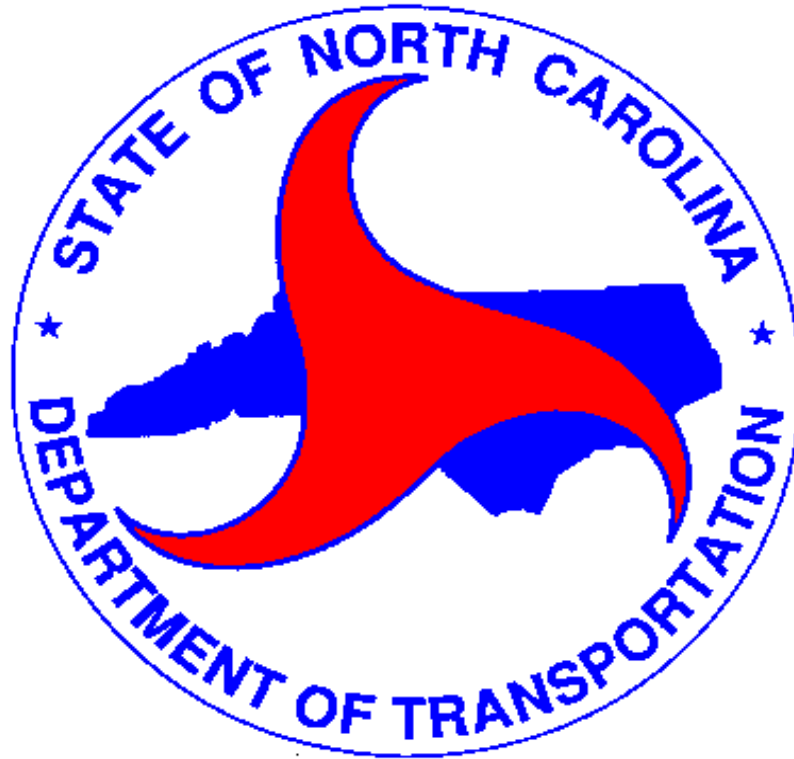


North Carolina Department of Transportation
Project Development and Environmental Analysis Branch



Citizen's Informational Workshop

**I-485, from US 521 (Johnston Rd.) to I-77, south of Charlotte
Mecklenburg County**

June 19, 2007

TIP PROJECT R-4902

CITIZENS INFORMATIONAL WORKSHOP

Proposed Improvements to I-485

Mecklenburg County

TIP Number R-4902

PURPOSE OF THE CITIZENS INFORMATIONAL WORKSHOP

The purpose of this workshop is to involve the public in the project development process and to present the alternates under consideration for the proposed widening of Interstate). Public involvement is an integral part of the North Carolina Department of Transportation's project development process. The concerns of citizens and interest groups are considered during project development studies. Often, additional project alternatives are studied or recommended alternatives are changed based on comments received from the public and/or local officials.

NCDOT realizes individuals living close to a proposed project want to be informed of the possible effects of the project on their homes and businesses. However, exact information may not be available at this stage of the project development process. For example, design work is necessary before the actual right of way limits can be established. This type of detailed information will be available at a later date. The purpose of this workshop is to receive your comments *before* final design decisions are made.

Written comments on this project may be left with NCDOT representatives at the workshop or mailed to the address below. If additional information is needed or you would like to submit comments after the workshop, please address requests and comments to:

Write: Dr. Gregory Thorpe, Manager
ATTN: Angela Sanderson, Project Planning Engineer
Project Development and Environmental Analysis Branch
North Carolina Department of Transportation
1548 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1548

Call: Angela Sanderson, Project Planning Engineer
(919) 733-7844 x 203

Email: amsanderson@dot.state.nc.us

THE PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Planning and environmental studies for federally funded highway projects are conducted in order to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The type of document published following the planning study depends on the magnitude of the project and its expected environmental impact. NCDOT is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) for this project.

The Environmental Assessment will discuss the purpose and need for the proposed improvements, evaluate alternatives, and analyze the project's impact on both the human and natural environment. The document will address the following areas of concern:

Efficiency and safety of travel	Wildlife and plant communities
Neighborhoods and communities	Water quality
Relocation of homes and businesses	Floodplains and streams
Economy of project area	Farmland
Land use plans	Archaeological sites
Historic properties	Hazardous materials
Wetlands	Traffic noise
Endangered species	Air quality

Following the completion of the EA, NCDOT will conduct a Public Hearing to review the proposed project design.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC AWARENESS

SCOPING LETTER - Published in the NC Environmental Bulletin. This letter notifies agencies and groups on the State Clearinghouse mailing list that a project study has been initiated and solicits comments from them.

CITIZENS INFORMATIONAL WORKSHOP – Informal meeting with the public. NCDOT staff conducts these workshops to speak one-on-one with citizens about projects. Comment sheets are provided for citizens to write down their questions, comments, and concerns. The number of workshops scheduled for a project depends on the scope and anticipated impact of the project.

DOCUMENT DISTRIBUTION – Copies of environmental documents are submitted to the State Clearinghouse for distribution and a notice is published in the NC Environmental Bulletin. Upon request, NCDOT will provide copies of the document to the public. Copies are available for public viewing at NCDOT Raleigh and Division offices, the State Clearinghouse office, local government offices, including the local council of government office, and local public libraries.

PUBLIC HEARING – One or more formal public hearings are held and public comments are recorded. Format typically involves a short presentation followed by an opportunity for citizens to comment.

CITIZEN LETTER – Citizens are encouraged to write NCDOT and provide information and express concerns regarding proposed improvements at anytime during the process. Correspondence from citizens and interest groups is considered during the course of planning study and is included in the project file.

PROPOSED PROJECT IMPROVEMENTS

TIP Project R-4902 proposes widening I-485 from US 521 (Johnston Rd) to I-77 south of Charlotte in southwestern Mecklenburg County. Additional lanes on I-485 will improve the traffic flow and as a result, lessen congestion in that area.. The proposed project is 6.6 miles in length.

PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the proposed project is to increase system capacity on I-485 for local and regional traffic from US 521 (Johnston Rd) to I-77, thereby improving mobility and safety as well as relieving system congestion.

Currently this segment of I-485 is one of the most congested freeways in North Carolina and continued development along this segment of I-485 is expected to result in an on-going further decline in mobility along this corridor. Traffic volumes are expected to range from 182,000 to 204,000 vehicles per day (vpd) by the design year 2030. If this segment of I-485 in Mecklenburg County is not widened, it is expected that traffic volumes on the project will exceed the current capacity of the existing facility by at least 100%. This segment of I-485 is currently operating at a level of service (LOS) F and is projected to be operating at a more congested LOS F by the design year 2030.

According to the Highway Capacity Manual, LOS is defined as “a qualitative measure describing operational conditions within a traffic stream, and their perception by motorists and/or passengers.” There are six levels of service and they are given letter designations from A to F. A represents the best operating conditions and F represents the worst.

During a three-year period from May 2003 to May 2006, there were 746 crashes recorded on I-485 within the proposed project limits. Rear-end crashes accounted for 50 % of total crashes and were distributed randomly along the length of the project. These accidents were primarily the result of the heavy stop and go traffic during peak travel times.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

I-485 is a 4-lane divided facility from US 521 (Johnston Rd) to South Boulevard. From South Boulevard to I-77, I-485 is a 6-lane divided facility, which includes an auxiliary lane in each direction. The additional lanes (one in each direction) are auxiliary lanes and are designed to aid traffic merging onto and exiting I-485 without disrupting through traffic on I-485.

A cable guardrail is maintained in the 70-foot wide grassed median throughout the entire project. The posted speed limit is 65 mph. Right of way width along the project is variable ranging from 350-380 feet wide. Access to I-485 is fully controlled and limited to the four interchanges; US 521-Johnston Rd, NC 51-Pineville-Matthews Rd, South Blvd, and I-77. There are four grade separations on this segment; Park Rd, Carmel Rd, Nations Ford Rd (SR 1126), and Norfolk Southern Railroad. Bridges span five named streams between US 521 and I-77. They are McAlpine Creek, McMullen Creek, Little Sugar Creek, Sugar Creek, and Kings Branch.

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

The proposed improvements to I-485 may include potential impacts to both the human and natural environments. Detailed planned studies and surveys will be conducted by field personnel in the coming months. These surveys will measure and identify in detail further impacts with more detailed information. Several known areas of concern are discussed below.

Natural Environment

- There is a potential for impacts to perennial streams and jurisdictional wetlands within the project limits, including the following resources: Sugar Creek (bridged crossing), Little Sugar Creek (culvert), McAlpine Creek (bridged crossing), and McMullen Creek (bridged crossing).

Human Environment

- Greenway pathways and planned future corridors are adjacent and intersect I-485 within the project limits. Currently there are two greenway facilities in use along McMullen Creek and McAlpine Creek. Three future greenways are planned along Sugar Creek, Little Sugar Creek, and Kings Branch.
- Noise walls are adjacent to several residential communities along I-485 near Park Road and Carmel Road within the project limits. Planned improvements have the potential for further noise impacts along the project. In areas that were undeveloped or unaffected by previous construction of I-485.

PROJECT SCHEDULE AND COSTS

Currently, NCDOT is scheduled to complete an Environmental Assessment by January 2010. A public hearing is anticipated four to six months after the completion of this document. A more detailed design will be presented at this public hearing. The FONSI (Finding of No Significant Impact) is the final environmental document and is scheduled for completion by April 2011. Currently, the Right of Way for this project is scheduled for purchase in fiscal year 2011 and construction is scheduled in fiscal year 2013. The construction cost is funded in the 2007-2013 Transportation Improvement Program. This schedule is subject to change.

NCDOT's 2007-2013 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM		
PROJECT STAGE	TIP SCHEDULE	ESTIMATED COSTS
RIGHT OF WAY	Fiscal Year 2011	\$100,000
CONSTRUCTION	Fiscal Year 2013	\$48,800,000
TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COST		\$48,900,000

OTHER TIP PROJECTS IN THE AREA

R-211 Construct interchange at Weddington Road, Mecklenburg County

ROW	Fiscal Year 2008
Construction	Fiscal Year 2010

U-3447 NC 51 from SC to SR 3645 (Downs Circle), widen to multi-lanes, Mecklenburg County

Planning	In Progress
ROW	In Progress
Mitigation	Fiscal Year 2008
Construction	Fiscal Year 2009

U-3411 NC 160 (West Boulevard) from east of I-485 to Horseshoe Lane, multi-lanes on new location, Mecklenburg County

ROW	Fiscal Year 2007
Construction	Fiscal Year 2007

Construction by others, NCDOT will contribute \$1.7 mil towards the construction cost.

U-3321 Garden Parkway on New Location from I-85 to west of Gastonia to NC 160, multi-lanes on new location, Mecklenburg County

Planning and Design	In Progress
ROW and Construction	Not funded

Project currently under study by the NC Turnpike Authority-planning and environmental studies.

**Citizens Informational Workshop
Comment Sheet (Continued)
R-4902**

Was the project adequately explained to you? Yes _____ No _____

Were NCDOT representatives understandable and clear in their explanations?
Yes _____ No _____ Further comments: _____

Were NCDOT representatives courteous and helpful? Yes _____ No _____

Were display maps and handouts easy to read and understand? Yes _____ No _____

How might we better present proposed projects and address citizens' concerns in future informational workshops?

How did you hear about this meeting today?

Based on the information available, were all substantial questions answered?

Yes _____ No _____

What was the most helpful aspect about the workshop today? What was the least helpful?

THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING THE WORKSHOP.
YOUR COMMENTS ARE VERY IMPORTANT IN THE PLANNING PROCESS.