



Responses to General Comments Received From the March 21, 2024, Public Meeting

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General Questions

Where can I find more information and project updates?

Project information, maps, and visuals from the Public Meeting, as well as project updates can be found on the project website (<https://publicinput.com/NC-127-Widening>). Email updates will also be sent to subscribers.

Please contact us at NC-127-Widening@publicinput.com if you have additional questions or to be added to the subscriber list.

Are local representatives (planners, schools, EMS, businesses) involved in project development?

The Project Team solicited feedback from local planners and stakeholders at the start of the project and continues to coordinate with the City of Hickory, Catawba County, and the Western Piedmont Council of Governments/Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization (GHMPO). The Project Team is coordinating with emergency services personnel to discuss the project and concerns regarding access for emergency services.

What data was used to determine growth for the Mountain View area? Does it consider housing developments, commercial developments, and emergency services?

The traffic forecast developed estimates using historic Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) (traffic volume per day) data, recent traffic counts along the project corridor, and regional model data from the Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization (GHMPO). Planned development and travel pattern changes were taken into consideration for the future year volumes. Additionally, various groups within NCDOT and representatives from the Western Piedmont Council of Governments, Catawba County, and City of Hickory were consulted in the development of the forecast.

Why does the project not continue to N.C. 10?

N.C. 127 north of Huffman Farm Road was identified by local planners as in need of improvement which resulted in NCDOT programming the project for widening in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

The Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization (GHMPO) has identified a project to modernize N.C. 127 from Huffman Farm Road to N.C. 10 and this project is included in NCDOT's current project evaluation and prioritization process, P7.0, as project no. H191141. Results of this analysis will feed into the 2026-2035 State Transportation Improvement Program (anticipated to be complete mid-2025).

Please reach out to [GHMPO](#) for additional questions regarding projects or transportation priorities identified in the region. Information on construction funding and scheduling for transportation projects throughout the state can be found on [NCDOT's STIP webpage](#).

When will the environmental document be completed?

The Project Team is completing a federal Categorical Exclusion (CE) consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) which is anticipated later this summer.

Additional information on NCDOT Environmental Documents can be found on [NCDOT's NEPA/SEPA webpage](#).



Bicycle and Pedestrian Comments

Proposed Accommodations

Why are sidewalks and multi-use paths (MUP) included along N.C. 127?

Multi-modal facilities along N.C. 127 are prioritized in local plans and NCDOT has coordinated with the City of Hickory, Catawba County, Western Piedmont Council of Governments, and Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization (GHMPO) and determined that a 5' sidewalk and 10' MUP would best accommodate the existing and future needs of the Mountain View area. The project team has also coordinated with the NCDOT Integrated Mobility Division (IMD) to ensure the proposed improvements are consistent with the [NCDOT Complete Streets Policy](#).

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities within neighborhoods would be more beneficial to the community.

NCDOT is committed to Complete Streets improvements to accommodate all modes of transportation and has continued to coordinate efforts with Catawba County and the City of Hickory to incorporate these improvements into the project. However, neighborhood streets and bicycle and pedestrian improvements along adjacent streets are beyond the scope of the U-2530A project.

Please contact local representatives with Catawba County or the City of Hickory to discuss the options for constructing bicycle and/or pedestrian improvements along neighborhood streets. We will share these comments with them as well.

Safety

I have safety concerns with bicycle and pedestrian facilities alongside N.C. 127. Will there be a barrier or additional protection for bicycles and pedestrians?

Safety for all modes is a priority on all NCDOT projects. Initial design concepts included sidewalks and designated on-road bicycle lanes on both sides of the road. Following coordination with local planning staff, and feedback from Public Meeting No. 1 (October 2018), the preliminary design was modified to include a multi-use path (MUP) on one side and sidewalk on the other. The current design provides 6.5' of separation between the travel lane and sidewalk or MUP (including a 2.5' gutter).

The NCDOT Integrated Mobility Division (IMD) has reviewed the proposed facilities and determined a sidewalk and MUP are consistent with the [NCDOT Complete Streets Policy](#) as well as local planning initiatives, and are appropriate for the type of roadway.

Can the speed limit be lowered to provide a more comfortable environment for bicycles and pedestrians?

The Preferred Alternative has been designed to accommodate the current 45 mile-per-hour speed limit, which is consistent with the roadway classification (major arterial). NCDOT will work with local authorities to determine if any changes to the posted speed limit should be considered.

Where are crosswalks being proposed?

Based on the current design, crosswalks are proposed at all signalized intersections; however, a detailed review of bicycle and pedestrian crossing locations will be completed during final design.



Potential Impacts

Impacts to the Existing Community

N.C. 127 does not need to be widened/improved.

Local planning agencies have identified the N.C. 127 corridor as in need of improvement since the early 2000s and the Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization (GHMPO) has included the U-2530A project in the regional long range transportation plan.

Capacity and design deficiencies of N.C. 127 have become evident as development activity and travel demand have increased. The project is needed to reduce existing congestion and adequately serve future travel needs of the region.

Please reach out to [GHMPO](#) for additional questions regarding projects or transportation priorities identified in the region.

I feel this project will negatively impact the small-town character of N.C. 127 and surrounding community.

N.C. 127 is a major north-south corridor serving both local traffic and commuter traffic between I-40, Hickory, the Mountain View area, N.C. 10 and areas further to the south. NCDOT understands the importance of a safe corridor that serves all users, and the Project Team has worked to develop the Preferred Alternative consistent with the recommendations and priorities of the Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization (GHMPO), Catawba County, and City of Hickory. The proposed improvements will reduce existing congestion along the N.C. 127 corridor and serve future travel needs of the region.

Decisions on local land use and development are dependent on local plans and zoning ordinances. Please reach out to [Catawba County Planning](#) and [City of Hickory Planning and Development](#) Departments for additional questions regarding development in the area.

Were roundabouts considered for intersections along the project corridor?

Roundabouts were not considered a viable option due to the disproportionately high traffic volumes along N.C. 127 compared to intersecting cross streets. When traffic volumes heavily favor one roadway over another, entering the roundabout becomes challenging and typically results in additional delay.

Through coordination with local planning agencies and stakeholders, widening the N.C. 127 corridor and constructing a median and turn lane improvements was determined to be the best option for improving current traffic conditions as well as accommodating future traffic volumes.

Impacts to Businesses and Commercial Development

I am concerned with the number of businesses that will close or relocate as a result of this project.

Impacts shown on the Public Meeting Maps typically reflect the “worst-case” scenario anticipated based on the most current data. These impacts are preliminary and subject to change.

NCDOT is committed to minimizing the number of business relocations due to this project. NCDOT considers safety, human and natural environment impacts, traffic service, cost, and public comments when making decisions on projects. As the preliminary design is further refined, NCDOT will continue to look for opportunities to further avoid and minimize relocations to the greatest extent practicable.



Impacts to the Natural Environment, Noise, and Utilities

Will a noise study or noise barrier be included as part of this project?

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 it will identify locations where noise abatement (such as noise walls) preliminarily meets feasibility and reasonableness criteria. When this noise study is complete, maps will be posted on the project website that show the areas that would benefit from noise abatement based on that preliminary analysis. 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.

Visit the [NCDOT Traffic Noise and Air Quality webpage](#) for additional information.

How will this project impact potential flooding issues?

A detailed hydraulic analysis will be conducted during final design. Potential impacts to adjacent property will be evaluated during final design and minimized to the greatest extent practicable.

How will this project impact utilities? Will utility relocations be underground?

Utility relocations will be required as part of this project. NCDOT will work with utility companies during the final design phase as needed to determine where utilities should be relocated.

Right-of-Way and Property Impacts

I have concerns with the potential right-of-way impacts to my personal property?

Impacts shown on the Public Meeting Maps typically reflect the "worst-case" scenario anticipated based on the most current data. These impacts 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 final design.

Some temporary construction easements may also be required. A temporary construction easement (TCE) is used to provide the contractor sufficient working area to construct slopes, ditches, silt control areas, etc. where continuous maintenance will not be required. The TCE will be staked before construction begins so that the contractor knows the boundary within which work is allowed. If a TCE is required, the property owner will be reimbursed.

NCDOT will coordinate with property owners if/when right-of-way acquisition is anticipated. Additional information on the NCDOT Right-of-Way Policy is available on the [NCDOT Right-of-Way webpage](#).

When will impacted property owners be notified about right-of-way acquisitions?

If a property or a portion of a property is identified as needed for the project, an NCDOT Right-of-Way agent will contact you once the final designs are complete and approved.

Are you considering the location of septic systems when designing the project?

Yes, septic systems have been surveyed and are accounted for in the preliminary designs.



Preferred Alternative Design

Design Development

Why did the project team decide on a median-divided facility? I'd prefer to see something like N.C. 127 through Viewmont (four lanes with center turn lane).

NCDOT has coordinated with the City of Hickory, Catawba County, Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG), and Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization (GHMPO) and determined that a median-divided facility would be ideal for serving the existing and future needs of the Mountain View area and the region.

Median-divided facilities provide the benefits of separating opposing travel lanes and reducing left-turn conflicts. Research data also concludes that median-divided facilities improve traffic flow (travel speeds), traffic operations (reduces congestion), and traffic safety (lower crash rates), when compared to non-divided facilities.

GHMPO has also identified an access management project through Viewmont from 8th Avenue NE to 30th Avenue NW to implement access management solutions. Proposed improvements include converting the existing five-lane roadway to a median-divided four lane roadway similar to the U-2530A project. This project is included in the current 2024-2033 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and draft 2026-2035 STIP as Project No. U-6135.

Please reach out to [GHMPO](#) for additional questions regarding projects or transportation priorities identified in the region.

Safety

I have safety concerns with a median-divided facility.

Median-divided facilities provide the benefits of separating opposing travel lanes and reducing left-turn conflicts. As evidenced by median projects across North Carolina and the United States, studies show that a median minimizes vehicular conflict points and makes the roadway safer by reducing crashes. Median-divided facilities improve traffic flow (travel speeds), traffic operations (reduces congestion), and traffic safety (lower crash rates), when compared to non-divided facilities.

Redirecting cars to make U-turns instead of left turns is going to cause more safety problems than a center turn lane.

Medians and U-turn bulbs have been implemented successfully throughout the state and have been proven to help alleviate congestion while increasing travel capacity. Redirecting minor traffic movements, such as cross streets or driveways, to avoid high-risk movements reduces the number of conflict points where collisions may occur.

Cars are already traveling at unsafe speeds. Will the speed limit remain the same once the project is complete?

The Preferred Alternative has been designed to accommodate the current 45 mile-per-hour speed limit, which is consistent with the roadway classification (major arterial). NCDOT will work with local authorities to determine if any changes to the posted speed limit should be considered.



I have concerns with intersection safety for all modes of transportation.

Designing roadways that promote safe passage and provide flexibility for predicted traffic growth is a priority for NCDOT projects. The design of the Preferred Alternative follows AASHTO's (American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials) Policy on design standards, which is designed to ensure safety, permanence, utility, and flexibility to provide for predicted traffic growth. The design also follows NCDOT's Roadway Design Manual and NCDOT's Complete Streets Policy.

Access

Adding a median is inconvenient.

Medians and U-turn bulbs are utilized successfully throughout the state. Medians provide opportunities to separate left-turn lanes from the main through-lanes and provide a physical separation with oncoming traffic.

What is a dedicated turning movement?

A dedicated turning movement is a turn lane dedicated to either a left or right turn only. They provide physical separation between turning traffic that is slowing or stopped and the adjacent through traffic.

Left turns onto N.C. 127 are challenging currently. Adding additional lanes will cause more issues.

The addition of a median has substantial safety benefits. It also provides adequate space to add left-turn lanes that are separated from the through-lanes. A common theme in the public comments received was how challenging, and unsafe, turning onto N.C. 127 is, particularly during peak hours. While the addition of a median and U-turns may seem inconvenient, a right turn followed by a U-turn is typically a safer travel route and takes less time than attempting to turn left across multiple lanes of traffic during peak hours.

A right turn lane is needed from Fleetwood Drive to N.C. 127 south. Current traffic from the shopping center backs up here.

Traffic analysis did not indicate a need for an additional turn lane at this location. There is alternate access to the shopping center that provides a right-turn lane to N.C. 127 southbound.

Traffic Signals

How were the signal locations determined? Are any new traffic signals included with the project?

All existing signals will remain throughout the project corridor. New traffic signal locations are still being considered and evaluated based on traffic and safety data. Additional evaluation of potential traffic signal locations may be completed as part of the final design process.

New traffic signals are needed at Woodridge Drive, Moss Farm Road, and Westover Road (across from Market Square shopping center entrance).

New traffic signal locations are still being considered and evaluated based on traffic and safety data. Additional evaluation of potential traffic signal locations may be completed as part of the final design process.