginia Foxx.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated we need a federal transportation bill. Most of the federal funding comes from the gas tax, which is declining.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Chairman Ted Godwin stated a Johnston County resident was persistent in her quest to obtain funding for transportation assistance. He encouraged everyone to contact their legislators on issues and concerns.

Public Comments

Carteret County Member Robin Comer introduced and welcomed Mark Mansfield, who is a new member of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission from Carteret County.

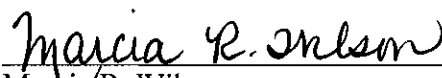
Highway 70 Corridor Commission Chairman Ted Godwin welcomed the members of the MPOs and RPOs.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission will take place on July 16, 2015 at the Crystal Coast Civic Center, 3505 Arendell Street, Morehead City, North Carolina.

Adjournment

At 3:30 p.m., Highway 70 Corridor Commission Chairman Ted Godwin adjourned the meeting.



Marcia R. Wilson



US 70 Corridor Commission

RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT for the Military Corridor Transportation Improvement Act of 2015 and calling upon the North Carolina Department of Transportation to allocate priority funding to US 70 improvements in advance of this designation.

WHEREAS a bipartisan coalition of North Carolina's federal delegation have introduced the Military Corridor Transportation Improvement Act of 2015, and

WHEREAS this act would designate US 70 from Raleigh to Morehead City as an Interstate, and

WHEREAS we support the US Military and recognize that our national security could be impacted if Cherry Point Marine Corps Air Station does not have consistent and efficient access for military personnel, and

WHEREAS access to the Port in Morehead, the state's second largest port, is critical to our state's wellbeing and port operations support North Carolina's citizens and businesses, and

WHEREAS effective and efficient access to and from our coast could have a positive economic impact on those communities, and

WHEREAS population growth within North Carolina will continue to increase the number of citizens utilizing US 70, thus adding to delays and increasing safety issues, and

WHEREAS interstate designation will expand economic development opportunities for the region, and

WHEREAS interstate will offer support for North Carolina's military community by providing consistent and safe roadway access, and

BE IT RESOLVED that the Directors of U.S. 70 Corridor Commission support the Military Corridor Transportation Improvement Act of 2015 and call for its swift passage.

M. Durwood Stephenson
Director

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