

Amboy/Meadow Road Improvements Project STIP Project U-4739

Comment Summary and NCDOT Responses to Comments Received at Public Meeting #1 (March 2019)

Introduction

An open-house public meeting was held on March 28, 2019, at the DoubleTree by Hilton, Asheville-Biltmore (115 Hendersonville Road, Asheville, NC 28803) to provide the public with information about the project's potential roadway typical section and gain an understanding of what the public would like to see along this corridor. The meeting was advertised in the local newspaper, on local radio and TV stations, on NCDOT's public meeting website <https://www.ncdot.gov/news/public-meetings>, and by postcard announcements mailed to nearby property owners and current residents. Flyers announcing the public meeting were also hand delivered to the Pisgah View Apartments located north of Amboy Road. NCDOT and consultant staff were on hand at the meetings to answer questions about the project. In addition, NCDOT Division 13 Right of Way staff were available to answer questions and provide information about the right of way acquisition process. Three sets of maps showing the study area/project limits were on display, as well as artist-rendered images of the currently proposed typical section options and a video showing the functionality of a "turbo" roundabout. Meeting attendees were asked to provide comments about the typical section concepts, their vision of the Amboy Road/Meadow Road corridor, and their preferred direction of widening (north side, south side), if necessary. The public meeting was attended by 113 members of the public. A local officials meeting held earlier in the day was attended by 13 representatives of the City of Asheville (Planning, Transportation, Water, Fire), Buncombe County, and French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

Number of comments received:

- Three Oaks Comment Spreadsheet – 44 comments received
- NCDOT PublicInput Comment Spreadsheet – 17 (written) comments received (at least one duplicate to a comment in the Three Oaks comment spreadsheet)

Total (unique) – 60

Results from questions asked on the Public Meeting's comment form and PublicInput website:

Preferred Typical Section

- Typical Section A – 0
- Typical Section B – 9
- Typical Section C – 17
- Other – 3
 - Typical Section C without the sidewalk

- Typical Section A between Amboy/Meadow/Lyman to Meadow/Victoria, Typical Section B where ROW allows and Typical Section C where it does not between I-26/I-240 and Meadow/Amboy/Lyman, Typical Section C from Meadow/Victoria to Hwy 25/Meadow
- Typical Section B along Amboy, Typical Section C along Meadow

Typical section preferences from the PublicInput website responses

- Typical Section A – 6%
- Typical Section B – 20%
- Typical Section C – 71%
- No preference – 3%

If Amboy Road is widened, do you have a preference for the direction of the widening?

- North – 8
- South – 2
- Other – 3
 - North b/w I-240 and State Street, south b/w State Street and Amboy/Lyman/Meadow, north from Amboy/Lyman/Meadow to Biltmore Avenue
 - North on Amboy, either on Meadow
 - North on Amboy, south on Meadow

An overarching summary the most frequently received comments:

- Preserve the adjacent parks and green space
- Prioritize bicyclists, pedestrians, and park users
- Add bicycle lanes
- Maintain and/or improve pedestrian facilities
- Add frequent, high visibility, signalized crosswalks for bicyclists and pedestrians
- Reduce vehicular travel speeds
- Typical Section C is the preferred option of those presented

Breakdown of Comments Received

All comment counts below a primary comment are subcounts of the primary comment's overall count and therefore not separate from or in addition to the primary comment count.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Comments

1. Request to include/general support for bicycle lanes (44), sidewalks (29), and/or multi-use path/greenway (16)

- *Explicitly requested separated bike lanes (cycle track or elevated bicycle path) (11)*
- *Explicitly requested barriers between bike lanes and vehicular travel lanes (4)*
 - *Specific suggestion of "3-foot tall rubber spikes" (1)*
- *Request that bicycle lanes be greater than 5 feet wide (2)*
- *Bike lanes along Meadow Road will help to reduce the student vehicular traffic to AB Tech (4)*
- *Request that sidewalks be greater than 5 feet wide (2)*
- *Request that multi-use path be greater than 10 feet wide (1)*

Comments about and support for bicycle lanes, sidewalks, and multi-use paths have been noted. Typical sections for the corridor are being developed in coordination with the City of Asheville and French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization. Further decisions made on the proposed betterments and typical sections to be used along the corridor will be presented to the public at the next public meeting currently planned for early 2020.

The widths of the proposed multi-use path, bicycle lanes, and sidewalks included in the current designs are based on design standards established by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), NCDOT, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Requests for facilities beyond the standards widths have been shared with the City of Asheville for further consideration.

2. Request to include/general support for clearly marked and signalized pedestrian (or pedestrian and bicycle) crossings/crosswalks (28)

- *Specifically proposed strategies*
 - *Flashing lights/beacons (8)*
 - *Pedestrian tables/raised speed bumps (5)*
 - *Push-button and count down (5)*
 - *Refuge islands (5)*
 - *Mid-block crossings (3)*
 - *Photo surveillance at cross walks for cars passing vehicles that have stopped for crossing pedestrians (1)*
 - *Wide crossings (1)*
 - *Curb extensions (1)*
- *Intersections of particular concern for bicycle crossing*
 - *Meadow/Amboy/Lyman*
 - *Meadow/Victoria*
- *Intersections of particular concern for pedestrian crossing*
 - *Amboy/Short Michigan*
 - *Amboy/State*

Pedestrian crosswalks will be provided at the signalized intersections and/or proposed roundabouts and additional crosswalk locations will be considered during the design stage of the project. Additional location decisions will be made in coordination with the City of Asheville, French Broad River MPO, and the NCDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Division. Proposed crosswalk locations will be presented at the next public meeting currently planned for early 2020.

3. Request to follow the Wilma Dykeman Riverway concept on Meadow Road (3)

Recommendations made within the Wilma Dykeman Riverway Plan are being taken into consideration as designs for this project are developed. Coordination with RiverLink is ongoing.

4. Concern that roundabouts will be difficult for bicyclists and pedestrians (3)

Roundabouts help address safety and congestion concerns at intersections. They are designed to enhance traffic efficiency, safety and aesthetics, and minimize delay and cost for all users including motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists. Roundabouts typically have marked sidewalks or striped crossings, outside of the roundabout itself, to help pedestrians navigate the intersection. Additionally, the splitter islands used in roundabout designs can act as a refuge area for pedestrians. A bicyclist would follow the same rules as a vehicle to navigate the roundabout or walk their bike along the outside of a roundabout like a pedestrian.

https://connect.ncdot.gov/resources/safety/TEPPL/TEPPL%20All%20Documents%20Library/R38_br.pdf

5. Request that bicycle and pedestrian facilities be shaded (1)

Comment noted.

6. Request to include bicycle racks along the corridor (1)

Comment noted. This request has been shared with the City of Asheville for further consideration.

7. Request that multi-use path/greenway have a noise barrier (1)

NCDOT is completing a traffic noise study as part of the preconstruction analysis of this project. This report will consider noise impacts to the adjacent parks overall and determine the feasibility and necessity of noise barriers throughout the corridor. Results will be shared with the public when they become available.

8. Request for lighting along sidewalks and multi-use path (1)

Street lighting as well as lighting along greenways is considered a betterment and will be handled by the City of Asheville. The project team has shared this request with the City of Asheville.

9. Statement that sidewalks are needed along Amboy Road but not necessary along Meadow Road (3)

The proposed typical sections for this project are being developed in coordination with the City of Asheville and French Broad River MPO. To comply with the City's adopted Complete Streets Policy and the MPO's adopted design guidelines, the project will most likely include some consideration for

pedestrians and cyclists along both Amboy Road and Meadow Road.
<https://www.ashevillenc.gov/departments/transport/bicycle.htm#completestreets>

10. Statement of support for bicycle lanes only if they do not destroy existing properties (1), statement against bicycle lanes because the greenway can be used (1), or statement of priority for multi-use path over sidewalks due to the constrained corridor (1)

The proposed typical sections for this project are being developed in coordination with and will have the support of the City of Asheville and French Broad River MPO. The Blue Ridge Bike Plan (2013) from the Land of Sky Regional Council, the City of Asheville's Comprehensive Bicycle Plan (2008) and their subsequent Asheville in Motion Mobility Plan (2015) all recommend bicycle lanes along Amboy Road and Meadow Road within the project study area.

Traffic Comments

1. Statement that a specific intersection is the source of congestion along this corridor and improvements at this intersection alone would alleviate much, if not all, of the problem along this corridor (3)

- *Biltmore Avenue/Village (2)*
- *Amboy/Meadow/Lyman (1)*

The purpose of this project is to improve traffic flow along the corridor, decrease both current and future anticipated vehicle delay for all intersections, replace Bridge No. 521 over the French Broad River, and provide bicycle and pedestrian accommodations with connectivity to the Lyman Road project. As such, improvements to a particular intersection in lieu of the overall project will not sufficiently address the transportation needs of the corridor.

2. Statement that this road is congested only at peak hours and not a problem any other time (1)

NCDOT is developing this project to meet the future year anticipated demands of the 2040 peak hour traffic volumes. The average delay per vehicle in 2040 is anticipated to double during the AM peak hour and almost triple during the PM peak hour, meaning delay and congestion within the design year will be far greater than it is today.

3. Stated desire for smooth flow of traffic along the corridor (6)

The desired outcome of this project is to improve traffic flow and decrease the anticipated vehicle delay along the corridor. The measure of effectiveness for evaluating the project's proposed improvements will be a target of a 50% reduction or greater in average delay per vehicle when compared to the 2040 No-Build scenario.

4. Support for traffic signals (1)

- *Specific locations:*
 - *Amboy/Short Michigan*
 - *Amboy/State*
 - *Amboy/Meadow/Lyman*
 - *Meadow/Victoria*

Traffic signals and roundabouts are being considered for all existing intersections along the corridor and the decision of the preferred treatment for each intersection will be made as preliminary designs are developed. If a traffic signal is determined to be warranted and is subsequently recommended by the NCDOT Regional Traffic Engineer, NCDOT will follow their standard traffic signal policy (please see the NCDOT traffic signal policy PDF on the project website).

6. Request for fewer stoplights along the corridor (1)

Comment noted. NCDOT is evaluating the use of roundabouts at intersections along the project corridor.

Land Use Comments

1. Statement that this is a recreational area (as opposed to a transit corridor) for parks, river activity, and bicycle and pedestrian activity (and therefore not appropriate for a large roadway expansion) (17)

We recognize that this is a recreational area with a high concentration of parks. However, this corridor is also classified by FHWA as a minor arterial, meaning it acts as an important transportation corridor for the city as a whole and connects high volumes of vehicles to a large number of smaller, local streets. As such, the project designs will seek to be context-sensitive and look to accommodate all users of the corridor including bicyclists, pedestrians, and motorized vehicles.

2. General comment to not take land from the parks (9)

Efforts will be made to minimize adjacent property impacts, including parks, during the design process. NCDOT is coordinating with the City of Asheville and RiverLink to ensure that the proposed project improvements are compatible with the existing and future park system.

3. Statement that if citizens must give up land, then Norfolk Southern and Biltmore Estate should have to give up land too (1)

Comment noted.

Typical Section Comments

1. Request to not add any additional travel lanes or stated preference of a two-lane road (11)

The current design approach is to not add additional travel lanes and instead attempt to improve traffic flow along the corridor and decrease anticipated vehicle delay by addressing the intersections along the corridor. However, the current plans will include a raised median and/or turn lane in some locations as appropriate that will require additional right of way.

2. Request to allow for left turns “where appropriate” (13)

- *At parks (4)*
- *At popular business destinations (2)*
- *At intersections (ex. State, Short McDowell) (7)*

The project's traffic analysis evaluates the existing and projected number of vehicles that turn in each direction at each intersection. This information informs the preliminary designs and the results will be shown at the next public meeting, currently planned for early 2020.

3. Request to keep the greenway/multi-use path away from road (other than in the form of selecting a preferred typical section) (6)

Comment noted.

4. Request to adhere to a Complete Streets policy (2)

See Bicycle and Pedestrian comment 9 response.

5. Request to keep the road as narrow as possible (5)

Comment noted.

6. Request to narrow the vehicular lane width to 10' or 11' (5)

The City of Asheville has requested lane widths of 11' along the project corridor and this request is currently being considered by NCDOT.

7. Statement in opposition of or request to not include a median (10)

- *Creates unusable space taken from the parks (4)*
- *Medians encourage faster vehicular movement (5)*
- *Use that space to make bike lanes, sidewalks, and buffers for alternative uses wider (3)*

Due to the large number of constraints along the corridor, the project designs are being developed with the goal of minimizing impacts. As part of this minimization effort, the proposed median was reduced from the standard 23-feet to 17.5-feet, with the possibility of further reduction. Median widths are evaluated based on the surrounding land use, access needs, project purpose and need, as well as other factors.

In addition, medians provide the following safety and environmental benefits;

- Medians allow a refuge area for pedestrians
- Medians reduce emissions by reducing stop and go traffic
- Medians reduce headlight glare from opposing traffic by providing greater separation between oncoming traffic
- Medians allow more room for landscaping which provides a more attractive corridor

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has identified that medians can provide the following safety benefits:

- May reduce pedestrian crashes by 46 percent and motor vehicle crashes by up to 39 percent.
- May decrease delays (by greater than 30 percent) for motorists.
- Allow pedestrians a safe place to stop at the mid-point of the roadway before crossing the remaining distance.

- Enhance the visibility of pedestrian crossings.
- Can reduce the speed of vehicles approaching pedestrian crossings.
- Can be used for access management for vehicles (allowing only right-in/right-out turning movements).
- Provide space for supplemental signage on multi-lane roadways.

For more information on FHWA's corridor access management policy and how it pertains to safety and economic development, please see the following websites:

- https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/intersection/other_topics/corridor/
- http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/provencountermeasures/fhwa_sa_12_011.cfm

8. Support for the use of a median (5)

- As a traffic calming measure (2)
- As a beautification measure (3)
 - Have a landscape architect design it (1)

Comment noted.

9. Request to add trees (3)

- Plan trees along the side of the road (3)
- Plant trees between the bicycle lanes/cycle track and sidewalk (2)
- Plant trees in the center, grass median (1)

Additional landscaping, beyond a grass median, may be coordinated with the City of Asheville upon their request. Additional landscaping is handled through a cost-sharing and maintenance agreement with the City that is required to be executed prior to beginning construction of the project. Factors involved in the consideration of roadside tree permitting include but are not limited to sight distances, recovery areas, and safety setbacks. Additionally, the size of a median can impact the ability to plant trees within the median. Further information on NCDOT guidelines for planting within the right of way can be found at the following link:

<https://connect.ncdot.gov/resources/roadside/AestheticEngineeringDocuments/PlantingGuidelines.pdf>.

The request for trees has been shared with City staff.

10. Request to include on-street parking (1)

The project team is continuing to work with the City of Asheville and French Broad River MPO to address access and parking for the parks along Amboy Road.

Speed Limit Comments

1. Request to lower vehicle travel speeds (39)

- 30-40mph (1)
- 35mph (10)
- 30-35mph (2)
- 25-35mph (1)
- 30mph (4)
- 25-30mph (2)

- 25 mph (3)

The City of Asheville has requested a reduction in the posted speed along this corridor and this request is currently being considered by NCDOT.

Design Comments

1. French Broad River bridge should include bicycle and pedestrian facilities (6)

The currently proposed typical sections for this project would include bicycle and pedestrian facilities across the new French Broad River bridge.

2. French Broad River bridge should include high railings (1)

Bicycle-safe railing is being considered as part of the bridge replacement design.

3. French Broad River bridge should be aesthetically pleasing and unique (3)

- Iconic, "instagrammable" structures and locations are well documented to be able to draw tourism traffic and improve public perception (1)
- Art memorial-style entrance to bridge (1)
- Decorative elements to encourage sight-seeing, lingering, and enjoyment of the river (1)

Aesthetic characteristics of the replacement bridge may be coordinated with the City of Asheville, upon their request. The desire for additional design features of the new bridge have been shared with the City of Asheville for further consideration.

4. French Broad River bridge should have two lanes for east bound traffic and one lane for west bound traffic or should have three lanes to allow for left turns (2)

This project does not seek to add additional capacity in either direction and instead intends to focus on improving traffic flow at intersections and along the corridor as a whole. However, as intersection designs are further developed, the replacement bridge may feature three lanes in order to accommodate the intended turning movements.

5. General support for the use of roundabouts (15)

- Specific location requests:
 - Carrier Park entrance (1)
 - State Street (1)
 - Victoria Road (2)
 - Meadow/Amboy/Lyman (2)
 - Short McDowell St (1)
 - Riverview Drive (1)
 - Short Michigan (1)

The current design approach is to include roundabouts at most of the existing intersections along the corridor unless geometric or resource impact constraints dictate otherwise.

6. Request for metered roundabouts at Meadow/Lyman/Amboy and Meadow/Victoria (1)

Metered roundabouts will be considered during the design stage of this project.

7. Concern about the impact footprint of roundabouts (1)

See Design comment 6 response. A context-sensitive design approach is being utilized for this project in order to minimize the overall impacts along the project corridor and at individual intersections.

8. Request to implement traffic calming techniques (no preferred specifics given) (7)

The City of Asheville has requested a lower posted speed limit and narrower travel lanes for the corridor. These requests are currently being considered by NCDOT. Additionally, if roundabouts are the selected treatment for intersections along the corridor, they too will serve as a traffic calming technique.

9. Request to take Norfolk Southern property to provide better alignment for Meadow Road (3)

Comment noted.

10. Request for good signage along the corridor (1)

Comment noted.

11. Request to designate a portion of the road as a passing zone (1)

The use of a median with left turn lanes and storage areas would reduce the need for passing along the corridor.

12. Concern over flooding issues and request to minimize floodplain impacts (7)

- *Design for stormwater absorption (1)*
- *Construct wetlands and swales, use of pervious pavement (1)*

Hydraulic analysis and designs are a standard part of NCDOT projects. These hydraulic designs will be developed prior to construction and will ensure that the project does not result in additional drainage problems to adjacent properties.

A federal environmental document is currently being prepared for this project that will review the potential environmental impacts of the work to be performed along Amboy and Meadow Road. This document includes, but is not limited to, watershed critical areas, high quality waters, outstanding resource waters, FEMA floodplains and hazard mitigation, and wetland and stream identification and preservation. Coordination with US Army Corps of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, US Forest Service, among others, is involved in the development of this document.

13. Request to connect all current and future greenways (10)

- *Specifically to the project on Swananoa River Road (4)*
- *Specifically to the RADTIP project on Lyman (1)*

Comment noted.

14. Request to close the highway exit from I-26 to Amboy Road (1)

Comment noted.

Transit Comments

1. General support for transit activity on the corridor (3)

Bus service in Asheville is provided by Asheville Redefines Transit (ART) (https://www.ashevillenc.gov/departments/transit/contact_staff.htm). The 2018 Asheville Transit Master Plan Update recommends a new route be implemented in 2025 along Amboy Road to provide service to Carrier Park. Coordination with the City of Asheville on the inclusion of any transit related infrastructure as part of this project is ongoing and the request for transit service along the corridor has been shared with the City of Asheville and ART for further consideration.

2. Request for parking area for car/bike/bus commuting (1)

Comment noted. This request has been shared with the City of Asheville and Asheville Redefines Transit for further consideration.

3. Request for bus stop shelters (1)

See Transit comment 1 response

Property Impact Comments

1. General comment to impact existing businesses as little as possible (1)

Efforts will be made to minimize adjacent property impacts during the design process.

2. Biltmore Estate (see comment PDF) [from Biltmore Estate attorneys]

3. ClimbMax – advocated for widening to the south due to fewer private business impacts [from ClimbMax employee or owner]

Comment noted.

4. Habitat ReStore – request to not impact the Habitat for Humanity facilities [unknown if the people are employees, volunteers, or neither] (2)

Comment noted.

5. Southern Concrete Materials – request to not impact the concrete plant [unknown if the person is an employee, owner, or neither] (1)

Comment noted.

Miscellaneous

1. Request for signage along the corridor about the flora and river similar to the signage being installed at Karen Cragolin Park (1)

Comment noted. This request has been shared with the City of Asheville's Parks and Recreation Department for further consideration.

2. Concern about potential construction runoff to the French Broad River (1)

NCDOT will work to minimize construction related impacts by implementing erosion and sediment control measures on construction sites to prevent soil movement/loss and eliminate appreciable damage to off-site receiving channels, properties, and natural resources.

3. City of Asheville making improvements to State Street in 2019-2020, in the study area. Chuck Watson is project manager (1)

The project team will discuss this project and the planned improvements with the City of Asheville to gain further information.

4. Request to include benches along the corridor (1)

Comment noted. This request has been shared with the City of Asheville for further consideration.

5. Request to add a pedestrian bridge in Karen Cragolin Park across the creek (Moore Branch) (1)

Coordination with RiverLink and the City of Asheville is ongoing as it relates to this project and potential impacts to the planned Karen Cragolin Park. This request will be discussed as a part of this coordination.

Requests/recommendations for the next public meeting:

- Have roundabout design vs. other option presented
- Explain how project connects to others (2)
 - Overlay of I-26 connector (1)
- Include an explanation of what has been included/ discussed and what has not included but discussed (ex. parking off Amboy Road, type of crossing options, speed limiting techniques, and turn/intersection options)
- Include information about pedestrian crossing options
- Update mapping imagery
- 3D visualization of cross sections and/or the proposed road itself
- Data on protected turn lanes
- Roundabout video specific to the project or more clearly explained to be a concept example and not specific to the project