

NORTH CAROLINA

WAYNE COUNTY

The Highway 70 Corridor Commission met on Thursday, June 3, 2010 at 12:30 p.m. at Wilber's Barbecue Restaurant, 4172 US Highway 70 East, Goldsboro, North Carolina, after due notice thereof had been given.

County members present:

Carteret County – Tom Steepy
Craven County – Harold Blizzard and Steve Tyson
Johnston County – Berry Gray, Rick Hester and Frank Price
Jones County – None
Lenoir County – Chris Humphrey and Russell Rhodes
Wayne County – Chuck Allen; C. Munroe Best, Jr. and W. Lee Smith, III

Other persons present:

North Carolina Board of Transportation – Leigh McNairy
North Carolina Department of Transportation – Dwayne Allgood, Neil Lassiter, Bobby Lewis
Tim Little and John Rouse
Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director – M. Durwood Stephenson
Town of Clayton – Jody L. McLeod
Craven County – Jack B. Veit and Donald Baumgardner
City of Goldsboro – Al King and Joe Huffman
City of Kinston – B. J. Murphy
Town of Princeton – Donald B. Rains
Village of Walnut Creek – Lou Cook
Upper Coastal Plain RPO – Daniel Van Liere
Wayne County Clerk to the Board – Marcia R. Wilson
Citizens – Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Potter, Christopher Randall, Jacqueline Potter Randall 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 Minutes

The minutes for the March 18, 2010 Highway 70 Corridor Commission meeting were not available. These minutes will be sent to the members as soon as they are received from Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc.

Approval of Agenda

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

Financial Update

Wayne County Manager W. Lee Smith, III stated the Highway 70 Corridor Commission has \$83,194.27 total cash on hand as of May 25, 2010. This cash total reflects monies paid out thus far for the Kinston/Lenoir County project and the James City project. He anticipated the June 30, 2010 cash on hand balance to be approximately \$50,000.

Wayne County Manager W. Lee Smith, III stated on March 26, 2010 the subcommittee of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission contracted with M. Durwood Stephenson to act as a lobbyist for the Highway 70 Corridor Commission. The employment agreement pays M. Durwood Stephenson \$7,500 per month for the duration of the contract period. The employment agreement between the Highway 70 Corridor Commission and M. Durwood Stephenson is attached hereto as Attachment A.

Wayne County Manager W. Lee Smith, III reviewed the Highway 70 Corridor Commission's budget for 2010-2011. The Highway 70 Corridor Commission has budgeted \$18,000 to contract with Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. to provide services as needed. The annual contract with M. Durwood Stephenson is \$90,000. This will leave approximately \$17,000 to partially fund a Highway 70 economic impact study.

Equity Formula

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Chairman Tom Steepy stated he attended the Joint Transportation Oversight Committee meeting concerning the equity formula with Chuck Allen; C. Munroe Best, Jr. and M. Durwood Stephenson on April 6, 2010. He requested the Highway 70 Corridor Commission members support the *Resolution on Reformulation of the North Carolina Department of Transportation Equity Formula for the Highway Trust Fund*. The resolution supports reformulation of the North Carolina Department of Transportation equity formula that increases funding to designated regions to expedite the completion of projects of the intrastate system to protect the economic viability of local, regional and statewide commerce and military operations safeguarding American freedom, and appropriates those monies specifically to those projects.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated he spoke in favor of retaining the current equity formula in the absence of a more equitable distribution of funds system, which would not penalize the rural areas of North Carolina. The majority of speakers at the Joint Transportation Oversight Committee meeting advocated change for the equity formula for the Highway Trust Fund. He reported there is no pending legislation in the current session for this issue. It is anticipated the rural population of North Carolina will decrease after the 2010 census is completed. He will keep abreast of the issue.

Goldsboro City Manager Joe Huffman reported the North Carolina Metropolitan Mayor's Coalition did not endorse the equity formula change for the Highway Trust Fund.

Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. Role

Wayne County Manager W. Lee Smith, III stated the Highway 70 Corridor Commission will contract with Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. to provide services as needed during 2010-2011. These services will include updating the website, providing IT assistance, and revising maps. All requests for services from Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. must be channeled through Highway 70 Corridor Commission Chairman Tom Steepy.

Kinston/Lenoir County Projects

On April 28, 2010 a special meeting was held to discuss Lenoir County projects, issues and concerns. The minutes of the meeting are attached hereto as Attachment B.

Lenoir County Transportation Committee Chairman Russell Rhodes stated there was concern Lenoir County was not represented on the subcommittee to hire a Director for the Highway 70 Corridor Commission. Therefore, the subcommittee was asked to include Kinston Mayor B. J. Murphy. The Lenoir County officials were told they would be receiving Highway 70 Corridor Commission updates and reports. There has been no information since the April 28, 2010 meeting.

Kinston Mayor B. J. Murphy stated the entire committee needs updates. Upon questioning, Mayor Murphy acknowledged he was receiving regular reports from Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson by email as stipulated by the Employment Agreement.

North Carolina Board of Transportation Member Leigh McNairy stated communication seems to be an issue. She suggested a conference call may help with communication issues.

Wayne County Manager W. Lee Smith, III stated a monthly report will be sent out.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated he would send out a monthly report.

Wayne County Commissioner C. Munroe Best, Jr. stated Lenoir County needs to decide on a northern or southern bypass route with the North Carolina Department of Transportation based on permits, environmental permits and money.

North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 2 Engineer Neil Lassiter stated the Kinston bypass is in the very preliminary stages of the project. The public and local officials were involved earlier. The next process is scheduled for later this month and will identify the purpose of need. The National Environmental Protection Act steps must be followed concurrently. All interested groups such as the Department of Transportation, RPO, Army Corps of Engineers, Wildlife Commission, EPA, Coast Guard, North Carolina Historic Preservation,

etc. must be contacted for input. There are many steps to be followed before the project can be constructed.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated he observed the Kinston bypass project was lagging. The bypass project has 14 steps. North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 2 Engineer Neil Lassiter has stated he may be able to cut two years off the process.

North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 2 Engineer Neil Lassiter stated North Carolina is the only state participating in a pilot project, which will utilize GIS technology layers. This project may be used to decrease the Lenoir County bypass planning time from nine years to five years.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Chairman Tom Steepy stated he hoped the meeting with Lenoir County officials would help them understand the Highway 70 Corridor Commission and its mission.

Update on US Highway 70 Priority Projects and Access Management Priorities Updates

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Chairman Tom Steepy requested each county adopt the US Highway 70 priority projects and access management priorities, attached hereto as Attachment C. He stated the priority lists should be submitted to each county's transportation committee for a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners. The Highway 70 Corridor Commission will also solicit support from the RPOs and North Carolina Department of Transportation on the finalized list of priorities.

Goldsboro City Councilmember Chuck Allen stated the priorities would be submitted to the Wayne County Transportation Committee and then sent to the Goldsboro City Council and Wayne County Board of Commissioners for consideration.

Lenoir County Transportation Committee Chairman Russell Rhodes stated the Lenoir County Transportation Committee was discussing the US 11 and US 55 intersection. The committee will make its recommendation to the Lenoir County Board of Commissioners.

Craven County Commissioner Steve Tyson stated the General Assembly is expected to act on the request to exempt school buses from stopping at the railroad crossing south of the US Highway 17 Bridge. He questioned if anyone had been contacted about the relocation of Citgo/McDonalds in order to extend Williams Road to Old Cherry Point Road. Extending Williams Road is a short-term inexpensive traffic solution in the area. Havelock is working on the Slocum Road improvements.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated he left a message for the Citgo/McDonalds owner to contact him.

Craven County Manager Harold Blizzard stated the Craven County Board of Commissioners would support the priorities with the following changes:

Freeway Priorities

#4 and 5 should be combined to read as follows: Construct “Ramp Over” interchanges at Thurman Road, Taberna, Airport Road and Williams Road in that order.

Access Management Priorities – Craven County

Add #9 Construct/modify connector road from Williams Road to Airport Road via airport entrance drive.

North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 2 Engineer Neil Lassiter stated the Williams Road intersection improvements are part of a larger package of improvements in the area.

Johnston County Manager Rick Hester stated the Johnston County Board of Commissioners would appoint Ray Woodall, Frank Price, Don Rains and Peter Wilson as Johnston County’s representatives on the Highway 70 Corridor Commission on June 7, 2010. He was confident the new Highway 70 Corridor Commission members from Johnston County would be meeting soon to reprioritize the proposed Johnston County list.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Chairman Tom Steepy stated members of the Carteret County Transportation Committee requested more information concerning the priorities. The committee is examining the widening and paving of NC 101 as a priority.

Director’s Update

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson presented his Director’s Report, attached hereto as Attachment D.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Chairman Tom Steepy suggested Military Task Force Executive Director Mark Sutherland should be invited a future meeting of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission.

North Carolina Department of Transportation Update

North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 4 Engineer Bobby Lewis stated the United States Department of Transportation is authorized to award \$600 million in TIGER II Discretionary Grants. The 2010 Appropriations Act directs that not less than \$140 million of the funds provided for TIGER II grants be used for projects in rural areas. He proposed a true corridor plan incorporating the ports, airports, Highway 70 corridor, military bases, highways and rail. The plan can also include community colleges, hospitals, and industrial sites. The notice requires pre-applications be submitted by July 16, 2010. Grants are awarded on a competitive base for projects that will have a significant impact on the nation, a metropolitan area or a region. He hoped the Highway 70 corridor would be incorporated into the Governor’s logistics plan. He showed a computer generated program by Daniel Van Liere, which showed the facilities and infrastructure along the Highway 70 Corridor.

North Carolina Board of Transportation Member Leigh McNairy stated the corridor plan needed to be changed to include a northern route for the Kinston bypass.

North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 4 Engineer Bobby Lewis gave an update on the four sections of the US Highway 70 Goldsboro bypass:

- Section A - \$70 million in five-year work plan. Section is from NC Highway 581 to Interstate 795. Projected for 2012.
- Section BA – under construction
- Section BB – construction not funded, no right-of-way yet
- Section C – right-of-way funded

North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 4 Engineer Bobby Lewis gave an update on the US Highway 70 projects in Johnston County:

- Pine Level project – square loop design. Project to be let in late 2011 or later.
- Daniel Van Liere with Upper Coastal Plain RPO is working on a project to improve air quality by decreasing congestion.

North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 4 District Engineer Tim Little gave the following update:

- Johnston County hazard elimination project – US Highway 70 from SR 2305 (Firetower Road) to east of SR 2310 (Davis Mill Road/Stevens Chapel Road). Close median crossovers and upgrade two intersections to interchanges. Allocation of \$9,060,000. Project to be let in September 2011.
- Johnston County spot safety project – US Highway 70 at SR 1002 (Rains Mill Road/N. Pine Street). Install dual “BE PREPARED TO STOP WHEN FLASHING” advance shoulder-mounted warning signs with actuated flashers on both US 70 approaches. Requested allocation of \$25,000. Seeking funding at this time. If funding is available then completion expected to be in 4-6 months.
- Wayne County hazard elimination project – US Highway 70 at SR 1234 (Ebenezer Church Road/Capps Bridge Road) and crossover 0.35 miles west of SR 1234. Construct mainline directional crossovers at both locations with appropriate bulb-outs at adjacent crossovers. Allocation is \$1,450,000. Project to be let in January 2011.
- Wayne County spot safety project – US Highway 70 westbound at SR 1302 (Florida Street) and Paul Street. Remove access to westbound US Highway 70 from Florida Street and Paul Street. Allocation is \$175,000. Project is under construction and expected to be completed in 2-3 weeks.

North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 2 Engineer Neil Lassiter gave the following update:

- Havelock bypass – draft environmental impact study to be sent to United States Department of Transportation in Atlanta for review in fall 2010. Target date for corridor public hearing is January 2011. Record of decision scheduled for May 2012.
- Gallant’s Channel – Project accelerated 2.5 years for anticipated construction in 2012. A 65 foot fixed span bridge is planned. Coast Guard must approve clearance. RFP out for bridge design. Local maritime interest may challenge fixed span bridge due to drawbridge preference, delaying the project.

- Slocum gate – Department of Defense allocated \$300,000 to fund feasibility study. Currently trying to find funds for preliminary engineering.
- North Carteret bypass – Waiting on record of decision. Do not want this project to be viewed as a continuance of Havelock bypass.
- James City – Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. addressing feasibility issues. Project from James City to western terminus of Havelock bypass. Unsure of status of Department of Transportation feasibility. Project could be used if other projects are not selected for funding.
- Kinston square loop – no Department of Transportation preliminary documents at this time.
- Kinston bypass steps:
 1. Purpose and need.
 2. Identification of corridors. Public comments scheduled for October 2011.
 3. Identification of least damaging alternatives. Scheduled for November 2011.
 4. Comments from Department of Transportation and regulatory agencies.

North Carolina Mobility Fund

Governor Beverly Perdue’s budget called for the creation of a multi-million dollar North Carolina Mobility Fund. This fund begins with a policy that does not transfer highway funds to the general fund and provides additional funds to be raised as stipulated in legislation and may generate as much as \$300 million for new projects. The proposed mobility fund would be used to pay for major transportation projects of statewide significance that are so expensive that it is difficult to fund them using current methods. Money for the mobility fund would come from two sources: increased DMV fees and a phase-out of transfers, which are annually made from the Highway Trust Fund to the North Carolina General Fund.

The mobility fund could be used on many types on transportation projects, including everything from highways and bridges to ports and transit projects. The fund would start out being used as a pay-as-you-go fund, but also could be used to back bonds in the future.

If the North Carolina Mobility Fund is approved, the North Carolina Department of Transportation plans to use money from the fund’s first several years to help pay for the \$330 million Yadkin River Bridge project in Cabarrus and Rowan counties. After this project, it would be to be determined how the fund’s revenue is used.

The North Carolina House budget did include the mobility fund, but the Senate budget did not.

The handouts entitled “NC Mobility Fund Talking Points” and “North Carolina Mobility Fund Frequently Asked Questions” are attached hereto as Attachment E.

Lenoir County Transportation Committee Chairman Russell Rhodes requested additional information on the mobility fund points in the handout.

North Carolina Board of Transportation Member Leigh McNairy stated the North Carolina Mobility Fund would bring equity to the rural areas. Regional projects need a funding stream. This fund could be a new source of funding for regional projects.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson recommended the Highway 70 Corridor Commission support the concept of additional funding for regional projects and not transferring funds from the Highway Trust Fund to the North Carolina general fund. NC Go, Highway 17 Association, North Carolina Metropolitan Mayor's Coalition and numerous leaders across the state have supported the North Carolina Mobility Fund.

Upon motion of Wayne County Commissioner C. Munroe Best, Jr. and seconded by Johnston County Commission Frank Price, the members of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission unanimously supported the North Carolina Mobility Fund. The resolution will be circulated for comments and placed on the August 12, 2010 agenda of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission for consideration.

Transportation Improvement Plan

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated time restraints do not permit escalating every major project along the US Highway 70 Corridor to the 6-10 year Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) schedule. Under new guidelines, the TIP plan may be revisited and revised every two years. He anticipated the major projects can be accelerated within the next two years.

Next Steps

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated the Highway 70 Corridor Commission must take a stand on projects we can move forward. We must think regionally, rather than individually. He cautioned every project along the Highway 70 Corridor without major action within a three year period must be reviewed and updated. He planned to meet with the appropriate North Carolina Department of Transportation personnel on every major Highway 70 project at least every 60 days.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Chairman Tom Steepy stated Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson had been open with his comments and had broadened the horizon of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission.

North Carolina Board of Transportation Member Leigh McNairy questioned the next step.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated we must try to place all major Highway 70 projects into the 6-10 year Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). If any project is eliminated from the TIP, we must have another one to take its place. Completion of all four sections of the Goldsboro bypass is a priority.

Economic Impact Analysis Study

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson updated the members on an economic impact study for the Highway 70 Corridor Commission region. He met with North Carolina's Eastern Region Executive Director John Chaffee, who provided valuable information concerning the study. On April 21, 2010 he met Dr. Joe Kleckley with East Carolina University concerning the importance and feasibility for an economic impact study incorporating road transportation, rails, ports and the Global TransPark on eastern North Carolina and its future. Dr. Kleckley stated the economic impact study would cost \$80,000 and East Carolina University would pay \$40,000 of this amount. The proposal for the economic impact study of the US Highway 70 Corridor is attached hereto as Attachment F. Grants may be available to help with funding. Governor Beverly Perdue supported the study, but could not appropriate monies for the study. He stated W. Lee Smith, III believes the Highway 70 Corridor Commission could find \$5,000-10,000 for the study. The North Carolina Department of Transportation may also be able to provide some funding. He will also keep in touch with the Military Task Force concerning this matter.

In response to a question from North Carolina Board of Transportation Member Leigh McNairy, North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 2 Engineer Neil Lassiter stated an economic impact study would help with the development of a 6-10 year plan.

Citizen Comments

Ralph Potter stated the North Carolina Board of Transportation established a vision for North Carolina that includes developing a network of safe and reliable high-speed facilities to accommodate statewide and regional support. He supported Corridor 46, which is the US Highway 70 corridor from Raleigh to Morehead City. Corridor 46 proposes a freeway as the corridor vision from US Highway 70 from Interstate 40 in Wake County to the end of the proposed Havelock Bypass in Craven County, and as a boulevard from the end of the proposed Havelock Bypass to Morehead City. He stressed the importance of Corridor 46 to the military and national defense in the area. Eastern North Carolina needs the element of an interstate in order to experience industrial, commercial, and residential growth. Corridor 46 would attract industry to the area.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Chairman Tom Steepy stated many of the comments presented by Ralph Potter have been incorporated into the Highway 70 master plan. The Highway 70 Corridor Commission members will work to benefit our military installations and improve the economic conditions in eastern North Carolina. He requested Ralph Potter keep the Highway 70 Corridor Commission updated.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission will be held on Thursday, August 12, 2010 from 2:00-4:00 p.m. in Craven 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 3:15 p.m.

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