



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

ROY COOPER  
GOVERNOR

J. ERIC BOYETTE  
SECRETARY

MEMO TO: Post-Public Meeting Attendees  
FROM: Verrol McLeary  
Project Manager – Divisions 11-14  
DATE: June 20, 2023  
SUBJECT: Project: 33870.1.2 (R-3603A) Catawba and Alexander Counties  
STIP No. R-3603A – N.C. 127 from Cloninger Mill Road to  
Richey Road Multi-Lane Improvements

**STIP Project R-3603A**

**Spring 2023 Public Meeting and Outreach Summary**

The N.C. Department of Transportation is proposing improvements to N.C. 127 from Cloninger Mill Road in Catawba County to Richey Road in Alexander County. Project R-3603A is included in the 2020-2029 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and proposes to widen N.C. 127 to a four-lane, divided roadway with a grass median. The project also proposes to construct a new-location bridge over Lake Hickory next to the existing bridge, a 10-foot multiuse path on the west side of N.C. 127, and a 5-foot sidewalk on the east side of N.C. 127. The project is in the conceptual design phase.

The purpose of the project is to reduce peak-hour traffic congestion at major intersections by improving travel time and system linkage for the existing two-lane roadway. With improvements to system linkage N.C. 127 will operate with similar efficiency and reliable travel times, to the way in which the roadway operates north and south of the project limits.

The project will also provide accommodations for multimodal roadway users between the Hickory Metropolitan Area and Alexander County. A multimodal roadway will include bicycle and pedestrian accommodations and foster a more walkable and bike-friendly environment.

The project is needed to address substandard lane widths, traffic delays at intersections resulting in poor Levels of Service (LOS), and the lack of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations. The LOS of a roadway is the measure of its traffic-carrying ability. Levels of service range from A to F, "A" being the best scenario with unrestricted maneuverability and operating speeds, and "F" being the worst scenario where travel on a roadway is characterized by "stop and go" conditions.

In addition, a single two-lane bridge provides access along N.C. 127 across the Catawba River from the Hickory Metropolitan Area to Alexander County. Providing an additional bridge crossing at this location is needed to improve connections between Alexander County and Catawba County.

N.C. 127 is an important north/south route in the area, connecting I-40 and U.S. 321 in Catawba County with U.S. 64/N.C. 90 in Alexander County. The N.C. 127 bridge over Lake Hickory is one of only two major crossings between Catawba and Alexander counties, making it a critical link for travel. An additional bridge over Lake Hickory will improve the reliability for this critical link.

At the Public Meeting on March 27, 2023, the public was invited to learn about the project, speak to project staff, and submit comments. During the same period, the project website also provided project information and collected comments and questions from the public. The public was encouraged to provide comments during the two-week comment period between March 27, and April 11, 2023.

## **OUTREACH SUMMARY**

### **In-person Public Meeting**

A public meeting was held at a church in the project's study area. Prior to the meeting, a notification postcard was sent to a mailing list of 555 recipients including residents, landowners, and business owners in the study area. The meeting was also advertised in 5 local and regional newspapers: The Taylorsville Times, Hickory Daily Record, Outlook Observer News Enterprise, One Observer News Enterprise, and the Charlotte Business Journal. Public meeting details are as follows:

- **Date:** October 28, 2023, 5:00 p.m. -7:00 p.m.
- **Location:** Bethlehem Baptist Church at 7500 N.C. 127, Taylorsville, NC
- **Attendance:** 122

### **Website**

The project website was advertised in various places, including the meeting notice postcard, the newspaper advertisement, and in the public meeting handout and display boards. The website URL is: <https://publicinput.com/nc127-catawba-alexander>

- A total of four phone call messages were left on the project phone voicemail. The phone number provided to the public was 512-580-8850, Project Code: 1350.

### **Project Email**

A total of 44 emails were received at the project's email address. The email address provided to the public was [nc127-catawba-alexander@PublicInput.com](mailto:nc127-catawba-alexander@PublicInput.com).

### **Comment Summary**

As of 5/19/23, the following comments have been received:

- Paper comment sheet: 30
- Online comment: 6
- Voice mail: 4
- Email: 8

Specific topics cited most frequently in the comments included: medians and U-turns (11 comments), property impacts (10 comments), driveways and access (5 comments), bicycle and pedestrian facilities (4 comments), noise impacts and abatement (3 comments), cost and maintenance (3 comments), and emergency response (3 comments).

## **RESPONSES TO COMMENTS**

### **Medians and U-Turns**

*Many commenters had specific suggestions for locations of U-turn cuts or bulb-outs.*

*Response:*

*Median and U-turn bulbs are a standard component of reduced conflict intersection (RCI) design and are utilized successfully throughout the state. Traffic analyses have been completed for this project, and the results of these analyses were carefully considered in the roadway design decisions.*

*NCDOT will continue to make every effort during the final design stages to maintain access to all existing properties, where possible. U-turn locations may be adjusted during the final design to maintain access to properties where feasible.*

### **Property Impacts**

*Many commenters expressed concerns about specific property impacts.*

*Response:*

*Impacts shown on the public meeting/hearing maps reflect the “worst-case” scenario anticipated based on the most current data; they are preliminary and subject to change. NCDOT will continue to make every effort to minimize impacts and relocations where possible, and additional measures to minimize relocations will be investigated during the final design.*

*After the final design has been approved, the proposed right-of-way limits will be staked on the ground. Impacted property owners will be contacted by an NCDOT right-of-way agent or representative to discuss the next steps.*

*If permanent right-of-way is required, independent appraisals are developed to determine the highest and best use. An N.C. General Certified appraiser will appraise your property and determine just compensation. Any damages to the remaining property are addressed in the appraisal and an offer for those damages will be included as part of the written offer for just compensation. In some cases where project impacts are minimal to the subject property, a right of way agent may prepare a waiver valuation to determine just compensation. The appraisals will be reviewed for completeness and accuracy, and the right-of-way agent will make you, the property owner, a written offer. The current market value of the property, at its highest and best use, will be offered as compensation. The Department of Transportation must treat all owners and tenants equally; fully explain the owner’s rights; pay just compensation in exchange for property value; and furnish relocation advisory assistance, where applicable. More about the Right-of-Way acquisition process and relocation assistance can be found here:*

*<https://connect.ncdot.gov/business/ROW/ROWManualsandPublications/Right%20of%20Way%20Brochure%20-%20Brochure%20Layout.pdf> and*

*<https://connect.ncdot.gov/business/ROW/ROW%20Documents/Relocation%20Assistance%20Brochure.pdf>*

*The Right-of-Way phase is scheduled to begin in 2024. Preliminary plans are available on maps at: <https://publicinput.com/nc127-catawba-alexander>*

### **Driveways and Access**

Many commenters expressed concern about property access and the elimination of driveways.

*Response:*

*Impacts shown on the public meeting maps reflect the “worst-case” scenario anticipated based on the most current data; they are preliminary and subject to change. NCDOT will continue to make every effort during the final design stages to maintain access to all existing properties, where possible. Businesses are encouraged to combine access points and provide connectivity through shared property access.*

### **Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities**

Commenters had comments on, or questions about, bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the study area.

*Response:*

*Following coordination with local planning staff, the functional design was modified to include a multi-use path (MUP) on one side of the road. The construction of a MUP along the project alignment is consistent with the priorities of the 2019 Bethlehem Community Plan.*

### **Noise Impacts and Abatement**

Commenters cited concerns about noise impacts and mitigation measures.

*Response:*

*A preliminary traffic noise analysis is currently underway, and the results are not yet available. Once the analysis is complete, the results will be documented in an initial noise study called a Traffic Noise Report (TNR). This TNR will present predicted traffic noise impacts based on the project’s preliminary design and will identify locations where noise abatement preliminarily meets feasibility and reasonableness criteria. If the TNR identifies areas likely to qualify for noise abatement, then additional noise studies will be conducted as part of the project’s final design activities to identify recommended noise barrier locations.*

### **Cost and Maintenance**

Commenters expressed concern about facility costs and maintenance.

*Response:*

*NCDOT capital projects are evaluated and identified for funding through a process called Strategic Prioritization. Prioritization occurs approximately every two years and uses the project scores to determine which projects will be scheduled for funding in the next 10-year STIP (State Transportation Improvement Program). Due to limited funds, NCDOT is unable to fund every requested improvement. More information about Strategic Prioritization can be found at <https://www.ncdot.gov/initiatives-policies/Transportation/stip/Pages/strategic-prioritization.aspx>*

## **Emergency Response**

*Commenters expressed concerns about emergency vehicle response.*

*Response:*

*The Reduced Conflict Intersections (RCI) concept improves emergency response time during peak hours by reducing gridlock at intersections, thereby improving emergency vehicle access through intersections. NCDOT will continue to coordinate with the local municipalities and emergency management services to address access concerns. NCDOT will continue to coordinate with local jurisdictions to refine the final design.*

## **Safety**

*Commenters expressed concerns about the safety of the facility.*

*Response:*

*An RCI design redirects minor movements to improve the overall safety and efficiency of the corridor. Redirecting minor traffic movements to avoid high-risk movements reduces the number of conflict points where collisions might occur. An improved and more efficient project corridor can be expected to improve the market reach of businesses along and in the vicinity of the project.*

Cc: Post Public Meeting attendees:

Cole Gurley – NCDOT Division 12

Dean Ledbetter – NCDOT Division 12

Bryan Sowell – NCDOT Division 12

Verrol McLeary – NCDOT PMU

Nathan Adima – NCDOT PMU

Hon Yeung – NCDOT PMU

David Clodgo – NCDOT Roadway Design

William Akabi-Davis – NCDOT Roadway Design

Martin Gallagher – NCDOT PICSViz

Jamille Robbins – NCDOT PICSViz

Todd Buckner, Michael Baker

Will Kerr, Michael Baker