

# **US 70 Improvements: Goldsboro Bypass to Princeton (R-5829)**

## **Responses to Comments Received from Public Meeting on May 21, 2019**

### **Introduction**

NCDOT held an open-house public meeting Tuesday, May 21, 2019, from 4:00-7:00 p.m. at the Grace Baptist Church in Princeton, North Carolina. NCDOT and consultant staff provided information about project R-5829, which proposes to upgrade US 70 to interstate standards from the Goldsboro Bypass in Wayne County to west of S.R. 2314 (Pondfield Road) in Johnston County. Staff also received public feedback about the proposed design during the meeting and the subsequent 15-day public comment period.

In advance of the public meeting, NCDOT published public notices in the local papers, on the NCDOT project website ([https://ncdot.publicinput.com/us70\\_goldsborotoprinceton](https://ncdot.publicinput.com/us70_goldsborotoprinceton)), and NCDOT social media (NCDOT handles: @NCDOT\_Triangle and @NCDOT\_Scoast). News media coverage in the local papers, on television, and via social media raised awareness about the meeting. Postcards mailed to nearby property owners, businesses, and current residents provided information about the project, meeting details, and ways to participate. To promote meeting participation from Environmental Justice and Limited English Proficiency communities, project team staff hand-delivered approximately 60 English/Spanish bilingual flyers to the Bridgemont mobile home park and adjacent mobile homes.

216 members of the public attended the public meeting. Nine representatives of local jurisdictions representing Johnston County, Wayne County, the Town of Princeton, City of Goldsboro, Upper Coastal Plain Regional Planning Organization, and NCDOT Board of Transportation attended the local officials meeting held earlier in the day. During both meetings, three separate sets of large maps displayed the proposed design. NCDOT and consultant staff answered questions and received feedback from the public about the proposed design. NCDOT right of way staff answered questions about the NCDOT right of way process for property acquisition, displacements, and relocations.

### **Comment Summary**

The public provided input by comment form during the meeting or after the meeting through the mail, email, or online via the NCDOT project website. NCDOT received a total of 21 comments during the 15-day public comment period. The comment forms offered respondents the opportunity to provide feedback about the meeting materials, concerns regarding specific property impacts, and any other comments.

Of the 21 comments received, the majority discussed specific property impacts. Other comments included general comments, which have been categorized below. Some respondents provided comments on more than one topic.

### **General comment topics noted:**

- request for more information or response (5)
- residential impacts (4)
- business impacts (4)

- noise (3)
- non-substantive (3)
- statement of opposition (2)
- traffic (1)
- cemetery impacts (1)
- utility impacts (1)
- error or omission (1)
- statement of support (1)

Comments received at the public meeting or during the public comment period will be considered and, where practicable, incorporated into the design.

### **General Comment Responses**

The comments received were categorized into twelve different categories (below). Responses to these summarized comments are provided in this document.

- A. Residential Property Impacts**
- B. Businesses Impacts**
- C. Changes to Local Travel Patterns/Property Access**
- D. Requests for More Information or Technical Response**
- E. Traffic**
- F. Noise Concerns**
- G. Cemetery Impacts**
- H. Utility Impacts**
- I. Error or Omission**
- J. Non-substantive Comments**
- K. Statements of Opposition to the Project**
- L. Statement of Support for the Project**

#### **A. Residential Property Impacts**

- 1) *Concern that right-of-way will impact front yard of residence and notes preference for full acquisition over partial acquisition with no front yard.*

The maps at the public meeting indicated the proposed project right of way limits for the preliminary design. These limits are subject to change as design progresses. Please note that the shaded area denoting the proposed right of way limits shown on the public meeting maps may be larger than the final right of way needs for the project.

NCDOT will continue to evaluate ways to minimize impacts to properties as the design progresses. Where NCDOT requires property for the project, NCDOT right of way agents will contact the property owner during the project right of way phase. The current schedule for the right of way acquisition to begin in project Segment A is 2023 and is 2025 for Segment B. These schedules are subject to change depending upon the availability of funds.

Please review the “Resources for Property Owners” on the NCDOT website at the link below to find out more about the right of way process. To speak with a NCDOT right of way agent, please contact the NCDOT Division 4 Right of Way Office at (252) 640-6570.

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

- 2) *Concern that the location of the exit ramp will impact rear property driveway access to Ebenezer Church Road.*

In order to meet interstate standards, the ramp curvature will need to remain as proposed on the public meeting map. NCDOT will, however, continue to evaluate ways to minimize impacts to properties as the design progresses for the project. In addition, the preliminary right of way needs may change as the design develops.

Where property is required for the project, a NCDOT right of way agent will contact the property owner during the project right of way phase to discuss the final right of way needs. The current date for right of way acquisition to begin in project Segment A is 2023 and is 2025 for project Segment B. The schedules are subject to change based on funding availability. Please review the “Resources for Property Owners” on the NCDOT website at the link below to find out more about the right of way process.

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- 3) *Concern that a raised median will limit the ability to turn left from residence onto Pearl Street.*

The proposed concrete median island will limit the turning access for a portion of N. Pearl Street. While the proposed project will change local traffic patterns and how one drives to and from places today, the proposed changes will improve safety and mobility in the corridor.

NCDOT will continue to evaluate ways to address property access concerns as the designs develop. In some locations, changes to the design may not be possible due to safety and design requirements.

- 4) *Concern about property access and requests a service road extension from Edwards Road to Capps Bridge Road.*

The maps at the public meeting showed the proposed service road locations for the preliminary design. NCDOT reviewed a request for a service road extension from Edwards Road to Capps Bridge Road that would connect the “dead-end” portions of the proposed service road on the north side of U.S. 70 in this area. After the review, NCDOT determined there would be some additional minor environmental impacts as well as additional right of way needs and construction costs for the service road extension. The extension would, however, provide improved access, connectivity, mobility, and transportation benefits for the overall community. Therefore, based on the overall added benefits, NCDOT is recommending to

incorporate the service road extension within the development of the right of way plans for the project.

## B. Business Impacts

- 1) *Comment notes a specific property and notes concern about potential for loss of income if project design impacts rental property or commercial signage.*

NCDOT will continue to evaluate ways to minimize impacts to adjacent properties as the design progresses. Where NCDOT requires property for the project, NCDOT right of way agents will contact the property owner during the project right of way phase. The right of way acquisition for project Segment A is currently scheduled to begin in 2023 and to begin in 2025 for project Segment B. The schedules are subject to change based on the availability of funding.

If a property owner believes their property should be advance acquired due to undue hardship on account of one or all of the following reasons: health, safety or financial reasons; they may request this of NCDOT in writing with supporting documents that show that remaining on the property poses an undue hardship to the property owner, as compared to other property owners located within the corridor. Located within the corridor alone may not be sufficient reason to qualify for a hardship acquisition.

Review the “Resources for Property Owners” on the NCDOT website at the link below to find out more about the right of way process. To speak with a NCDOT right of way agent, please contact the NCDOT Division 4 Right of Way Office at (252) 640-6570.

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- 2) *Comment notes a specific property and requests a right-out driveway to allow for car and truck access that would not conflict with the existing right-in-right out driveway.*

NCDOT reviewed the request for a right-out driveway. Due to the limited property frontage, proximity to the proposed interchange ramp, and need to meet interstate standards for providing and maintaining control of access limits at interchanges, NCDOT is not recommending a break in the control of access to add a right-out driveway.

- 3) *Follow up comment asks about specific property right-of-way impacts, notes the existing site constraints, and notes concern about vehicular maneuverability if additional property is required for the project. The commenter additionally requests a map showing the right-of-way needs for the property and asks whether the signage will be affected by the design.*

NCDOT will be able to provide more specific information on the right of way needs when the right of way plans are completed. The current schedule for the right of way plans to be complete and for acquisition to begin is 2023 for project Segment A and is 2025 for project Segment B. The schedules are subject to funding availability.

Where NCDOT requires property for the project, NCDOT right of way agents will contact the property owner during the project right of way phase. Please review the “Resources for Property Owners” on the NCDOT website at the link below to find out more about the right of way process. To speak with a NCDOT right of way agent, please contact the NCDOT Division 4 Right of Way Office at (252) 640-6570.

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- 4) *Comment notes specific property-related impacts that would constrain the business owner’s needs for operations. The commenter requests NCDOT to move the project right-of-way north and away from the business to avoid utility impacts and allow the business to continue operation.*

NCDOT will continue to evaluate ways to minimize impacts to adjacent properties as the design progresses in the right of way plan preparation stage. A utility relocation report will also be prepared as the design process progresses, and information will be shared with property owners as it becomes available. The current schedule for right of way acquisition to begin is 2023 for project Segment A and is 2025 for project Segment B. Please note that the schedules are subject to funding availability.

Where NCDOT requires property for the project, NCDOT right of way agents will contact the property owner during the project right of way phase. Review the “Resources for Property Owners” on the NCDOT website at the link below to find out more about the right of way process. To speak with a NCDOT right of way agent, please contact the NCDOT Division 4 Right of Way Office at (252) 640-6570.

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- 5) *Question about whether NCDOT will reimburse a property owner for land needed for the project across a property.*

Where NCDOT requires property for the project, NCDOT right of way agents will contact the property owner during the project right of way phase. Review the “Resources for Property Owners” on the NCDOT website to find out more about the right-of-way process. To speak with a NCDOT right-of-way agent, please contact the NCDOT Division 4 Right of Way Office at (252) 640-6570.

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### **C. Changes to Local Travel Patterns/Property Access**

- 1) *Comments noting the various ways access and travel patterns will change.*

While the proposed project will change local traffic patterns and how one drives to and from places today, the proposed changes will improve safety and mobility, and provide access to

businesses and residences to the extent possible. While changes in access to US 70 may have negative impacts to some businesses, it will also present some opportunities at new interchanges and service roads.

#### **D. Requests for More Information or Technical Response**

- 1) *Six comments received included a request more information (e.g., hard copies of maps) or a technical response.*

Requests for additional information have been supplied by NCDOT.

#### **E. Traffic**

- 1) *Concerns expressed about existing traffic issues at specific locations not apparent in the traffic volumes shown on the public meeting maps and requesting the project team to review the identified locations.*

NCDOT performed a traffic analysis which evaluated the existing number of cars on the roads and the number of cars expected to use the roads in the future with the project built. This information informed the project design.

When the project is constructed, the streets currently intersecting with existing Highway 70 will no longer directly intersect with Highway 70. This will result in the removal of these existing intersections and traffic signals. As a result, traffic will no longer queue on these streets and congestion will be improved with the construction of the nearby interchanges and overpasses.

#### **F. Noise Concerns**

- 1) *Requests for consideration of noise barriers.*

The preliminary noise study helped to identify noise-sensitive areas, such as homes. These areas were identified on the public meeting maps with red hatching and labels. A detailed noise study will be performed near the time of the right of way acquisition phase to confirm whether the noise-sensitive areas qualify for noise mitigation. If the location qualifies for noise mitigation, NCDOT will follow the adopted NCDOT Traffic Noise Policy for incorporating noise abatement, such as noise barriers. The right of way acquisition is currently scheduled for 2023 for Project Segment A and is in 2025 for project Segment B. The schedules are subject to change depending upon funding availability.

<https://connect.ncdot.gov/resources/Environmental/PDEA%20Procedures%20Manual%20Documents/2016%20NCDOT%20Traffic%20Noise%20Policy.pdf>

#### **G. Cemetery Impacts**

- 1) *Comment received from owner of cemetery indicated the desire to save as much of the cemetery as possible for future grave space.*

NCDOT will continue to evaluate ways to minimize impacts to the cemetery as the design progresses. The design presented at the public meeting incorporated efforts to minimize impacts to the cemetery and grave relocations. For graves that must be relocated, they will be moved in accordance with North Carolina General Statutes 65 and 70.

#### H. Private Utility Impacts

- 1) *Comment asking how private utility relocations, such as wells or septic systems, will be moved.*

Impacts to private utilities, such as wells and septic systems, will be determined during the right of way phase of the project. NCDOT will locate these utilities and determine if they conflict with the project or if there is room to repair/replace them on the property. As mentioned within the public meeting information, the right of way acquisition for project Segment A is in 2023 and is in 2025 for project Segment B. Please note that the schedules are subject to change depending upon the availability of funds.

Where NCDOT requires property for the project, NCDOT right of way agents will contact the property owner at that time. Review the “Resources for Property Owners” on the NCDOT website at the link below to find out more about the right of way process. To speak with a NCDOT right of way agent, please contact the NCDOT Division 4 Right of Way Office at (252) 640-6570.

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#### I. Error or Omission

- 1) *One comment noted a mapping error regarding the shape of how a house was drawn on the public meeting maps.*

NCDOT will review the mapping error and make any necessary corrections on future project maps.

#### J. Non-Substantive Comments

- 1) *Three comments were non-substantive in nature, meaning the commenter: did not reference a specific topic or concern, provided yes or no responses on the comment card, or provided a thank you response after receiving an email.*

All comments have been noted as part of the project record.

#### K. Statements of Opposition to the Project

- 1) *Two comments (one commenter submitted the same comment twice) stating opposition for the NCDOT preferred interchange alternative design on the east side of the Town of Princeton.*

*Commenter indicates preference for previous design presented at the December 2017 public meeting and notes that the new design would result in residential and traffic impacts.*

NCDOT investigated the possibility of an interchange at or near the intersection of US 70 with N. Pearl Street and Edwards Road based on comments received from the December 2017 public meeting. Interchange locations at both Dr. Donnie Jones East (presented at the December 2017 meeting) and N. Pearl Street/Edwards Road satisfy the purpose and need of the project and are expected to operate adequately based on the traffic forecasts. There are also no substantial differences in anticipated environmental impacts when comparing each interchange location. While the Dr. Donnie Jones East interchange may have resulted in a few less relocations, there were concerns expressed about its location, proposed design, and the closure of N. Pearl Street and Edwards Road. The interchange locations and configurations were thus evaluated on their ability to address public comments and concerns.

Emergency management officials expressed concerns regarding the added emergency response time associated with closing some existing accesses to and across US 70. An interchange allowing connectivity for N. Pearl Street and Edwards Road provides more direct access to the Town of Princeton and a more direct route for emergency responders to cross US 70 to provide fire and rescue services. Some business owners also expressed concerns about the closure of N. Pearl Street and Edwards Road due to the added travel time and more circuitous routes that would be introduced to access their businesses. After noting the access concerns and the interest to maintain traffic flow along or near existing N. Pearl Street and Edwards Road, it was determined the Dr. Donnie Jones East Interchange location should be dismissed from further study.

While changes in access will change travel patterns and the way one drives today, the proposed project will improve safety and mobility as well as provide access to businesses and residences to the extent possible. The changes to US 70 may have negative impacts to some businesses, but the project will also present opportunities at new interchanges and along service roads.

#### **L. Statement of Support for the Project**

- 1) *One comment specifically noted support for the design.*

The comment has been noted as part of the project record.