

NORTH CAROLINA

CRAVEN COUNTY

The Highway 70 Corridor Commission met on Thursday, August 12, 2010 at 2:00 p.m. in the Berne Room in the New Bern Riverfront Convention Center, 203 S. Front Street, New Bern, North Carolina, after due notice thereof had been given.

County members present:

Carteret County – Randy Martin and Tom Steepy
Craven County – Michael Avery, Steve Tyson and Danny Walsh
Johnston County – Frank Price, Donald B. Rains and Peter Wilson
Jones County – None
Lenoir County – Brian Lucas, D. Mark Pope and Russell Rhodes
Wayne County – Chuck Allen; C. Munroe Best, Jr. and Sandra R. McCullen

Other persons present:

North Carolina Board of Transportation – Hugh Overholt (District 2) and Gus H. Tulloss (District 4)
North Carolina Department of Transportation – Dwayne Alligood, Neil Lassiter and Bobby Lewis
Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director – M. Durwood Stephenson
Craven County – Jack B. Veit
East Carolina University – Dr. James W. Kleckley
Eastern Carolina Regional Airport – Tom Braaten
Eastern Carolina RPO – Patrick Flanagan and Alex Rickard
City of Havelock – Scott Chase
Johnston County – Rick Hester
Upper Coastal Plain RPO – Daniel VanLiere
Wayne County Clerk to the Board – Marcia R. Wilson
Citizens – Cathy Aikens; Craig Allen; Stephanie Allen; Emma B. Bell; James Boyd; Clifton Blango, II; Anna Carter; Deona Collins; Melvin Cooper; Vanessa Cooper; Rebecca Credle; Cynthia H. Daniels; William C. Daniels, Sr.; Linda Daugherty; Connie H. Davis; Ophelia Davis; William H. Dove; Evangelist Myrtle Dowling; Gloria Eldridge; Daisy English; Fred English; Bessie G. Folks; Chelsie Forbes; Frances Foy; Carolyn Foye; Georgia Foye; Shirlene Foye; Jane Gavin; Patricia Gavin; Ethel Godfrey; Lucy Haddock; Cheryl Harris-Coles; Terrance Hicks; Floyd Hill, Jr.; Haywood Humphrey; Hal James; Raynor James; Steve Keen; Barbara J. Lee; Patricia Lee; Mamie Moore; Carolyn Munfore; Deborah Patterson; Trenz D. Phillips; Ron Sage; Quincy Spears; Florence St. Rose; Chad Stawn; Vivian Stevens; William Stevens; Val Walston; Rob Will and others.

Welcome and Introduction of Members

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Chairman Tom Steepy welcomed everyone to the meeting. Everyone present introduced herself or himself.

Approval of Agenda

Upon motion of Craven County Commissioner Steve Tyson and seconded by Goldsboro City Councilmember Chuck Allen, the Highway 70 Corridor Commission members unanimously approved the Highway 70 Corridor Commission August 12, 2010 agenda, as presented.

Approval of Minutes

Upon motion of Wayne County Commissioner C. Munroe Best, Jr. and seconded by Craven County Commissioner Steve Tyson, the Highway 70 Corridor Commission members unanimously approved the March 18, 2010 and June 3, 2010 minutes of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission.

Citizen Comments

Co-Chairman of the James City Steering Committee Craig Allen gave a history of James City in Craven County. James City was originally called the Trent River Settlement. James City was founded in 1863. The community was named for the Reverend Horace James, an army chaplain from Massachusetts, who dealt with the growing number of blacks coming into the city and subsequently became assistant commissioner of the Freedman's Bureau in North Carolina. In the early 1970s the construction of the Highway 70 overpass relocated citizens in James City to Scott's Road and Williams Road. At one time the Old Cherry Point Road tied into Highway 70. The entrance into James City by Bojangles, church and school is an entrance only and cannot be used to exit James City. The length of trains is often one mile long and blocks access to the James City community. If one misses the exit to James City, they must drive an additional two miles before they can turn around. Mr. Allen requested another alternative be considered. For motorists traveling east on US Highway 70 the Williams Street signal is the first one after the signal at Lenoir Community College. The proposed elimination of Highway 70 crossovers at Williams Road and Airport Road will create more congestion and cause more accidents. The projected cost of a freeway Highway 70 at James City is \$76 billion and will only last 20 years. Mr. Allen requested an in-depth study be done before a bypass around James City is constructed so the residents will not be uprooted again. He requested someone stand up for the citizens of James City.

Chairman of the James City Steering Committee Melvin Cooper stated pockets of communities occupy the land once known as James City. Retrofitting US Highway 70 will impact a large portion of the James City community. Construction barriers and safety issues will cause congestion and/or accidents during the retrofit. James City recognizes US Highway 70 is the major link between Raleigh and Morehead City for commerce, trade and recreational traffic. The proposed retrofit does not present a healthy economic outlook for the community and state. James City welcomes growth and knows growth is inevitable, but does not want the change of retrofitting US Highway 70. Suggestions for Highway 70 included: construction of US Highway 17 bypass to the county line, freeway style section of Highway 70, construct flush median or no median at all, timing and spacing of traffic signals based on peak and non-peak traffic, proper zoning ordinance to control business, develop access management ordinance, and a community impact study to document growth in James City area. He challenged communities

along US Highway 70 to address issues in a cooperative effort. James City has more than one voice and more than one vision. Chairman of the James City Steering Committee Melvin Cooper stated retrofitting Highway 70 at James City is not fitting for the community. Businesses will be adversely affected by the retrofit.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Chairman Tom Steepy thanked the members of the James City community for the tour. Workshops were held for public input.

North Carolina Department of Transportation District 2 Engineer Neil Lassiter stated the signal timing has been revised at Taberna and James City. Physical geometric improvements have been made. A feasibility study has been conducted at the request of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission. The staff is exploring all available options. US Highway 70 in the James City area is a long way from construction. The study is a starting point for a more in-depth planning process.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated he would like to meet with Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. representatives and the James City engineer to discuss suggestions less harmful to the community, which would handle traffic issues.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Chairman Tom Steepy stated the Highway 70 Corridor Commission began 4-5 years ago. Johnston, Wayne, Lenoir, Craven and Carteret counties fund the Highway 70 Corridor Commission. Each county appoints four members. Safety, mobility and economic development aspects of the projects are studied. One short-term option for the James City area is to examine retrofitting an existing highway section to make it safer. The second option is examining a long-term solution such as a bypass. The third option was a flyover. The flyover was the most favored option at the public meeting and would cost approximately \$30 million and take up to ten years for all permitting to be completed. Precautions would be taken to try to lessen the impact of construction on the 70% of the local traffic and 30% of the beach traffic, which uses US Highway 70. A bypass is a long-term option and would cost \$300-400 million. The Highway 70 Corridor Commission has studied the entire 135 mile corridor and determined two projects are extremely important with relation to traffic and crash statistics – James City in Craven County and Kinston in Lenoir County. James City has more accidents along the corridor. The North Carolina Department of Transportation has funded \$150,000 for a possible design in the James City area. The Highway 70 Corridor Commission is concentrating on improving high traffic and high accident areas. The Highway 70 Corridor Commission is willing to work on a concept to mutually benefit both sides.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Chairman Tom Steepy asked the citizens from James City at the meeting if they wanted improvements in the near future or wait 30 years for improvements. By consensus, the citizens wanted to wait 30 years for any improvements at James City on US Highway 70.

Raynor James stated retrofitting US Highway 70 in James City would create a nightmare, kill jobs and hurt a lot of people.

Hal James stated defensive driving is needed along US Highway 70 in James City due to excessive speeding, ignoring stop signs on service roads and problems with turnout lanes.

US 70 Priority Projects Update

Johnson County

- Committee has met and made no significant changes
- Proposed wording and scope changes to be considered
- Board of Commissioners has not taken a position on Oak Street rail closure/ Buffalo Road railroad grade separation – needs further consideration
- Supports completion of the remaining Goldsboro bypass and construction of the Pine Level interchanges under the freeway priority list *with modifications to Peedin Street intersection with US Highway 70*

Wayne County

- Grantham Street ramp project has been completed
- Wayne County Transportation Committee has approved the priority list
- No issues with priority list
- List will be forwarded to Board of Commissioners for consideration

Lenoir County

- Lenoir County will submit a new list of priorities
- Priorities have not gone to the Board of Commissioners
- Clarity and further consultation with Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. needed on access management study on the proposed median closures between the new Harvey Parkway and LaGrange/Little Baltimore area

Craven County

- Concerns heard today about James City area
- *On April 19, 2010 the Craven County Board of Commissioners accepted a report from Craven County Commissioner Steve Tyson and Craven County Manager Harold Blizzard regarding US Highway 70 priority projects. Under freeway priorities #4 and #7 should be combined to read “Construct ramp over interchanges at Thurman, Taberna Road, Airport Road and Williams Road in that order.” Under access management priorities, add #9 “Construct/modify connector road from Williams Road to Airport Road via airport entrance drive.”*

Carteret County

- Community college/hospital area intersection improvements are not supported by the college or hospital and should be deleted from the list
- Median from east of Hestron Drive to Banks Street to be addressed locally

Appropriation for Lenoir County to Work with Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc.

Upon motion of Goldsboro Councilmember Chuck Allen and seconded by Wayne County Commissioner Chairman C. Munroe Best, Jr., the Highway 70 Corridor Commission unanimously approved up to \$2,000 for consultation with Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. on the access management study in Lenoir County between the new Harvey Parkway and LaGrange/Little Baltimore area.

Havelock – Slocum Road Options

Havelock Commissioner Danny Walsh updated the Highway 70 Corridor Commission on the Slocum Road flyover option. The City of Havelock hired a company to find federal funding for Slocum Road improvements. Funding through the Department of Defense was secured to conduct fundamental studies and four options were determined. The Slocum Road flyover option was selected since it was the most affordable. It has not been determined if the Slocum Road flyover would be eligible for Defense Access Road funding. Cherry Point has said the main gate may be moved to the Slocum Road area. If this move should occur, the flyover option could be changed to an overpass and the stoplight moved. The Military Growth Task Force is in discussion with the Defense Access Road staff about an overpass. Congressmen G. K. Butterfield and Walter K. Jones, Jr. have each secured \$350,000 in funding. Congressman G. K. Butterfield has applied for \$1 million for the Slocum Creek Bridge. All outside funding sources are being explored, including the Department of Defense. Havelock is working with the Military Growth Task Force on the Sustainable Communities Initiative planning grant and work program for the area.

Economic Impact Study Update

Dr. James W. Kleckley, Director of the Bureau of Business Research at East Carolina University, stated work began on the economic impact study a month ago. He is working with information on the region and examining how US Highway 70 impacts the different parts of eastern North Carolina. The IMPLAN analysis will determine the impact of proposed construction and how the highway impacts the areas along the highway. This macro study will examine the indirect impact of highway bypass investment projects in other areas of the southeast United States and the benefits and problems experienced in these project areas. Currently, he is in the process of collecting information. Dr. James W. Kleckley requested the members submit issues they would like addressed in the study and he will try to address the issues with supporting documentation. The projected completion date is in September.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated local communities would be able to use information from the economic impact study as an economic development tool.

In response to a question concerning the US Highway 70 bypass route in Kinston, Dr. James W. Kleckley stated his role is not to make a recommendation on a northern or southern route for the Kinston bypass, but to provide data to the local community and the North Carolina Department of Transportation to make the best decision for the local community.

In response to a question concerning the results of the economic impact study, Dr. James W. Kleckley stated the jobs created by the highway construction project activities can be analyzed. The growth of the area is harder to measure scientifically in a manner, which is defensible. The study is looking at the counties along the corridor, as well as the counties contiguous to the corridor counties.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated an application has been completed for a TIGER planning grant. He was optimistic the grant would provide significant monies to do an in-depth study.

North Carolina Division 2 Board of Transportation Member Hugh Overholt stated within the past 10 years an economic impact study involving military growth had been completed. The Military Growth Task Force has also studied economic impact and this data could be utilized.

Dr. James W. Kleckley stated he is not trying to duplicate previous studies.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated the study should help the large assets in eastern North Carolina improve their operations. The large assets include the railroad, ports, Global TransPark and military.

In response to questions, Dr. James W. Kleckley stated the study would examine the jobs created from the road construction projects. There is a problem examining only a 30,000 foot view of the economy of an area along the highway. Construction will displace things even though the North Carolina Department of Transportation would try to mitigate as much as possible. The study looks at examples of other areas with similar construction impacts and relates the good and bad ways in which the issues were addressed.

Morehead City Manager Randy Martin stated he was concerned about the impact of inaction. Economic problems can arise due to inactions. There is a cost to doing nothing and gridlock traffic can be created. Morehead City saw economic adversity due to inaction. He stated as long as it takes to get transportation projects funded, there is a tremendous cost to the community by not doing anything.

Havelock Commissioner Danny Walsh requested information concerning the Havelock bypass and Slocum Road flyover as soon as possible. With a possible change in traffic patterns, the focus may need to be shifted. With the Havelock bypass scheduled for 2017-2018 he wanted to make sure he was doing the right thing to plan for the future.

Goldsboro City Councilmember Chuck Allen stated he understood the study would determine the impact of highway construction jobs. The members also thought the study would determine the economic impact of the highway projects to the tax base.

Dr. James W. Kleckley stated the study would examine the expected economic growth in the counties as a result of a new highway and specifically the construction dollars generated through the construction of a new highway.

Letter of Support to the Military Growth Task Force

Upon motion of Morehead City Manager Randy Martin and seconded by Havelock Commissioner Danny Walsh, the Highway 70 Corridor Commission unanimously approved and authorized the Chairman to sign a letter of support for the Sustainable Communities Initiatives planning grant and work program to be managed by the Military Growth Task Force and to send a copy of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission membership with the letter, attached hereto as Attachment A.

Draft TIP Update

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated he was pleased with the draft TIP as it relates to the Highway 70 Corridor. There is a two month period in which the draft TIP can be adjusted.

The members of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission applauded North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 2 Engineer Neil Lassiter and North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 4 Engineer Bobby Lewis for their creative thinking and their Highway 70 avocation.

North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 2 Engineer Neil Lassiter stated he was pleased with the draft TIP. The Havelock bypass right-of-way has been delayed from 2010 to 2012. Construction of the Havelock bypass could begin in 2015. Some comments have been received on the environmental documents for this project.

North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 2 Engineer Neil Lassiter stated the Kinston bypass (R-2553) project has right-of-way scheduled for 2020. The staff is continuing the planning process. The project may be accelerated.

North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 2 Engineer Neil Lassiter stated the Gallant's Channel bridge (R-3307) project was accelerated from 2015 to 2012.

North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 2 Engineer Neil Lassiter stated he did not have good news concerning the northern Carteret bypass. He suggested keeping it on the Down East RPO and Carteret County Transportation Committee priority lists.

North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 4 Engineer Bobby Lewis stated the Goldsboro bypass is the major project in his division. The Goldsboro bypass is divided into four sections. One section is under construction. The eastern most section is in Divisions 2 and 4 and is on the five year work program and has funding in 2012. The staff is working on the other two sections, but they have not gone to the North Carolina Board of Transportation for consideration. Section A runs from NC Highway 581 at Rosewood to Interstate 795. Section BA runs from Interstate 795 to Wayne Memorial Drive. The other two sections run from Wayne Memorial Drive to LaGrange and the staff is trying to make this one section.

Johnston County Member Frank Price stated Johnston County supports the completion of the Goldsboro bypass.

Treasurer's Report

Wayne County Clerk to the Board Marcia R. Wilson gave the treasurer's report for Secretary/Treasurer W. Lee Smith, III. The Highway 70 Corridor Commission has \$91,552.34 total cash on hand as of August 10, 2010. All member counties have been invoiced for fiscal year 2010-2011.

Director's Report

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated his July 2010 report was sent to the members electronically.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission will be held on Thursday, October 14, 2010 in Johnston County. The location of the meeting will be determined at a later date and the members will be notified.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Highway 70 Corridor Commission Chairman Tom Steepy adjourned the meeting at 3:20 p.m.

Marcia R. Wilson, Clerk to the Board
Wayne County Board of Commissioners