

NORTH CAROLINA

WAYNE COUNTY

The Highway 70 Corridor Commission met on Thursday, July 14, 2011 at 2:00 p.m. at the Goldsboro City Hall in Room 206, 200 North Center Street, Goldsboro, North Carolina.

County members present:

Carteret County – Tom Steepy
Craven County – None
Johnston County – Fleeta Byrd, Frank Price and Don Rains
Jones County – None
Lenoir County – J. Mac Daughety and Brian Lucas
Wayne County – Chuck Allen and Jack Best

Other persons present:

North Carolina Board of Transportation – Leigh McNairy (At Large) and Gus Tulloss (Division 4)
North Carolina Department of Transportation – Dwayne Alligood, Haywood Daughtry, Neil Lassiter and Bobby Lewis
Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director – M. Durwood Stephenson
Craven County Planning Department – Director Donald Baumgarder and Chad Strawn
Down East RPO – Robert Will
Eastern Carolina RPO – Alex Rickard
North Carolina State Ports Authority – Stephanie Ayers
Wayne County Clerk to the Board – Marcia R. Wilson
Wayne County Planning Department – Director Connie Price
Citizens – Don Black and Ophelia Davis

Welcome and Introductions

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Chairman Chuck Allen welcomed everyone to the meeting. Members present introduced themselves.

Approval of Agenda

Upon motion of Don Rains, the members of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission unanimously approved the agenda as presented.

Approval of Minutes

Upon motion of Frank Price, the members of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission unanimously approved the minutes of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission on May 12, 2011.

Financial Report

Wayne County Clerk to the Board Marcia R. Wilson reported as of July 14, 2011 there was a total cash balance of \$83,606.23. Invoices for fiscal year 2011-2012 will be mailed soon.

Havelock Bypass Project Update

North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 2 Engineer Neil Lassiter stated the Environmental Impact Statement for the Havelock Bypass project has been completed and should be released soon. A public hearing on the Environmental Impact Statement is scheduled for October 2011. The North Carolina Department of Transportation is responding to a request for information on the project, which was received under the Freedom of Information Act.

Gallants Channel Project Update

North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 2 Engineer Neil Lassiter stated the project had reached a milestone with construction scheduled to begin in July 2012. The United States Coast Guard believes the 65-foot fixed replacement bridge should suffice in meeting the reasonable needs of navigation transiting Gallants Channel. The North Carolina Department of Transportation staff will hear local issues and concerns next week, but he was not aware of any issues. The lighting of the bridge is not an issue if it is a fixed-span bridge.

Slocum Gate Project Update

North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 2 Engineer Neil Lassiter stated funding was secured for the preliminary Planning and Environmental Study of the Slocum Gate project, which was approved by the North Carolina Board of Transportation on July 6, 2011. The North Carolina Department of Transportation will be assigning a staff member to the Slocum Gate project. It is anticipated it will take approximately two years to complete an Environmental Assessment of the project once the staff member is assigned.

Goldsboro Bypass Project Update

North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 4 Engineer Bobby Lewis stated the BB and C section of the Goldsboro Bypass is scheduled to be let in November 2011. Originally there were nine firms on the construction list for the remaining sections of the Goldsboro Bypass. Now there is a short list of four construction firms for the Goldsboro Bypass, which include S.T. Wooten Corporation, Barnhill Contracting Company, W. C. English and Flatiron Constructors. The North Carolina Department is hoping for low bids on the remaining sections.

North Carolina Board of Transportation Division 4 Member Gus Tulloss stated current bids are not coming in low.

North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 4 Engineer Bobby Lewis stated he was encouraged the bids for the remaining sections of the Goldsboro Bypass would come in low. The remaining sections of the Goldsboro Bypass could be completed by 2016. The current section of the Goldsboro Bypass under construction is scheduled to be completed in December 2011.

Pine Level Project Update

North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 4 Engineer Bobby Lewis stated Pine Level Mayor Jeff Holt recommended the North Carolina Department of Transportation hold a public hearing on the original alternative submitted by the North Carolina Department of Transportation. Johnston County Highway 70 Corridor Commission Member Don Rains was thanked for his assistance on the project.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated after careful study Pine Level Mayor Jeff Holt is ready to accept the proposal by the North Carolina Department of Transportation.

Wilson's Mills Project Update

North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 4 Engineer Bobby Lewis stated the Wilson's Mills project is in the beginning stages. He will meet with Wilson's Mills Mayor Phillip Wright and Highway 70 Corridor Commission Member Fleta Byrd to solicit public feedback and encourage ideas on the project.

James City/Williams Road Project Update

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated he met with North Carolina Department of Transportation Chief Operating Officer James H. Trogon, III and North Carolina Department of Transportation Director of Preconstruction Debbie Barbour to discuss improvements at the Williams Road intersection at James City. McDonald's has requested a schedule and plans for the intersection from the North Carolina Department of Transportation. McDonald's is considering expansion at its site at the intersection.

North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 2 Engineer Neil Lassiter stated he met with North Carolina Department of Transportation Director of Preconstruction Debbie Barbour and officials from McDonald's. After reviewing the plans by the North Carolina Department of Transportation for the intersection, McDonald's has determined the location is not suitable for its long-term needs. McDonald's will remain at its current location, but will not proceed with expansion plans. McDonald's indicated it is looking at a stand-alone location.

Wayne County Projects Update

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Member Jack Best thanked North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 4 Engineer Bobby Lewis for his assistance in moving the Goldsboro Bypass forward.

Craven County Projects Update

Craven County Planning Director Donald Baumgarder stated the residents in James City understand there is a problem at James City and something must be done. McDonald's will not be allowed any additional water demands for an expansion according to the City of New Bern's commercial water policy.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated McDonald's does not have the sewer capability to expand its operations at its Williams Road location. The James City Citizens Committee has requested to attend the next meeting of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission. He introduced Don Black, a New Bern business owner, who has voiced his support for the general mission of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission.

Johnston County Projects Update

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Member Frank Price stated the Pine Level project is the most active project along US Highway 70 in Johnston County. Other active issues include the protection of the Clayton Bypass as a scenic vista and the additional lane on Interstate 40 at the Clayton Bypass, which should help with the US Highway 70 merger situation.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Member Don Rains thanked North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 4 Engineer Bobby Lewis and North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 4 Operations Engineer Tim Little for working on the development of the Princeton project.

Carteret County Projects Update

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Vice-Chairman Tom Steepy updated the members on the Outer Banks Scenic Byway Committee. The 135 mile long Outer Banks Scenic Byway begins in the north at Whalebone Junction, the joining of US 64-264, US 158 and NC 12, in Nags Head in Dare County. The byway continues south on NC 12 through Bodie and Hatteras islands in Dare County, Ocracoke Island in Hyde County and Down East in Carteret county to end on the west side of the North River at the intersection of US Highway 70 and Merrimon Road (SR 1300). The Carteret County Board of Commissioners will consider an \$112,000 grant to purchase property adjacent to the North River bridge.

Legislative Agenda Update

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson updated the members of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission on the following proposed legislation, which would affect the Highway 70 Corridor Commission:

- House Bill 635 – An act to adjust the distribution formula for equity funds. The bill would increase the population factor from 50% to 66%. The Highway 70 Corridor Commission has opposed the equity formula change that would increase the population factor, which would significantly impact eastern North Carolina road funds. The

Metropolitan Mayors Association has not endorsed this legislation, but appears to be waiting for 100% of the funding.

- House Bill 309/Senate Bill 183 – The bill concerns permitted changes in selective vegetation removal with the right-of-way in state highway system and allows installation of electronic billboards. Towns and RPOs along the Highway 70 Corridor adopted resolutions opposing this legislation. Minor changes were negotiated toward the end of the long session of the General Assembly. It is anticipated the General Assembly will consider this legislation during the short session.
- House Bill 562 – This bill prohibits construction of median barriers in several locations, including Kinston. North Carolina Department of Transportation officials are working on a compromise that will engage the services of an independent consulting engineer to review crash data and the necessity of median closures. Representative Stephen LaRoque introduced a second bill, which would not allow the North Carolina Department of Transportation to study the crash data.
- Senate Bill 235/House Bill 399 – These bills would impact the motor fuel excise tax. The North Carolina Department of Transportation opposes this legislation, which would impact transportation funding. The Highway 70 Corridor Commission has endorsed Mobility Funds and has concern any reduction in the availability of dollars may impact Mobility Funds, which are a source planned for some of the US Highway 70 Corridor projects.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated he recently met with New Bern business man Don Black, Representative Norman Sanderson and North Carolina Board of Transportation Member Hugh Overholt. Representative Norman Sanderson is very supportive of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission and agreed to form a legislative caucus of the 16 legislators along the Highway 70 Corridor.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission M. Durwood Stephenson stated a recent article in the *News and Observer* stated rural areas in eastern North Carolina are stagnant, while urban areas are exploding. All legislators along the Highway 70 Corridor need to understand the Corridor's problems and support its mission.

North Carolina Board of Transportation Member Leigh McNairy stated she and North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 2 Engineer Neil Lassiter met with several legislators from the five counties along the Highway 70 Corridor in eastern North Carolina. The Highway 70 Corridor Commission needs the support from all of the legislators. The legislators agreed to a Highway 70 caucus. Senator Louis M. Pate volunteered to be the leader of the caucus. Senator Louis M. Pate will be informed about the formation of the caucus. She encouraged the concept of a legislative caucus.

North Carolina Department of Transportation Eastern Regional Field Operations Engineer Haywood Daughtry stated North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 2 Operations Engineer Dwayne Alligood is overseeing the Kinston median project. They had an introductory meeting today with representatives from the City of Kinston and Lenoir County to review the traffic crash data pertaining to the Kinston median project and the study by a third party independent engineering consultant. The committee will also include a business person

from Lenoir County. If justified, the project would be funded as a safety project. If the project is not justified by the independent third party engineering consultant, the North Carolina Department of Transportation would drop the project. Another meeting is scheduled in a couple of weeks.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated Highway 70 Corridor Commission Member J. Mac Daughety also invited several business persons, who objected to the Kinston median project, to serve on the committee to review the Kinston median project. The invitation to serve on the committee was declined.

North Carolina Board of Transportation Member Leigh McNairy stated the Lenoir County Chamber of Commerce contacted her concerning a business person to serve on the committee to review the Kinston median project. She believed a business person would serve on the committee.

Project Scoring and Priorities

The members of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission discussed the project scoring and prioritization of projects. The RPOs and MPOs are able to trade points in order to move up the priority of a project. Our projects compete with other projects across the state. We must come together to move up the priority of our projects.

Eastern Carolina RPO Planner Alex Rickard stated each MPO and RPO has a certain number of points, which can be given to a project. No project can receive more than 100 points. All projects must be entered into a database by the end of July. Data calculations should be completed by the end of September, at which time the MPO and RPO give their final ranking of the projects. The Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Transportation and Division Engineers also can give points. The final scores will be completed in October. Traffic data for every statewide strategic corridor highway, including US Highway 70, makes up 70% of its score. The North Carolina Department of Transportation Division Engineers, MPOs and RPOs also rank the projects for the remaining 30% of the score. The data must support the need for the project before the MPO and RPO rank the project highly. The Highway 70 Corridor Commission and the North Carolina Department of Transportation Division Engineer must be in agreement on the priority of the projects. Points can be shared for two years. We need to promote the concept of regionalism between MPOs and RPOs east of Interstate 95. We also need bonus points for ranking projects as a priority for consecutive years in a row.

After considerable discussion, the members discussed the need for an overview on the highway prioritization model system. The members also discussed the need to narrow its list of priorities.

North Carolina Board of Transportation Member Leigh McNairy suggested a chart showing the projects and how they compare. A one page summary on the point system is needed. A map is also needed showing how our region compares with other regions statewide. Other documentation needs to show the maneuverability of the projects dependent upon the number of points for the project.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated the Corridor Commission Subcommittee discussed supporting the US Highway 17 Commission, Pitt County and Greene County.

North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 4 Engineer Bobby Lewis stated 100 is the maximum number of points for each project. Communication is vital in letting each other know their top three to five projects.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Chairman Chuck Allen requested Eastern Carolina RPO Planner Alex Rickard, North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 2 Engineer Neil Lassiter and North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 4 Engineer Bobby Lewis determine our priorities in order to discuss our regional priorities. We could use our priorities to coordinate with other regions in eastern North Carolina.

Lenoir County Projects Update

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Member J. Mac Daughety stated the North Carolina Department of Transportation is studying flow lanes to help alleviate congestion at Skinner's Bypass during the construction of the Queen Street/NC Highway 258 bridges in Kinston.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Member J. Mac Daughety stated the North Carolina Department of Transportation offered to fund an independent engineering consultant to study the Kinston median project data. A local committee and a business person would review the data. The project has been postponed until 2013 to study the data.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Member J. Mac Daughety stated there will be a meeting of local officials on the Kinston Bypass on July 28, 2011.

North Carolina Board of Transportation Member Leigh McNairy stated morale is very high on the Lenoir County Transportation Committee and the members have a "can do" attitude.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Member J. Mac Daughety stated the Lenoir County Transportation Committee has prioritized its road projects in a cohesive manner. The Kinston Bypass project and other priority projects in Lenoir County promote a regional concept, which will also economically impact neighboring Duplin and Greene counties.

Eastern Carolina RPO Planner Alex Rickard stated the Lenoir County Transportation Committee adopted the Kinston Bypass as its #1 Transportation Improvement Plan priority.

Board of Transportation/Highway 70 Corridor Committee

North Carolina Board of Transportation Member Leigh McNairy stated approval of the Highway 70 Corridor would give us credibility. She met with Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson and Global TransPark President Jim Fain to discuss the mission of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission. Global TransPark President Jim Fain is an advocate for the Highway 70 Corridor Commission.

North Carolina Board of Transportation Member Leigh McNairy stated there would be no problem getting Highway 70 Corridor Commission language inserted into the Maritime Studies, Seven Portals and Logistics Task Force under the Lt. Governor. These are time honored key documents.

North Carolina Board of Transportation Member Leigh McNairy thanked Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson for his guidance.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated he met with North Carolina Board of Transportation Member Leigh McNairy and North Carolina Department of Transportation Eastern Region Project Development Unit Head Rob Hanson on the proposed schedule of the Kinston Bypass. The schedule will not be adjusted backwards. He thanked North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 2 Engineer Neil Lassiter for his assistance on the Kinston Bypass.

North Carolina Board of Transportation Member Leigh McNairy stated everyone appears to support the Highway 70 Corridor Commission. We need to position ourselves in order to utilize their support. We need to make sure everyone understands US Highway 70 is anchored by the Morehead City Port and three military bases along or near the corridor.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated we need to convince people we can carry out our mission. We need to continue to recruit believers in our camp and convince others to come onboard. Other will join our camp when they believe we are serious in our mission and can accomplish our goals.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated Stephanie Ayers with the North Carolina State Ports Authority has been a very faithful and active member of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission. Years ago the route of Interstate 40 was determined based on data from the Wilmington port. Now the Highway 70 Corridor Commission needs to utilize the Morehead City port data to help its case. The Morehead City port has growth potential. He thanked Stephanie Ayers for educating the members of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission about the port in order for us to help sell the future of eastern North Carolina.

Stephanie Ayers with the North Carolina State Ports Authority stated currently timber is being loaded on a vessel at the Morehead City port and being shipped to Europe. The timber is generally from western North Carolina. Therefore, the North Carolina Board of Transportation members in western North Carolina support the Morehead City port.

Stephanie Ayers with the North Carolina State Ports Authority updated the members on the proposed PCS Phosphate sulfur melting plant at the Morehead City port on Radio Island. The plant would mean a \$90 million construction investment at the port. There is local opposition to the construction of the plant. The port officials agreed to apply for one of the environmental permits the company needs to move forward because PCS is a tenant at the port. PCS is also looking at sites in other states to locate the plant.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Vice-Chairman Tom Steepy stated local governmental entities have passed resolutions opposing the plant and are concerned about air quality if the plant was constructed at the Morehead City port.

Board of Transportation/Intergovernmental Committee

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated North Carolina Board of Transportation Member Hugh Overholt will be introducing some new ideas soon. Mr. Overholt has very strong ties to the military. The Base Realignment and Closure Committee is scheduled to make recommendations in 2014-2015. We need to show we are military friendly and provide results.

Booker Dairy Road Dedication

North Carolina Board of Transportation Member Gus Tulloss stated Booker Dairy Road construction should be completed in October 2011. Work on the road has taken 17 years. Next month the North Carolina Board of Transportation will consider naming the road in honor of M. Durwood Stephenson.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated the road was needed because there is only one other bridge crossing the Neuse River into Smithfield. Originally, the bridge was to be 700 feet long and cost \$5 million. The actual bridge is 3,000 feet in length and cost \$30 million. He lauded efforts by North Carolina Department of Transportation Chief Operating Officer James Trogdon for his efforts to counteract the roadblocks on the project by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and his ability to provide stimulus monies for the project.

Smithfield/US Highway 70 Bridge

North Carolina Board of Transportation Member Gus Tulloss stated the US 70 Business bridge in Smithfield crossing the Neuse River will be replaced.

North Carolina Department of Transportation Division 2 Engineer Bobby Lewis stated construction of the project is scheduled for March 2012. The steel has been ordered. This roadway has over 20,000 vehicles per day. The offsite detour will be Booker Dairy Road. The road is scheduled to be closed for six months.

Other Business

Wayne County Planning Director Connie Price stated the members may want to keep abreast of the proposed legislative districts in eastern North Carolina.

Highway 70 Corridor Commission Director M. Durwood Stephenson stated there was no charge for the Highway 70 study by Dr. James W. Kleckley.

Public Comments

Eastern Carolina RPO Planner Alex Rickard stated the Eastern Carolina RPO would meet next Thursday at 9:30 a.m. at the City of Kinston Public Service Complex.

Members of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission congratulated Daniel Van Liere with the Upper Coastal Plains RPO upon the birth of his son.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission will be held in Johnston County on a date to be determined. The members will be notified of the date and location.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Highway 70 Corridor Commission Chairman Chuck Allen adjourned the meeting at 3:45 p.m.

Marcia R. Wilson