

Appendix E
Report of Comment/Response Database

I-26 Connector

1. Purpose and Need

1-1

Comment

It is crucial that the Report of the Community Coordinating Committee (CCC) of September 2000, which includes nine key project design goals, be included in the NC DOT'S Purpose and Needs Statement for the I-26 Connector Project, I-2513. This report, created by Asheville area residents, including members of the business community, elected officials, neighborhood groups, and others, was officially adopted by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) on September 21, 2000. Most importantly, the Purpose and Needs Statement must include the separation of local and interstate traffic, which will result in eliminating the dangerous merging situations that currently exist on the Smokey Park Bridge. Creating a local traffic connection will reunify and connect the community. The scale of the project must match the character of this unique community. The nine Evaluation Criteria of the CCC Report address the purpose and needs of the project and were adopted by the City and the MPO as an effective method of gaining extensive public input on the Connector project while keeping the project on schedule. The evaluation criteria were developed specifically to be included in the Purpose and Needs Statement. Any Purpose and Needs Statement that excludes the CCC report is incomplete. I thank you for your attention to this matter.

Response

The CCC report of September 2000 and the nine Key Design Goals that it presented were considered in the development of the project Purpose and Need Statement and the DEIS. Refer to Chapter 1 of the DEIS where the CCC report and its recommendations are addressed. The report recommends that the goals be included in the project Purpose and Need Statement. Although these goals and recommendations emphasize local considerations developed during the planning process, many are considerations that are evaluated during the alternative selection process (refer to Chapter 2 of the DEIS). Such considerations should be weighed with other factors and should not be used to eliminate the evaluation of viable alternatives that solve the transportation problem. While the goals were not specifically included in the purpose and need statement, NCDOT understands their importance to the local community. Many local citizens believe that the separation of local and interstate traffic should be included in the purpose and need. The FHWA and NCDOT considered whether or not to include separation of local and interstate traffic as a need for the project and determined that to do so would limit, or too narrowly define the range of alternatives that could be evaluated through the NEPA process. Furthermore, truly separating local and interstate traffic would be in direct conflict with other identified needs such as system linkage. The local community has also expressed a desire for the project to address the issue of separating I-240 traffic from Patton Avenue traffic. This issue is addressed in the DEIS and has been considered in the evaluation of alternatives presented in Chapter 2 of this Draft EIS. This issue is also addressed in Chapter 8 of the DEIS.

Letter Codes

PP0003 PP0005 PP0010 PP0015 PP0019 PP0021 PP0022 PP0023 PP0026 PP0028 PP0029 PP0031 PP0032 PP0034 PP0035 PP0040 PP0041
PP0042 PP0044 PP0045 PP0047 PP0048 PP0049 PP0050 PP0051 PP0052 PP0053 PP0054 PP0058 PP0059 PP0060 PP0063 PP0064 PP0069
PP0081 PP0083 PP0085 PP0087 PP0088 PP0090 PP0091 PP0092 PP0093 PP0098 PP0099 PP0105 PP0107 PP0110 PP0111 PP0112 PP0113
PP0114 PP0116 PP0117 PP0119 PP0121 PP0122 PP0123 PP0124 PP0125 PP0127 PP0128 PP0129 PP0130 PP0133 PP0135 PP0141 PP0143
PP0145 PP0149

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1-2

Comment

One of the main needs for I-26 as it passes through the City of Asheville is to replace the current dangerous merging situations on the Smokey Park Bridge. These problems stem from the lack of separation of local and interstate traffic. I believe the Purpose and Needs Statement should specifically include the separation of local and interstate traffic.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes

PP0008 PP0074 PP0075 PP0076 PP0079 PP0089 PP0099 PP0100 PP0101 PP0103 PP0106 PP0108 PP0132 PP0139 PP0142

1-3

Comment

Do whatever is necessary to separate I-26 and Patton Avenue. This old design would never pass muster today so please correct a long time problem.

Response

Each of the project alternatives studied in the DEIS would remove I-26 traffic from Patton Avenue.

Letter Codes

PP0009

1-4

Comment

Thanks for making the I-26 and I-40 connection that was left off of your original plans.

Response

Comment noted.

Letter Codes

PP0009

1-5

Comment

We need to separate interstate and local traffic.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes

PP0016

1-6

Comment

I request that the purpose and need statements regarding the I-26 connector project include separation of local and interstate traffic at the existing Smokey Park Bridge. It is a dangerous mix, and the community has to be clear and consistent in requesting this separation.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes

PP0012

1-7

Comment

It is crucial that the report of the CCC of Sept. 2000, which includes nine key goals for project design, be included in the NCDOT's purpose and need statement for the I-26 connector. This report was created by Asheville area residents, including members of the business community, elected officials, neighborhood groups, and others, and was adopted by the MPO on Sept. 21, 2000. MOST IMPORTANTLY, the NCDOT must include THE SEPARATION OF LOCAL AND INTERSTATE TRAFFIC, in order to reunify and connect the community, and must match the scale of the project with the character of this unique community. This feature has been left out of the current draft of the purpose and need statement of Dec. 2007. Any attempt by the NCDOT to ignore the criteria in this CCC report will likely result in a delay of the project.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes

PP0007 PP0013 PP0014

1-8

Comment

I consider it vitally important for the local and interstate traffic to be separated in Asheville. The character of the traffic flow has changed drastically since the changing of 19/23 to I-26, with much more tractor trailer traffic. Also, Asheville's population is growing by leaps and bounds with people who are not used to driving in WNC.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes

PP0138

1-9

Comment

I am writing to comment about a serious concern concerning the I-26 connector project. One of the main needs of I-26 as it passes through the City of Asheville is to replace the current dangerous merging situation on Smoky Park Bridge. The Purpose and Needs Statement should include SEPARATION of local and interstate traffic.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes

PP0017 PP0018 PP0096

1-10

Comment

The nine Evaluation Criteria of the CCC Report address the purpose and needs of the project and were adopted by the City and the MPO as an effective method of gaining extensive public input on the Connector project while keeping the project on schedule. The evaluation criteria were developed specifically to be included in the Purpose and Needs Statement. Any Purpose and Needs Statement that excludes the CCC report is incomplete.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes

PP0022 PP0146 PP0148

1-11

Comment

It has been brought to my attention that you are seeking public input on the Purpose and Needs for the I-26 Connector Project in Asheville.

I believe that it is essential that the Report of the Community Coordinating Committee (CCC) of September 2000, which includes nine key project design goals, be included in the NC DOT'S Purpose and Needs Statement for the I-26 Connector Project, I-2513. This report was created by Asheville area residents, including members of the business community, elected officials, neighborhood groups, and others, and was officially adopted by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) on September 21, 2000. I travel I-240/26 daily and the Purpose and Needs Statement must include the separation of local and interstate traffic, which will result in eliminating the dangerous merging situations that currently exist on the Smokey Park Bridge. It is extremely dangerous merging from Westgate East and trying to cross 4 lanes to get on I-26/19/23 or to leave from Patton Ave downtown and try to get to Westgate. Creating a local traffic connection will reunify and connect the community and make it much safer! I find it also very important that the scale of the project must match our unique community character. The nine Evaluation Criteria of the CCC Report address the purpose and needs of the project and were adopted by the City and the MPO as an effective method of gaining extensive public input on the Connector project while keeping the project on schedule. The evaluation criteria were developed specifically to be included in the Purpose and Needs Statement. Any Purpose and Needs Statement that excludes the CCC report is incomplete.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes

PP0025

1-12

Comment

I've been looking at the all of the maps and proposed routes for the I-26 Connector Project (I-2513), and I think it is important for the Report of the Community Coordinating Committee (September, 2000), be included in the NC DOT'S Purpose and Needs Statement for the project. I like that this report was created by Asheville area residents, including members of the business community, elected officials, neighborhood groups, and others, and was officially adopted by the Metropolitan Planning Organization. The CCC report seems to have considered the importance of creating a local traffic connection in a city that has already been divided by interstate traffic. Due to the

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enormity of the project and the dramatic, long-term impact it will have on the lives of so many people, careful considerations need to be made during the planning phase and ALL options carefully considered. This means that a Purpose and Needs Statement that without the CCC report is incomplete.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes

PP0027

1-13

Comment

As someone who crosses the Smokey Park Bridge at least once daily, it's clear to me that one of the main needs for I-26 is to correct the current dangerous merging situations on the Smokey Park Bridge. I have heard that traffic experts agree that these problems stem partly from the lack of separation of local and interstate traffic. Therefore, I believe the Purpose and Needs Statement should specifically include the separation of local and interstate traffic.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes

PP0030

1-14

Comment

I live in West Asheville and use the Smoky Park Bridge daily. Please consider the following: One of the main needs for I-26 as it passes through the City of Asheville is to replace the current dangerous merging situations on the Smokey Park Bridge. These problems stem from the lack of separation of local and interstate traffic. I believe the Purpose and Needs Statement should specifically include the separation of local and interstate traffic.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes

PP0033

1-15

Comment

I believe that the Purpose and Needs Statement should specifically include the separation of local and interstate traffic. Also, that our city is in need of a way to connect our communities on both sides of the river.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes

PP0036 PP0097

1-16

Comment

I am writing to urge you to reconsider the I-26 connector Purpose and Need Statement to take into account the needs put forth by the Community

Coordinating Committee (CCC) Report of September 20.

The main recommendations of that report were:

- 1) Separation of local and interstate traffic
- 2) Compatibility with long term community planning goals stated in adopted plans
- 3) Incorporation of community-selected design features
- 4) Minimization of impact on neighborhoods and local businesses
- 5) Match the scale of the project to the unique character of the City
- 6) Reunification and connectivity of community

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes

PP0037 PP0038 PP0095 PP0104

1-17

Comment

As a resident of western North Carolina and truck owner-operator who frequently uses both the I-26 corridor and Asheville's local infrastructure personally and professionally, I think it is crucial that the Report of the Community Coordinating Committee (CCC) of September 2000, which includes nine key project design goals, be included in the NC DOT'S Purpose and Needs Statement for the I-26 Connector Project, I-2513. This report was created by Asheville area residents, including members of the business community, elected officials, neighborhood groups, and others, and was officially adopted by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) on September 21, 2000.

Most importantly, the Purpose and Needs Statement must include the separation of local and interstate traffic, which will result in eliminating the dangerous merging situations that currently exist on the Smokey Park Bridge. Creating a local traffic connection will reunify and connect the community. The scale of the project must match the character of this unique community.

The nine Evaluation Criteria of the CCC Report address the purpose and needs of the project and were adopted by the City and the MPO as an effective method of gaining extensive public input on the Connector project while keeping the project on schedule. The evaluation criteria were developed specifically to be included in the Purpose and Needs Statement. Any Purpose and Needs Statement that excludes the CCC report is incomplete.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes

PP0039

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1-18

Comment

I urge you to include the September 21, 2000 report of the Asheville/Metropolitan Planning Organization Community Coordinating Committee in NC DOT'S I-2513 Purpose and Needs Statement for the I-26 Connector Project. The Asheville report's inclusion of the need to separate local and interstate traffic, and thus greatly reduce traffic on the Smokey Park Bridge, is of great significance to us, both for its effect on local vehicular congestion, and for its potential to allow for pedestrian connection between W. Asheville to downtown.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes

PP0043 PP0057 PP0118

1-19

Comment

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the purpose and needs statement for the I-26 Connector project, and your willingness to allow me a few extra days to submit the comment. I am not a resident of Asheville, but rather of an unincorporated part of Buncombe County. I commute to Asheville daily for work, and I do the majority of my shopping and other activities in Asheville. I travel to Asheville six to seven days per week, so what is done to and for transportation in Asheville affects me daily.

The purpose and needs statement for the I-26 Connector that I found on your website is to "connect I-26 south of Asheville with US 19-23 north of Asheville, relieve traffic congestion on existing I-240 in West Asheville, and enhance regional travel along the I-26 to US 19-23 corridor." I think that purpose and needs statement includes part of the story, but I do not think it is complete. The purpose and need statement must recognize the need to separate Patton Avenue traffic from interstate traffic, and reconnect Patton Avenue as a main thoroughfare connecting West Asheville and downtown.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes

PP0046

1-20

Comment

As a resident of West Asheville I'm very concerned about the impact of I-26 construction on the Smokey Park Bridge. Many West Asheville residents are young professionals who work in downtown Asheville but live in more affordable West Asheville. West Asheville is a growing community that needs easy access across the river.

Response

Construction of the I-26 project, once completed, will remove I-26 traffic from the Smoky Park Bridges helping to relieve congestion on this route to and from downtown Asheville.

Letter Codes

PP0051 PP0085

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1-21

Comment

Attached is a letter from the Asheville Design Center expressing our concern that the purpose and need statement does not incorporate all of the design principles identified in the Community Coordinating Committee (CCC) report of September 2000. This report was created by Asheville/Buncombe area residents, including members of the business community, elected officials, neighborhood groups, and others, and was officially adopted by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) on September 21, 2000. With such strong community support, we trust you will consider inclusion of these important design objectives in your revisions to the I-26 project Purpose and Need Statement. Attachment follows:

As representative of the Asheville Design Center (ADC), a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting quality design in the Asheville region, I am writing to express that our group feels it is crucial that the Report of the Community Coordinating Committee (CCC) of September 2000, which includes nine key project design goals, be included in the NC DOT'S Purpose and Needs Statement for the I-26 Connector Project, I-2513. This report was created by Asheville area residents, including members of the business community, elected officials, neighborhood groups, and others, was officially adopted by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) on September 21, 2000.

The report includes nine key project design goals, but most importantly, the Purpose and Needs Statement must include the separation of local and interstate traffic on Patton Avenue, particularly across the Smokey Park Bridge. This will obviously help eliminate the dangerous merging situations that currently exist, but it will also allow the development of a local boulevard that can reunify and connect our city with the larger community. We think it is important that the design of the project must match the scale and character of this unique region.

The nine Evaluation Criteria of the CCC Report were developed to specifically address the purpose and needs of the project and were adopted by the City and the MPO as an effective method of gaining extensive public input on the Connector project while keeping the project on schedule. These 9 goals were intended for inclusion in the Purpose and Needs Statement. We feel that any Purpose and Needs Statement that excludes the CCC report is incomplete.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes

PP0054

1-22

Comment

The Community Coordinating Committee (CCC) was a group of Asheville area residents assembled to provide a representative range of input on the I-26 Connector Project and to coordinate the associated public involvement process. I ask that you incorporate the key design goals listed in the CCC Report in the Purpose and Need Statement. The CCC Report was adopted by both the Asheville City Council and the

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MPO. It lists evaluation criteria for each goal. In particular I ask that the following goals be explicitly included:

- 1) Separation of local and interstate traffic
- 2) Matching scale of project to character of community
- 3) Maintain compatibility with community's design vision and plans; incorporation of community-selected design features

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes

PP0056 PP0068

1-23

Comment

I am writing concerning the Purpose and Need statement for the I-26 Connector project. As a retired transportation planner and Life Member of ITE, I have had considerable experience with the EIS process for transportation projects. I believe that the current Purpose and Need statement is incomplete. It deals only with traffic issues, and does not address a key element of the traffic problem.

The small amount of congestion that currently occurs on I-240 is due primarily to the weaving movements on the Smoky Park Bridge. The sharp single-lane ramps are not ideal, but they are not really the problem. The problem results from the mixing of traffic from Patton Avenue and I-240 in both directions. This results in excessive weaving movements, and considerable confusion and resulting last-minute sudden weaves. The obvious solution to this problem is to separate local (Patton Avenue) traffic from interstate traffic. This should be included as a specific point in the Purpose and Need statement.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes

PP0061

1-24

Comment

As a 17-year resident of Asheville and an active member of the regional design community, I think it is very important that you hear from me regarding the inclusion of the Report of the Community Coordinating Committee (CCC) of September 2000, which has nine key project design goals, in the NC DOT'S Purpose and Needs Statement for the I-26 Connector Project, I-2513. This report was created by Asheville area residents, including members of the business community, elected officials, neighborhood groups, and others, and was officially adopted by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) on September 21, 2000.

The nine Evaluation Criteria of the CCC Report address the purpose and needs of the project and were adopted by the City and the MPO as an effective method of gaining extensive public input on the Connector project while at the same time keeping it on schedule. The evaluation criteria were developed specifically to be included in the Purpose and Needs Statement, and thus any Statement that excludes the CCC report would be not only incomplete but also inaccurate. Thank you for all your work on this vital project.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes

PP0062

1-25

Comment

Most importantly, the Purpose and Needs Statement must include the separation of local and interstate traffic, which will result in eliminating the dangerous merging situations that currently exist on the Smokey Park Bridge. I advise my 2 teenage drivers and visiting guests to avoid those areas because, even when familiar with it, I have often found it a crazy and unsafe place to drive. Creating a local traffic connection will eliminate this safety issue and reunify the disconnected parts of the community.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes

PP0062 PP0136

1-26

Comment

As the North Carolina Department of Transportation formulates the "Purpose and Need Statement," for the Interstate-26 Connector, I request that the NCDOT consider the needs of the community as it pertains to the reconfiguration of Interstate-26 and as it is stated in the Community Committee Report. The issue at stake goes beyond reducing the volume of traffic and improving the traffic patterns of the Smokey Park Bridges;...

...The goals set forth in the Community Coordinating Committee (CCC) Report are reflections of the needs and desires of the people of the City of Asheville, have been recognized by City and MPO as such, and must take precedent in the development of the Purpose and Need Statement.

The goals set forth address the following issues: the separation of local and interstate traffic; the compatibility with long term community planning goals stated in adopted plans; the incorporation of community-selected design features; the minimization of the negative impacts on neighborhoods and local businesses; matching the scale of the project to the unique character of the City; and the reunification and connectivity of community...

...The purpose of this letter is to speak in advocacy of separating local and interstate traffic with the rerouting of I-26 in a manner which respects the needs and desires of the City of Asheville, and allows for sustainable development to occur; this letter also speaks in favor of the CCC report and requests that the NC-DOT respond holistically to the goals described in this report when constructing the Purpose and Need Statement for the I-26 Connector. Thank You!

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

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PP0065

1-27

Comment

The first section is the Summary of Need.

This section should also include the need to remove Interstate traffic from the local traffic crossing the Smoky Park bridge. Under the sub-section Capacity, if local traffic were to be separated from the Interstate traffic, it is unclear whether I-240 would need additional capacity (ie: more than 4 lanes, two lanes each way). It has been shown in studies that the largest volume of traffic on the Smoky Park bridge is local, not interstate.

This statement about capacity also fails to factor in future declines in the rate of private passenger vehicle use per capita which will occur as a result of the increase of fuel costs due to anticipated reductions in the worldwide supply of oil and the necessity of humans to reduce fossil fuel consumption due to global climate change.

There are several other needs which should be added:

The need to minimize the impact of the project on housing stock and business infrastructure.

The need to align the project with future design goals of the local communities.

The second section is the Purpose of the Action.

I believe that the third statement: "To improve the capacity of existing I-240 west of Asheville to accommodate the existing and forecasted (2030 design year) traffic in this growing area." should be removed. As mentioned above, the need for an increase in the capacity of this roadway is not clear. Simply separating Interstate traffic from local traffic will decrease traffic volumes on the interstates. Also there are likely to be significant decreases in per capita use of private passenger vehicles by the year 2030, due to increasing fuel costs because of reductions in the worldwide supply of oil and the necessity of humans to reduce fossil fuel consumption due to global climate change

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1. Impacts to housing and businesses are addressed in Chapter 4 of the DEIS. Chapter 1 of the DEIS explains the need to increase capacity on I-240 west of Asheville.

Letter Codes

PP0067

1-28

Comment

I am writing to urge you to incorporate the report of the Community Coordinating Committee of September 2000 into the NCDOT Purpose and Needs Statement for the I-26 Connector Project. Asheville's citizens have actively pursued refinement of the design of the connector to lessen the adverse impact it could have on our Community. We have asked the DOT plan to be revised to protect the integrity of our neighborhoods, to maintain the continuity of our traffic patterns within the community and perhaps most importantly, to separate local and interstate traffic so that the merge at Smokey Park Bridge will no longer be a nexus of confusion and accidents. My

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understanding was that the CCC Report was developed specifically to be included in the Purpose and Needs Statement. To leave the CCC report out of the Purpose and Needs Statement will make that document incomplete.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes

PP0070

1-29

Comment

As a resident of the City of Asheville for nearly 25 years, I have a concern about the current project going forward with the I-26 Connector in my city. The decisions about completion of this project impact how the city grows, serves, and gives access to its citizens, as well as commercial and passenger traffic just "passing through." The Smokey Park Bridge is already a bottle neck. There needs to be provision for a separation of local and interstate traffic.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes

PP0072

1-30

Comment

I-26 and the French Broad River separates West Asheville from the rest of the city; there is no connection except the busy highway bridge. Separating the traffic should be priority in determining the new configuration.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes

PP0077

1-31

Comment

This letter is to voice concern about the plans for future I-26 through Asheville. I am worried primarily that an already hazardous road will be made more dangerous for me and my family and my community by further merging Interstate traffic with our already heavy local traffic. It is a truly risky proposition exiting from 19/23 into Asheville, or from 240 onto an Asheville exit already. The plan for merging all future traffic from I-26 with our local town traffic will funnel speeding cars just wanting to "get through" Asheville and on their way with those of us who live here and try to drive in a manner which will ensure our safety as we go about our daily lives. Asheville's highway and exiting systems are already so poorly laid out, without thought to future traffic growth, that compounding it with the plan for I-26 will seriously endanger all of us. As the mother of young children who are my sacred duty to protect, and who are at the mercy in our car of those who drive around us, please rethink the plans for I 26 and come up with a proposal which takes into account Asheville as a community. Thank you,

Response

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Construction of the I-26 project, once completed, will remove I-26 traffic from the Smoky Park Bridges helping to relieve congestion on this route to and from downtown Asheville.

Letter Codes

PP0080

1-32

Comment

As the Purpose and Need Statement will be used to compare and evaluate the alternative designs being considered for I-26 Connector, I urge that it be rewritten to call for separating local and interstate traffic on the bridges. It is important to minimize the negative impact on neighborhoods and local businesses in this Asheville community. Creating a local traffic connection will serve to reunify this community.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1. Impacts to neighborhoods and businesses are presented Chapter 4 of the DEIS.

Letter Codes

PP0084

1-33

Comment

I think it is crucial that the Report of the Community Coordinating Committee (CCC) of September 2000, which includes nine key project design goals, be included in the NC DOT Purpose and Needs Statement for the I-26 Connector Project, I-2513 in Asheville, NC. This report was generated through consensus at meetings of the Community Coordinating Committee (CCC) comprised of Asheville area residents, including members of the business community, elected officials, and neighborhood groups. The West End/Clingman Avenue neighborhood, which I represent, was involved in this process.

The evaluation criteria are:

1. Separation of local and interstate traffic
 2. Matching scale of project to character of community
 3. Reunification and connectivity of community
 4. Minimization of neighborhood and local business impacts
 5. Use of updated traffic modeling software and data
 6. Maintenance of compatibility with community's design vision and plans; incorporation of community-selected design features
 7. Creation of full interstate movements between I-26 and I-40
 8. Minimization of air quality and other environmental impacts
 9. Emphasis on safety during construction and in the design of the final product
- Most importantly, the Purpose and Needs Statement must include the separation of local and interstate traffic, which will result in eliminating the dangerous merging situations that currently exist on the Smokey Park Bridge.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes
PP0090 PP0120

1-34

Comment

I am writing to comment on the I-26 Connector project in advance of the development of the purpose and need statement. As a resident of West Asheville, I travel on Patton Ave / the Smoky Park Bridge daily. I would prefer that local and interstate traffic be separated. I am a fan of the alternatives offered by the Asheville Design Center, particularly as they lessen the impact of the connector on our community, physically, environmentally and financially. It is important to me that this project have aesthetic merit, mirror our unique community and not encourage more traffic. Also, I would like for West Asheville to have a better route connecting us to downtown Asheville; one that allows for pedestrians and bicycles.

Please use the Community Coordination Committee report from September 2000 to inform the purpose and need statement. Our community needs a community endorsed solution to the I-26 Connector.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes

PP0094

1-35

Comment

Please keep in mind several things when considering I-26 Very important for you to be sure to separate local and interstate traffic and remember that the community of Asheville is unique and has long term planning goals and the DOT plans need to incorporate community selected design features wherever and whenever possible. The city needs to be connected and not separated by your construction.

Please keep in mind neighborhoods and local businesses. Don't make the project so big that it outsizes the size of the city. Don't forget about the CCC report!!

Thank you so much for your consideration of these concerns.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1. Impacts to neighborhoods and businesses are presented Chapter 4 of the DEIS.

Letter Codes

PP0109

1-36

Comment

I've heard you are asking for citizen input on the purpose and need statement for the I-26 Connector Project in Asheville. Thanks for doing that. There are a number of concerns I have:

1. Separation of local and through traffic would help dangerous mixing.
2. Matching the design of the project to the Asheville style and using community suggestions.
3. As little impact on area residences and businesses as possible.
4. Consideration for community long-term plans.

This is quite a complex project. Thanks for your help in getting it done right.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1. Impacts to neighborhoods and businesses are presented Chapter 4 of the DEIS.

Letter Codes

PP0115

1-37

Comment

I have lived in Asheville over a year now, but when I first moved here, the drive I most dreaded was anything about going over the bridge that borders the Westgate area. It is confusing and weirdly conceived. Traffic is the worst there. It is also very ugly and is not indicative of the beauty of Asheville.

Response

Comment noted.

Letter Codes

PP0131

1-38

Comment

I believe strongly that "Purpose and Need Statement" must specifically call for separation of local and interstate traffic. I cross the Smoky Park Bridges traveling east and west on I 26 frequently and each time it's a "white knuckle" event. This is especially true when I'm traveling on I 26 West. I can only imagine the confusion and terror of the I 26 traveler encountering this connection for the first time.

I trust that you will agree to change the "Purpose and Need Statement" so that it is clear that separation of local and Interstate traffic is an urgent need in order to correct the very dangerous situation that exists on the Smoky Park Bridges today for both local and Interstate travelers.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes

PP0137

1-39

Comment

As a commuter from West Asheville to downtown Asheville, I am writing to say that I believe there is only one sound approach to the I-26 connector, and that is to TOTALLY separate local traffic from the Interstate traffic. I feel I have to take my life in my hands every morning as confused I-26 travelers try to move across multiple lanes of traffic in the shortest span of bridge to make it to the I-26 exit. This is absolutely one of the poorest designs I have ever witnessed.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes

Comment

As a representative of the City of Asheville Community Coordinating Committee I request that DOT adopt the CCC's Key Project Design Goals listed below:
REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR THE DESIGN OF THE I-26 CONNECTOR THROUGH ASHEVILLE
 This report documents the goals identified by public input at the I-26 Connector Design Forum held July 21-22, 2000 in Asheville and recommends that these goals be included in the Purpose and Needs Statement and thoroughly studied as a design alternative in the project Environmental Impact Study.

The goals described are generated from official records of discussion table comments at the forum and summaries of citizen-developed mission statements at the forum wrap-up session. They have been evaluated by the Community Coordinating Committee and recommended for consideration. These goals provide the foundation for a citizen-based design alternative to be given engineering and environmental study both preliminarily and through the EIS. They also provide recommended criteria for EIS evaluation of all alternatives.

Section 1 - Project Goals Identified by the Design Forum

Many facets of the project were discussed at the forum. The themes listed below summarize the most prominent concerns of area citizens

They provide a set of specific goals the community would like to see accomplished through the course of completing the I-26 Connector Project. We, as a community, want a thorough, full and proper study of an alternative design which will accomplish these goals. At the same time, the community feels strongly that the ultimate completion date for the project should be maintained and expedited, if possible. We are hopeful that building community consensus around the design alternative that best accomplishes these goals will ultimately help expedite the project. Due to the inter-related nature of the issues raised, the immediate proximity of areas to be affected and the need to expedite completion of the work, the strong preference of the Community Coordinating Committee is for these to be addressed as a single project rather than multiple "phased projects."

Key Project Design Goals

- Separation of local and interstate traffic
- Matching scale of project to character of community
- Reunification and connectivity of community
- Minimization of neighborhood and local business impacts
- Use of updated traffic modeling software and data
- Maintenance of compatibility with community's design vision and plans; incorporation of community-selected design features

- Creation of full interstate movements between I-26 and I-40
- Minimization of air quality and other environmental impacts
- Emphasis on safety - during construction and in the design of the final product

Section 2 - Evaluation Criteria

This section restates our community's design goals and establishes a set of criteria, or standards, by which their achievement should be measured.

Evaluation Criteria For:

Separation of Local and Interstate Traffic

Eliminate Patton Avenue/Smokey Park Bridges as an Interstate Link

Reclaim land for community use (including expansion of taxable base)

Create Patton Avenue gateway possibilities (which complies with City of Asheville 2010 Plan)

Generate redevelopment possibilities in Corridor in compliance with City's "smart growth" principles

Simplify traffic movements

Create a more convenient and safer driving environment

Matching Scale of Project to Character of Community

Be sensitive to the prominence of the highway relative to Asheville's unique topography, landscape and built environment

Recognize the highway's relationship to the river and downtown

Retain the "feel" of a small city in the mountains

Select the lowest design speed compatible with safe and proper functioning of the various components of the highway facility

Consider the impact of highway widening and alignment decisions on property takings and neighborhood division

Do not use a "Jersey barrier" approach to median design; the raised median in the I-240 cut is a much better example of sensitive median design in a constrained space

Reunification and Connectivity Of Community

Provide well-defined pedestrian/bicycle facilities throughout the project corridor

Improve opportunities for reconnecting neighborhoods and Downtown with the French Broad Riverfront

Expand accessibility for Hillcrest Community

Create a better local street network (including linkages between West Asheville and Downtown, within Downtown and within West Asheville)

to relieve interstate traffic pressure

Minimization of Neighborhood and Local Business Impacts

Minimize residential property acquisitions

Limit impact on neighborhood connectivity

Minimize number of businesses needing to be closed or relocated

Prioritize safety and traffic-routing during construction

Maximize opportunities for hiring of local workers for construction of project

Use of Updated Traffic Modeling Software and Data

Determine that project scale achieves safe and adequate traffic flow with the minimal number of lanes

Create an opportunity to reinforce and/or redirect land use decisions that relate to transportation

Optimize transportation alternatives (balancing of thoroughfare plan with mass transit, bike/pedestrian, local street grid improvements and other alternatives)

Assess "induced traffic" phenomenon and interrelationship of highway capacity and development patterns

Maintenance of Compatibility with Community's Design Vision and Plans

Achieve compatibility with riverfront use and development plans (particularly limiting the loss of riverfront property for highway use)

Achieve compatibility with "smart growth" direction of city planning

Reclaim land for non-highway use

Create recognizable community character in design features

Develop unique and attractive bridge design(s)

Include gateway elements

Include local artists in creating design features

Use quality materials

Creation of Full Interstate Movements Between I-26 and I-40

Reduce through-traffic volume (especially trucks) In Asheville central district (I -240)

Enhance driving safety on I-240

Remove interstate traffic (especially trucks) from West Asheville street network

Determine best highway design with least impact on air quality

Protect water quality

Preserve tree canopy and wildlife habitat

Emphasis on Safety - During Construction and in the Design of the Final Product

Improve simplicity of design for weaving, merging, and diverging

Segregate local and through truck traffic

Provide for incident management

Alleviate complexity and safety risks of current road and ramp configuration

Provide effective maintenance of traffic flow during construction

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Make a strong recommendation to the City Council and MPO that the alternative alignment concept developed at the Design Forum receive serious study for inclusion in the project Environmental Impact Statement.

Make a strong recommendation to the City Council and MPO that the NCDOT, FHWA and local citizens work together as a "Committee on Visual Design" to develop ideas for bridge design, signage, overpass design, landscaping and other aesthetic issues that reflect our

community's character.

Make a strong recommendation to the City Council and MPO that the NCDOT and FHWA expedite the development of new and updated traffic models for use on the ultimate design of this project, including regional air quality modeling.

Make a strong recommendation to the City Council and MPO that the NCDOT and FHWA explore engineering and signage options to improve the north-to-east connection of eastbound I-26 traffic with I-40 in an easterly direction as part of this project or a simultaneous project. The specific concerns involve limiting commercial truck through-traffic on I-240 and on lesser-classified roadways proximate to residential areas.

Make a strong recommendation to the City Council and MPO reflecting the Committee's general consensus that the bicycle and pedestrian

connectivity be restored to link neighborhoods and the river while simultaneously exploring traffic calming measures to reduce the vehicular impact on residential streets.

Make a strong recommendation to the City Council and MPO that the NCDOT and FHWA ensure that all interchange design is community sensitive. To achieve this end, it would be helpful to provide artist's renditions of feasible design alternatives for public review.

Make a strong recommendation to the City Council and MPO that the NCDOT and FHWA seriously examine safety issues in project construction and design including maintenance of traffic during construction and emergency access after construction.

Make a strong recommendation to the City Council and MPO that the NCDOT and FHWA release any unneeded right-of-way at the completion of this project to the City of Asheville to be zoned and used in accordance with a land use plan to be developed by the City in cooperation with the NCDOT.

Make a strong recommendation to the City Council and MPO that the NCDOT and FHWA keep the I-26 Connector project on its current or, preferably, an expedited schedule.

Section 3 - Potential Tradeoffs

We realize that the achievement of our design goals involves tradeoffs. While the accomplishment of some of them may reduce construction

costs, the accomplishment of others may increase the overall cost of the project. Aesthetic improvements may carry their added costs. In order to produce a separation of Patton Avenue from I-240, there may need to be additional bridging of the French Broad River which carries with it some visual impact. New and improved traffic and air quality modeling, though providing a more accurate picture of transportation system needs, could slow key decisions about capacity and design speed.

In another areas, the selection of a lower design speed to minimize neighborhood impact may affect travel time. Fewer lanes may create challenges to planning for maintenance of traffic during construction. Shrinking the footprint of the highway could result in a more "engineered" highway in terms of landscaped medians and grade differentials between east and west travel lanes.

It is too early in the process to fully understand the costs and benefits of each alternative design for the project. We mention some

possible costs we have considered in order to demonstrate our awareness of them, in order to enhance our capability for addressing them, but most of all, in order to express that, despite the potential tradeoffs, we as a community are united in support for achieving our set of project design goals.

Section 4 - Design Forum Background

In December 1999, the Asheville City Council, in response to active and continuing citizen involvement, requested City staff to formulate plans for a community design process related to the I-26 Connector Project that would allow extensive public input while keeping the project on schedule. A month later, the North Carolina Department of Transportation joined the City in this effort by agreeing to incorporate the idea of an I-26 Connector Design Forum into its public involvement program. It was seen as an opportunity to enhance community-wide input from Asheville area citizens to the design of the I-26 Connector. This, in turn, would expand on recent efforts to solicit neighborhood-based involvement.

In April 2000, the North Carolina Department of Transportation and the City of Asheville agreed to create a Community Coordinating Committee (CCC) to guide this public participation in the design process. In addition to planning the design process format, the composition of the CCC would help achieve community consensus in the identification and interpretation of key issues. Representatives from a broad base of community organizations as well as project stakeholders were chosen to comprise the CCC. The design process they selected took place in two stages.

During mid-June, an Education Forum was held to inform the public about project design issues. This was attended by over 300 people who listened to expert presentations and participated in project component breakout sessions.

In late July, an intensive two-day Design Forum was scheduled to draw from the public both general design concepts and specific design ideas. This Forum attracted between 500-600 community residents over the two-day period. It was staffed by representatives of the Federal Highway Administration, North Carolina Department of Transportation, City of Asheville, the American Institute of Architects, and several independent consulting engineers and community mediators. Fred Craig, Vice President of Parsons Brinkerhoff's Ohio office, acted as overall Forum facilitator.

The overwhelming sense from participants was one of appreciation for the privilege of taking part in the process. Repeatedly stated was

the fact that this highway project could either impose negative impacts or provide beneficial opportunities for the community. Continuing citizen input to defining design criteria was seen as central to maximizing project benefits while minimizing the costs. This report by the CCC contributes to its ongoing function - that of translating community concerns into specific goals which can be achieved through integration into ultimate project design.

Response

Refer to comment response 1-1.

Letter Codes

PC0126

1-41

Comment

These comments are submitted on behalf of the Western North Carolina Alliance and the Southern Environmental Law Center. The Department of Transportation's (DOT) latest newsletter sought comment on the "purpose and need for the project and project alternatives."

Concerning project purposes, these purposes should be expanded to incorporate the project goals set forth in the Report of the Community Coordinating Committee For the Design of the I-26 Connector Through Asheville (2000). This Report represented the consensus of this community about how to proceed with the I-26 Connector and formally was endorsed by both the Asheville City Council and the Buncombe County Commission.

A primary purpose of the Community Coordinating Committee (CCC) Report was to influence the project's Purpose and Need and for the community's goals to be included in the project's purposes. CCC Report at 1. Unfortunately, this has not occurred; the project's purposes do not include any of the goals from the CCC Report. The DOT should remedy this deficiency by amending the "Summary of Need" and "Purposes of Action" in its Draft EIS. The "Summary of Need" should be modified to include a paragraph titled "Community Enhancement," or something similar, that sets forth the need to incorporate the goals of the CCC Report into the project. The "Purposes of Action" should be supplemented to include the primary goals of the CCC Report.

Chief among these goals of the CCC Report are (1) separation of local interstate traffic; (2) matching the scale of the project to the character of the community; and (3) minimizing neighborhood, business, and environmental impacts. CCC Report at 2. The goals can and should be incorporated into the purposes of the action to guide the development of and selection among alternatives.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Response

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Refer to comment response 1-1. Impacts to neighborhoods and businesses are presented Chapter 4 of the DEIS.

Letter Codes

PG0078

1-42

Comment

I am sure that by now you have been receiving more letters than you could possibly need regarding this project. As an architect who had an office in Raleigh for thirty years, I am well aware of your very important function within the NCDOT. This is the most important Western North Carolina project in the last fifty years. It is my hope that you will succeed in making this highway/bridge project Governor Easley's legacy to Western North Carolina as he completes his term in office. It will not be to anyone's advantage if it should fail. Thank you for what you do.

Response

Comment noted.

Letter Codes

PP0147

1-43

Comment

I understand as an old NCDOT/mass transit employee, how highway engineers love to build roads & bridges, however it would seem the last 30 years have not changed NCDOT off of center. What is needed in my opinion is a multi-story parking garage around I-26/I-40/I-240 and I believe the City of Asheville should pay for this instead of building more parking downtown. By allowing this park and ride (multi-modal facility) from the outset would then show that 8 lanes going north are not needed. A ground transportation call-in center located in the garage would allow the necessary van-pooling, car pooling, bus routes (regional) to take place.

Response

Letter Codes

PP0158

1-44

Comment

For shame! Your new selection is but half the requirement - it lacks east bank resolution altogether.

Response

Letter Codes

PP0168

1-45

Comment

I-2513 needs to be done.

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Response

Letter Codes

PP0196

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2. Alternatives

2-1

Comment

Ever since the early 1990's I have recommended that the I-26 connector should be a ring road around the western part of city of Asheville, not through it. For apparent political reasons this solution was summarily rejected. Instead, the discussions centered around the widening of I-240 and the location of the interchange with US19-23. Any solution afforded by these limited alternatives will ultimately prove hazardous to traffic, borne out by the examples of where interstates are routed through cities. If we don't build a ring road around Asheville now we'll end up doing it 25 years later and at ten times the cost.

Response

Thank you for your email, we always appreciate input from the public. Your comments will be included in the project record. We are currently scheduled to hold a public hearing in the spring of 2008, which will give you further opportunity to review the proposed design and comment upon it. There will be notices in the local papers and a newsletter will be sent to everyone on the project mailing list announcing the place and time.

Also refer to Chapter 2 of the DEIS where project alternatives are addressed.

Letter Codes

PP0001

2-2

Comment

The ADC plans work for the community. Maybe some tweaking is necessary, but the overall idea is sound. Reconnect Asheville across the river. Increase commercial possibilities, reduce the footprint of the highway. Maybe a more community-friendly plan would slow down traffic. Okay, Duh? Is that so bad in the universal flow of things? There are too many communities where a huge increase of lanes has later resulted in an expensive decrease in lanes. Let's err here on the side of conservatism. No reason to force an increase now that could easily demand a reduction later.

Response

The NCDOT is working with the ADC, City of Asheville, Buncombe County, and their chosen engineering consulting firm to determine if their conceptual alternative can be modified/developed to meet interstate design criteria. Should the ADC alternative be determined to be feasible, it will be studied in detail prior to selection of a preferred alternatives. Also refer to the response to comment 4-1 and to Chapter 2 of the DEIS where project alternatives are addressed.

Letter Codes

PP0004

2-3

Comment

I write to urge the NC DOT to give serious consideration to the alternative proposals for the restructuring of the I-26 connector over the French Broad River, as submitted by the Asheville Design Center, for a much more economical, space efficient, logical and reasonable

design for the separation of interstate and local traffic, whether by double-decker bridge or in some other way. The old and current routing has done significant damage to the sense of community in West Asheville and has been totally out of scale in relation to the unique aspects of the community as a whole. The Design Center proposals could greatly help to redress this mistake. Asheville is a very special community, comparable to Savannah and Charleston in its national and international appeal, and deserves a 'signature' bridge, similar to those in those two cities, for the new I-26 crossing, one that will be easily identifiable as only-in-Asheville. That separation would allow the creation of a grand, monumental boulevard entry for local traffic from West Asheville, along Patton Avenue, incorporating the current interstate bridge into the community as a whole. These proposals have significant support from the business community as well as from both city council and county commissioners, all of whom are being copied with this expression of support.

Response

Refer to comment response 2-2.

Letter Codes

PP0006

2-4

Comment

The design that runs the new I-26 behind West Gate Center is the best for all concerned. I takes advantage of poorly used and maintained land called a golf course. If you have ever seen it you would know that no serious golfer would play there. It is not a tourist drawing card.

Response

Comment noted. Refer to Chapter 2 of the DEIS where project alternatives are addressed. A preferred alternative will be selected after the public has had the opportunity to comment on the DEIS.

Letter Codes

PP0009

2-5

Comment

I am greatly opposed to this present plan which brings the highway expansion so close to our wonderful neighborhood. Please consider other alternatives.

Response

Comment noted.

Letter Codes

PP0011

2-6

Comment

I would also like consideration of a small alignment footprint that respects and compliments the somewhat urban context, with thoughtful connections that disperse traffic rather than consolidate it, while allowing neighborhoods and destinations on each side of the corridor to remain integrated and cohesive.

Response

Comment noted. Project alternatives will be designed to have as small a footprint as possible while still achieving interstate design criteria.

Letter Codes
PP0012

2-7

Comment

Any design should include provisions for other means of transportation, such as mass-transit, pedestrian and bicycle.

Response

The project will be consistent with the Asheville Pederstiran Plan and Draft Bicycle Plan. Other modes of transportation are considered in Chapter 2 of the DEIS.

Letter Codes
PP0012

2-8

Comment

Please do everything in your power to use the results of the Asheville Design Center process. The people who have devoted hundreds of hours to that project know this city, love this city and want the best. My impression as a Journalist covering this I-26 process since the 1990s is that NCDOT tends to have a one-size fits all answer, a box of bridge plans and a commitment to the asphalt companies to use as much as possible.

The ADC plan is cheaper, more elegant, uses fewer bridges, preserves and increases usable, taxable land for the city, and is in every observable way a better plan than any of the options we have been shown by NCDOT. Please don't force an ugly 8-lane down our throats just because you can.

Response

Refer to response to comment 2-2.

Letter Codes
PP0016

2-9

Comment

It is time for the NCDOT to show that it knows how to develop Context Sensitive Solutions and that it truly embraces multimodalism. The separation of local from interstate traffic should allow pedestrian, bicycle, and transit features to be included in this project. These features help replace car trips with walking, bicycle, and bus trips, extending the capacity life of the project for vehicular traffic.

Response

The NCDOT is not responsible planning, developing, operating or maintaining mass transit systems. These initiatives are typically developed and overseen at a locale level. As of January 2008, there were no development plans incorporating mass transit into the project's purpose and need. Also refer to comment response 2-7.

Letter Codes

PP0038

2-10

Comment

I am writing you concerning the I-26 connector that is going to be built in Asheville. I am a homeowner who lives literally blocks from the current and future connector. I would like to offer a very brief account of my transportation habits since moving to West Asheville.

If the roads enabled me to, I could jog to the outer part of downtown (where my job is) in probably about ten minutes. If the roads enabled me to, I could ride my bike downtown even more quickly. Instead I am stuck to a convoluted and dangerous trek towards downtown. Or I can travel way out of my way, adding a safer but more inconvenient amount of time to my commute. Anyone who lives in Asheville and lives anywhere off of Hazel Mill Road and West Patton, and the hundreds of streets that service these, would have these same issues. There are thousands of people who are in need of a system that suits the needs of the community more completely than the current design(s). It would be unfortunate to miss an opportunity to create a positive change for this community. Whatever the final design, it must support all types of transport.

Response

Refer to comment response 2-7.

Letter Codes

PP0020

2-11

Comment

Patton Avenue facilities must include reasonable and convenient accommodation of pedestrians and bicyclists, who are part of the local traffic. I see pedestrians dodging across interstate traffic on the east side of the Smoky Park bridge with frightening regularity. That is strong evidence of need for pedestrian connections from east to west along Patton Avenue and from a reunited Patton Avenue to the Hillcrest public housing community which is located North and West of the junction of US 19/23 and I-240. This project would indeed be an ideal opportunity to undo the isolation imposed upon the Hillcrest public housing community by the location of US 19/23 and I-240. It is also important that gain in one area is not offset by loss in another – convenient and reasonable pedestrian and bicycle access must be maintained throughout the project area.

Response

Project planners understand that isolation of the Hillcrest Community and pedestrian safety is an issue that should be considered in the development of project alternatives. Refer to Sections 3.1.4, 4.1.1.1, 3.1.4.1, and other sections of the DEIS for discussions of Neighborhoods, Safety, and other issues involving the Hillcrest community.

Letter Codes

PP0046

2-12

Comment

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I-26 Connector

Living with the current interchange that involves using the Smoky Park bridge for both interstate and local traffic is a nightmare that must end. However, we do not want to settle for a solution that solves one problem and creates other problems just as serious.

After evaluating all the schemes for solving the troubles at "malfunction junction" the scheme generated by the local working group of architects, engineers and planners is by far the superior plan and the one that best meets all the needs of both the City of Asheville as well as the users of the interstate system. It is simply unacceptable to continue mixing local and interstate traffic on any bridge or roadway that requires the two traffic streams to interact in the normal course of travel. It is dangerous and induces all manner of unnecessary delays in travel. This objective must be a vital part of any scheme that is adopted. Having interstate highways and related interchanges and roadways intrude into the interior of an urban area is extremely destructive of the quality of life under the best of circumstances. We want the locally developed scheme because it does the best job of solving the interstate travel issues. At the same time it solves the needs of the urban community to reclaim the area now consumed by interstate roadways and exchanges, area that we need to reclaim a cohesive community and re-establish the link between our downtown core area and the rapidly developing urban corridor along Patton Avenue west of the Smoky Park bridge.

The current interchange system is a confusing mess that has too much asphalt for the job it does and is far too confusing for those who must use it every day. The new locally generated scheme will be much more compact and straightforward in terms of entry and exit to the interstate systems than any of the others. This is not surprising as local people know how our area works: how people need to travel and how we want to use the road system and urban environment. We strongly urge adopting the new locally generated scheme and proceeding with construction as soon as possible. We want an interstate system that works and a local road system that works and that allows us to reclaim the space now used for interchange just west of the downtown core area. This space is badly needed for urban growth and improvement of the local environment and business and residential need for growth.

The locally generated scheme is the only one that doesn't give us more interstate sprawl. None of the other schemes meet any of our needs for our urban development. None of them really solve the interstate problems and they make the local traffic and development problems worse, not better.

Response

Refer to comment response 2-2.

Letter Codes

PP0055

2-13

Comment

The project should facilitate transportation by modes other than single-occupant autos: walking, bicycle, transit, and carpools.

Response

Refer to comment response 2-7.

Letter Codes

PP0061

2-14

Comment

I urge you, both as a concerned tax-paying citizen and as a design professional (architect) with 15 years of working history in the Asheville area to include the following comments in the revised documents in the Purpose and Needs Statement.

- 1) First priority is to design a freeway interchange that separates local, east/west river-crossing traffic from interstate traffic. This can only be achieved via a (or several) new bridges to serve the new Interstate traffic as the existing Smoky Park bridge is not suited, either by design or alignment for anything but local traffic.
- 2) Reworking of local lanes to improve community connectivity to the primary urban East/West artery- Patton Ave. including accommodations for bike, pedestrian and rapid transit.
- 3) Placement and alignment of Interstate structures so as to minimize negative visual impact, for example by staying within the low-ravine property and passing UNDER Patton Ave. to tie-in with the existing low grade of I-240 south of the bridge, thereby reducing noise, pollution, and visibility of thru-traffic.
- 4) Efforts applied to the new bridge(s) design that is compatible with the scale and character of Asheville and can be admired as a scenic asset to the riverway.

Response

Refer to comment responses 2-2 and 2-7.

Letter Codes

PP0066

2-15

Comment

The third section is Project Alternatives.

I am sending on the comments which I made previously about the alternatives. I have not re-reviewed the alternatives to see whether they have been changed. If they are the same then all of these comments should still be relevant.

On Section A:

There is not very much traffic that gets on and off of the freeway at Amboy Rd. Your current design reconnects Amboy Rd. across the freeway and down to Brevard Rd. My Recommendation is to eliminate the interchange at Amboy Rd. altogether. Still connect the road across the freeway however, but do not connect up to Haywood Rd. This allows people who want to go onto Amboy from the freeway to get off at Brevard. This allows people who want to get onto the freeway from Amboy to get on at Brevard. I recommend this because it would allow the elimination of on and off ramps at Amboy and the connection up to Haywood. This can save houses from being bulldozed and it can also be less costly. Please consider eliminating the Amboy interchange, but do connect Amboy across the freeway and down to Brevard Rd.

On Options for Section B:

Option B2: This is a terrible idea. Please do not consider any option that destroys Westgate shopping plaza.

Option B3: This option is overly wasteful and destructive of existing infrastructure. It does not take advantage of existing roadways and destroys way too many houses.

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Option B4: This design is the best design from my point of view and the only one which I think is OK. It destroys less houses and disconnects the freeway from Patton Ave. These are essential components which are the most important considerations in my view. I think that the ability of the city to take back the Patton roadway and to reconnect to the Hillside development and to the Westgate shopping plaza in a way that is bicycle and pedestrian friendly make this a good design.

Section C:

I prefer alternative F-1 the best. I like its simplicity. As a frequent driver of I-40 (I pass this interchange daily and will sometimes take I-240 and sometimes I-40 depending upon my destination), the interchanges in this design make sense to me. I also like that this design consumes less of the landscape.

General Comments:

I see that the Draft EIS is now being developed. I think that it is important to include the No Option alternative in your EIS. I also think in addition to the selected 8 lane design, there should be, for comparison, a list of impacts for the same design if implemented as 6 lanes and if implemented as 4 lanes. The reasons for including these comparisons are that the world supply of fossil fuels is declining. Our city will be creating alternative transportation options because of decreasing supplies of fossil fuel as well as the fact that burning that fuel contributes to global warming. By the time the final EIS is created, it may be that the building of an 8 lane freeway will be an obvious waste of money and other resources. It would be good if we could move ahead with less lanes, if it seems appropriate without doing the whole process over again.

Response

An evaluation of the project alternatives is presented in Chapter 2 of the DEIS. The need for an eight-lane typical sections is presented in Chapter 1 of the DEIS.

Letter Codes

2-16

Comment

Regarding the I-26 Connector Project, I-2513, I have definite concerns that I hope will be addressed in the upcoming meetings. First, since this is an Interstate highway, there must be a separation of local and interstate traffic. If possible, I would like to see local traffic not have to merge onto the Interstate to cross the French Broad River.

Response

Refer to comment response 2-2.

Letter Codes

PP0073

2-17

Comment

As a land owner adjacent to the proposed I-26 Connector Project going through and over what is now known as I-26 / Patton Avenue, I have concerns with the design of the proposal presented by your department as it may compare to the Asheville Design Center's alternate design. I have been following the Asheville Design Center development of their alternative plan since they were organized last summer. I find their design to be more acceptable as it separates the local and interstate traffic which will result in eliminating the now

dangerous merging situation on or about the Smoky Park Bridge. Their design allows the faster Interstate traffic to flow through our City while allowing the slower local traffic to flow within the community joining the Downtown Commercial District with the communities to the West. I hope you will give consideration to their alternative(s) and will do all within your department's power to separate the fast moving Interstate traffic from the slower local traffic.

Response

Refer to comment response 2-2.

Letter Codes

PP0086

2-18

Comment

In addition to separating local and interstate traffic, pedestrian and bicycle traffic needs to be accommodated. As is, it is nearly impossible and extremely dangerous to cross to West Asheville using this route unless traveling in a vehicle, effectively cutting off a section of town and businesses from the central part of Asheville. Creating a local traffic connection will reconnect and reunify the community.

Response

Refer to comment response 2-7.

Letter Codes

PP0090

2-19

Comment

Additionally, I feel strongly that citizens should have the right to walk or bike through the city and that bike paths / sidewalks should be in place under all interstate bridges. One glaring example is that it is not possible to safely walk from Fairview (Hwy 74) to Fairview Road (there is a maze of on and off ramps from I-40 and I-240). The town of Fairview is completely cut off from Asheville without going on an expressway or expressway ramp.

Response

Refer to comment response 2-7.

Letter Codes

PP0091

2-20

Comment

Please just give us eight lanes of highway around Asheville and six lanes to Hendersonville. No matter where you put the connector it can be no worse than the planning solutions we commonly see coming from the local experts.

Response

Comment noted. Refer to Chapter 1 of the DEIS where the number of lanes needed is addressed and to Chapter 2 of the DEIS where the project typical sections for construction alternatives are addressed.

Letter Codes

PP0102

2-21

Comment

I think that the alternate design assembled by the Asheville Design Center has many valid points -can't the DOT use their expertise AND work with the local community's vision? Reclaiming the Patton Avenue bridge for local only traffic, eliminating the dangerous intersection with 240 by looping 240 around to tie in to the north, and doing so with the design footprint that takes up LESS asphalt and engineering, impacts less land, and reclaims developable, taxable prime real estate downtown all seem like the most logical solutions. Combining engineering and design to create a signature bridge for Asheville (like Charleston) addresses the need for more than moving traffic-it can create a visual entrance that is in keeping with our unique, aesthetically oriented city. We're not, nor do we wish to be Charlotte or Atlanta!

Response

Refer to comment response 2-2.

Letter Codes

PP0108

2-22

Comment

I am a biker, a walker and a driver. I am interested in keeping Asheville as a vibrant community-centered place to live. I believe people need their cars in many cases to get where they are going, and I know from experience that many in the Asheville area are happy to bicycle to their destinations when the routes are safe and car exhaust is minimized. I WANT TO BIKE TO WEST ASHEVILLE on a safe route.

Response

Refer to comment response 2-7.

Letter Codes

PP0110

2-23

Comment

These nine Evaluation Criteria of the CCC Report, plus the Asheville Design Center's improvements to the variation on DOT's Alternate Plan 4, demonstrate both the competency and the high levels of commitment this community holds for this project. The Asheville Design Center (ADC) plan calls for a double-decker bridge just north of Westgate Shopping Center, with I-26 and I-240 on separate levels. The design will make the Smoky Park Bridge a local boulevard re-connecting downtown with West Asheville. The plan takes up less land, saves about \$150 million, and frees up significant land currently part of the highway configuration on the downtown side of the river.

Response

Refer to comment response 2-2.

Letter Codes

PP0120

2-24

Comment

I support the alternative plan designed at their own time and expense by local engineers who care.

6/9/2015

I-26 Connector

32

Response

Refer to comment response 2-2.

Letter Codes

PP0131

2-25

Comment

May I respectfully suggest that what Asheville and Western North Carolina really needs are not more investments in roadways, but rather an extension of passenger rail service. NCDOT presently provides some subsidy which makes possible regular daytime passenger rail service between Raleigh and Charlotte. The tax dollars of WNC residents are helping to pay for this service, but we do not get any benefit for it. Presently, when we want to take the train, we must drive ninety miles to Greenville, SC. The northbound Amtrak Crescent arrives after 11PM (if it is even on time), the southbound leg arrives before sunrise (ditto). This is simply unacceptable. Oil prices are going up fast, and motor fuel prices are sure to follow this trend. Given the increasing difficulty and expense in finding and developing new reserves of oil, this trend is unlikely to reverse; more likely, it will accelerate. People will very soon be needing alternatives to private passenger cars. That "very soon" will likely occur within NCDOT's normal planning horizon. As I understand that there are several technical issues that will require several years to extend passenger rail service to Asheville, it is time to bring this project off the back burner and move forward with it now. I understand that the project would also require funding, which is why I am opposing the I-26 connector project; the funds can be better spent on passenger rail. The same energy price increases that drive more people toward energy-efficient passenger rail will be driving more people off the road. It would be a tragedy to spend money that could have been used to provide passenger rail service on yet another roadway project that will end up being under-used. In just a few years time, it is likely that reduced traffic will take care by itself of the problems that this connector project is intended to solve. Forget the connector, let's move forward with passenger rail to Asheville now!

Response

Other modes of transportation are considered in Chapter 2 of the DEIS.

Letter Codes

PP0134

2-26

Comment

These comments are submitted on behalf of the Western North Carolina Alliance and the Southern Environmental Law Center. The Department of Transportation's (DOT) latest newsletter sought comment on the "purpose and need for the project and project alternatives."

Concerning project alternatives, the Southern Environmental Law Center submitted extensive comments dated November 10, 2006, that still apply. The DOT and the draft EIS must give full consideration to the design alternative proposed by the Asheville Design Center (ADC) and also to alternatives of less than eight travel lanes. Indeed, much has occurred since November 2006 that strengthens the case for consideration of these alternatives. Foremost among these developments is an engineering review of the ADC alternative that has found that this alternative is feasible and can be implemented with minor modifications, according to recent news articles.

Response

The NCDOT and FHWA have given careful and deliberate consideration to the comments dated November 10, 2006 submitted by the Southern Environmental Law Center. Each of the comments have been addressed in the DEIS. As stated in response to comment 2-2, the NCDOT is working with the ADC, City of Asheville, Buncombe County, and their chosen engineering consulting firm to determine if their conceptual alternative can be modified/developed to meet interstate design criteria. Should the ADC alternative be determined to be feasible, it will be studied in detail prior to selection of a preferred alternatives. Also refer to Chapter 2 of the DEIS where project alternatives are addressed.

Letter Codes

PG0078

2-27

Comment

Sir, May I suggest that the Smoky Park Bridge AND the interchange at its west end be bypassed. This interchange is not bad. It serves its purpose well enough, and when relieved of I-26 traffic, and much local north/south traffic, it should be adequate for a long time. It should be seen as being outside of the Interstate System and not subject to those regulations. "If it ain't broke don't fix it"

Accordingly, I suggest that I-240 be expelled from the west side of the French Broad River and be joined to I-26 at the north end of the bypass by way of 19/23/70. Some discussion is attached.

[ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED IN ATTACHED PDF.]

Thank you for the new invitation to submit comments and suggestions concerning the proposed I-26 bypass for Asheville. I attended several showings of possible plans for the bypass and was impressed with the one on 9/10/06. The colorful display occupied two long tables and most of the wall space of two large rooms, but my proposed plan was nowhere to be seen. I had handed the idea to some DOT representatives at earlier meeting and mailed it off to your offices at Carey, but I never knew whether it was ignored or lost. That might be due to the fact that I do not represent any local group or organization, but I think the idea should be given some serious engineering study. I suggest a simple, straightforward, uncluttered bypass with no complicated "options". There should, of course, be an off ramp from the north to bring 19/23 to Patton Ave. and one to take 19/23 to I-26 northward. There are those who would attach a major remaking of the whole area just east of the river. Let's discard all of that. If I understand the need for highway funding, this is not a time to splurge.

My general idea boils down to one large question. Does the interchange at Patton Ave. and I-240, just east of the Smoky Park Bridge really require massive rebuilding at huge cost, and a year or two of disruption, or would it be sufficient with some relative minor improvements and a bypass? The bypass I suggest would remove interstate traffic from the interchange and from the Smoky Park Bridge, and also much local traffic, as between south and west Buncombe and such places as UNCA, Woodfin and Weaverville. With that done, the present bridge and adjacent structures might be sufficient for a very long time.

The bypass would begin with a split between I-240 and I-26 in West Asheville about a quarter mile south of Patton Ave. It would veer a bit eastward, overpass Patton Ave. and continue northward through or along side the Westgate shopping center. It would end, as DOT has planned, in a similar split where the bypass would merge with what is now designated 19/23/70.

The interchange at Patton and I-240 seems to me, as a frequent user of the area, to serve its purpose very well. Patton Ave. is, of course, headed into West Asheville's "inner city", a mile long clutter of businesses, and there is often a back up into the interchange. There is a lot of traffic exchange between Patton Ave. and I-240, on the westward running bridge, however straight through I-240 keeps to the right and avoids being entangled with any traffic jam. The last DOT plan I have seen for the area has I-240 mixing with Patton Ave. on the bridge, crossing over and turning left (southward) at the interchange. The present arrangement seems to have an advantage here, but this is the main place where some simple fixing is needed. The right turn-left turn ramp leading to the Patton Ave. underpass is too short, and the turns too sharp. The right turn should begin closer to the west end of the Bridge. How much is that worth if one compares cost with benefits? I don't know. There is an occasional truck wreck, but I haven't heard of anyone being Killed or maimed.

A major reason for the high cost of redoing the interchange is that, as the DOT sees it, I-240 must be rebuilt to conform to the latest interstate specifications. For this reason and others, I suggest that I-240 need not cross the river at all, but be altogether on the east side. Whatever problem the area has should be seen as being outside the Interstate System.

A proposal that has been around for some time, would disconnect I-240 from the Bridge, have it cross the river on a magnificent new bridge and join the I-26 bypass in an interchange just north of the Westgate Shopping Center. I had expected the idea to quietly disappear, or be flatly rejected by the DOT as being awkward, too expensive and unnecessary. However, it keeps reappearing, and lately promoted by persons connected with the Asheville Design Center. They are no doubt aware that I-240 is already connected to future I-26 by a first class four-lane road currently designated 19/23/70, I propose that this section be eventually designated I-240 and its junction with I-26 be its northwest end. I-240 is heavily used by local commuters, shoppers and commercial traffic. Its actual interstate traffic is understood to be much lighter, but it does provide a valuable short cut link between I-26 and I-40 at exit 53. I recommend we leave it very nearly as is. May I add a postscript below on a slightly different matter?

Priorities.

The latest DOT thinking on the sequence of constructions places high priority on the interchange at I-40/I-26. Drivers looking turn eastward on I-40 expects to find a ramps connecting I-240 to I-40 in that direction. In stead, this connection has been provided by directing traffic to shortcut using Brevard road. This connection is a bit awkward and may be missed by drivers. From Brevard Road drivers find on and off ramps connecting to I-40. A magnificent four-lane was recently finished to carry little old Brevard road over Hominy Creek. Presumably this was to smooth this flow from I-240 to the ramps that connect Brevard road to eastward I-40. Then it turned out that the new bridge was not supposed to be the final solution to this connection! DOT is proposing a complicated, and very expensive, restructuring of this sprawling interchange, and the new arrangement would include ramps connecting I-26/I-240 to eastward I-40.

It may very well be that many years ago the planners for this area opted to use the Brevard Road short cut because they expected it to be lightly used. The way to and from eastward I-40 is to use eastward I-240, and connect to I-40 at exit 54. This is five miles shorter than going by the west end of I-240. Something probably should be done eventually to improve the connection to I-40 for those drivers who find themselves in West Asheville going the wrong way on I-240. However, I would urge that priority be given to a bypass for the Smokey Park Bridge and its approaches.

I should introduce myself. I am a native of western NC. I was employed by the US government as a physicist in the Washington DC area for 30 years.

Response

Comments noted. Refer to Chapter 2 of the DEIS where project alternatives are addressed. Specific bridge design will be considered after selection of a preferred alternative.

Letter Codes

PP0144

2-28

Comment

Section A, as shown, cuts off bicycle route on Fairfax, parallel to Brevard Rd. Bicyclists use it as a more suitable route. The Amboy Rd. connector and median cut off this route.

Pedestrian and bike facilities are a must!

Response

Letter Codes

PP0151

2-29

Comment

I'm extremely interested in Section C because of our plan for greenway connection from Hominey Crk Park across historic Brevard Rd. bridge to Farmers Market and beyond. Alternative F1 seems least disruptive for our plan. We hope a 10-12 ft multi-use path could be put along Brevard Rd. w/ access to the bridge over I-40 to access the crosswalk into the Farmers Market - a protected 2-way bike lane on the bridge or cantilevered off would be the best.

Response

Letter Codes

PP0193

2-30

Comment

On Brevard Rd from Hominy Creek at I-240 Alt. F1 seems to be best alternative - to add a multi-use path (10-12' width) for bikes and ped and connect W. Asheville neighborhoods to Farmers Market and On the Arboretum etc.

Response

Letter Codes

PP0156

2-31

Comment

Please make sure you allow for multimodal options (ped and bike) across Smokey Park Bridge.

Response

Letter Codes

PP0157

2-32

Comment

The C choice is terrible. Sensible cities are tearing down highways. Why create miles of new concrete. Highways create blight and crime. Asheville is going backwards - we need walkways, more bike paths & greenways. We do not need more roads to attract more cars. We need to improve public transportation with street cars. Asheville is becoming more and more auto-centric new highways create new and old problems.

Response

Letter Codes

PP0159

2-33

Comment

Prefer options C-F1 and B C3, except on C-F1 the South Bear Creek Road, two 90-degree curves are not 'fixed'. There are numerous accidents every year. The option C D-1 fixes the problem. I suggest incorporating the D-1 South Bear Creek piece into the F-1 option.

Response

Letter Codes

PP0160

2-34

Comment

6/9/2015

I-26 Connector

I am in favor of Section B Alt. 3C. It seems to have the shortest distance with less impact on environment and businesses as viewed.
Response

Letter Codes
PP0161

2-35 **Comment** I would hope we could prioritize multi-mobile (sic) access on as much of the revised roads as possible.
Response

Letter Codes
PP0166

2-36 **Comment** - 3 lanes is enough, 4 is too big
Response

Letter Codes
PP0167

2-37 **Comment** I am in favor of Alternative 4
Because it frees Patton Ave from any through interstate traffic

Response Because it does not require the elevated highway running along the river over top of existing roads

Letter Codes
PP0170

2-38 **Comment** I am in favor of Alternative 4 for the I-26 connector project through Asheville.
Response

Letter Codes

PP0171

2-39

Comment

-Prefers Alt 4B
-Separation of local and interstate traffic is a MUST

4B is also relatively compact while most of the other proposals destroy a lot of usable land for the interchanges.

Response

Letter Codes

PP0172

2-40

Comment

The current design of Section A with 5 lanes (4+ Aux) is based on outdated models and outdated traffic volume assumptions.

Response

Letter Codes

PP0177

2-41

Comment

If you add the bike and ped multi-use lanes on Section a, B & C this will have a better chance of passing.

If you could start with bike/ped multiuse on Baron Bridge it would help lots of people get across the river and it may help sell plan as a whole.

Response

Letter Codes

PP0178

2-42

Comment

This email is in regard to the proposed changes to the Asheville, NC portion of I-26.

As longtime resident of Asheville and a daily traveler over the Jeff Bowen Bridge, I sincerely hope any future changes will improve our ability to cross river on good or by bike. Currently you have to be somewhat insane to cross the bridge as a pedestrian. When riding my bike, I have to detour around to one or two other bridges which increases my commute time substantially. Please consider this when expanding the interstate and realize that there are thousands more like me who wish to be able to cross the river as a pedestrian on Bowen Bridge (formerly Smoky Park Bridge.) Not being able to cross as a pedestrian is contrary to basic human rights and should be a

major consideration of the DOT's planning process.

Response

Letter Codes

PP0183

2-43

Comment

How will the selection of a preferred alternative be made? How will costs & benefits be weighed? Will life-cycle and secondary impacts be included? Will compliance with City development plans be considered?

Response

Letter Codes

PP0184

2-44

Comment

Build it up to US 25 Exit in Weaverville. This project should have been built ten years ago.

Response

Letter Codes

PP0191

3. Noise

3-1

Comment

Noise pollution also has serious effects including hypertension increase. I would like to know how much noise and air pollution will increase due to the building and presence of the expansion.

Response

Noise and air quality impacts are addressed in Section 4.1.3 of the DEIS.

Letter Codes

PP0011

3-2

Comment

Would like a noise study around Montford/Westover Drive.

Like 3C the best.

Response

Letter Codes

PP0154

3-3

Comment

I recently reviewed a notice for a upcoming meeting to share information about the subject project. My wife and I own a home in West Asheville just east of I-26 and south of Haywood Ave.. We will not be in town for the upcoming meeting so I want to ask you some questions by email. Please respond as best you can as well as provide me with any link to additional details on the project.

I have heard that the proposed project will include widening of I-26 closer to my home location, taking out the homes and properties adjacent to Hanover street. This would place the interstate highway even closer to my home than it is now.

Currently the traffic noise is tolerable, however, if the proposed project is built the noise would most likely become a problem situation. This would also have a negative impact to my property value.

A potential solution to the noise issue (to some degree better) would be to construct noise abatement walls that are functional and decorative on both sides of the interstate in heavily populated areas. These are commonly seen in many areas of the country along interstate freeways/highways.

Please don't let the interstate be widened and increase traffic noise without providing these noise abatement walls and considering the negative impact to all the residents living adjacent to this interstate. Without the solution to noise abatement and aesthetics this would be possibly violating environmental regulations. I'm sure the project will have to pass the approval of environmental impact regulations

and not be in violation of any of these regulations. Please tell me what is planned for this noise abatement issue. I would also like to know about interstate access points to the interstate proposed changes. Will these access points change or move from current access locations?
Please send me a map of the proposed interstate modifications.

Response

Thank you for taking the time to send your comments via email; all mapping alternatives for the proposed project are located at the following website:
<http://www.ncdot.gov/projects/i26connector/>
With regards to the noise issue, abatement walls are indeed planned for the affected surrounding neighborhoods. The locations of these walls are included on the mapping provided on the website.

If for any reason you are unable to open the maps, please let me know and I will determine another way for you to view them.

Letter Codes

PP0188

3-2

Comment

I currently am in school in florida and rent out my home until I return as a resident.

I will not be able to make it to the Public Meeting, My questions are as follows, these are the same questions I proposed in a City Council meeting back in 2009, and of course got no direct answer:

1. Does NCDOT realize the noise implications to the neighborhoods? What noise barriers will be imposed?
2. Does NCDOT realize the added noise and exhaust pollution that will be added to the neighborhood? What is underway to address this?
3. My home is located at ## Branning Street, what direct implications will this project have on my home and on the surrounding area?
4. Am I in an area that will be directly affected by the construction and need to vacate the home??
For what it's worth, and I realize not much as big money talks, I hope NCDOT realizes this EXPANSION project creates more noise and exhaust pollution to my neighborhood AND hope you will NOT continue with this project.

Leave us alone!!

Response

We appreciate your interest in the I-26 Asheville Connector Project. Representatives from NCDOT and URS reviewed each of your comments and questions related to the Public Meeting conducted on May 12, 2014, and offer the following responses.

1. *Jonathan Felsen: Does NCDOT realize the noise implications to the neighborhoods? What noise barriers will be imposed?*

Response: Preparation of the Traffic Noise Analysis is underway. Field measurements for ambient noise levels were collected during the middle of June 2014. Results of the analysis will be presented in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement that is anticipated to be completed and ready for public review by the middle of 2015.

2. *Jonathan Felsen: Does NCDOT realize the added noise and exhaust pollution that will be added to the neighborhood? What is underway to address this?*

Response: Preparation of the Air Quality Analysis is also underway. Results of the analysis will also be presented in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

3. *Jonathan Felsen: My home is located at 72 Branning Street, what direct implications will this project have on my home and on the surrounding area?*

4. *Jonathan Felsen: Am I in an area that will be directly affected by the construction and need to vacate the home??*

Response: Is your home and property located in the southeast quadrant of the I-240/Patton Avenue Interchange at the intersection of Branning Street and Millbrook Road? If so, your property is located within the limits of the Project Study Area, and about 400 feet from the existing highway. The Federal Highway Administration and NCDOT are proposing improvements to the interchange and four alternatives (3, 3C, 4, and 4B) are being studied. The preliminary design plans presented at the Public Meeting on May 12, 2014 are still underway pending the findings of the traffic operations analysis. Therefore, we will not know specific impacts of each alternative until the traffic operations analysis is completed and the required revisions to the preliminary design plans are made. At this point and based upon the preliminary design plans presented at the Public Meeting, Alternative 3 improvements, as currently proposed, are ~200 feet from your property, Alt 3C improvements, as currently proposed, are ~300 feet from your property, Alt 4 improvements, as currently proposed, are ~100 feet from your property, and Alt 4B improvements, as currently proposed, are ~100 feet from your property. NCDOT will keep you apprised as this project continues to develop. You will be invited to future events and will receive all future correspondence.

Please let us know if you want to discuss any of our responses or need more information about the I-26 Asheville Connector Project.

Letter Codes

PP0192

4. Land Use

- 4-1 **Comment**
We need to maximize the usable land along the Patton Ave. corridor and to bring together West Asheville and the downtown at the river.
- Response**
Improving transportation and balancing impacts to land uses is difficult and property acquisition is typically needed to provide right of way for the proposed project. Every effort will be made to minimize property acquisition and relocations.
- Letter Codes**
PP0016
- 4-2 **Comment**
Property taking should be kept to a minimum. Since the project will be located very close to downtown Asheville, as much land as possible should be saved (or freed up) for denser development. Rural interstate standards should not be applied to this project; slower design speeds and curvatures should be employed in order to conserve land and reduce takings.
- Response**
Refer to comment response 4-1. Please refer to Chapters 1 and 2 for information on the project traffic analysis and project design criteria.
- Letter Codes**
PP0061
- 4-3 **Comment**
In giving their considerations, I would also look forward to greatly reducing the I-26 Connectors foot print through the City. As proposed by your department a great deal of land area will be consumed which could be better used in development giving the City a more valuable economic base.
- Response**
Refer to comment response 4-1.
- Letter Codes**
PP0086
- 4-4 **Comment**
Don't eat up valuable close-in real estate with Atlanta-sized roads. We are constrained enough by our topography to suffer additional losses of real estate to the interstate.
- Response**
Refer to comment response 4-1.
- Letter Codes**
PP0122

4-5

Comment

As a homeowner, I would love nothing more than to sell my house to the state: it appears that will only happen if Section B - Alt 4B is selected. What can I do to advocate for this option?

Response

Letter Codes

PP0155

4-6

Comment

Our riverfront thru section B is becoming a valuable property tax asset for Buncombe Co. Reducing the amount of acreage taken off the tax rolls would be appreciated.

Response

Letter Codes

PP0165

4-7

Comment

Per MGWray:

Another gentleman, was a representative of the local design team that has worked on this project for years. The comments of his that I jotted down are as follows:

There is a take of a church in section A, and he believes that the design can be shifted to avoid that relocation (Parcel #82)

Response

Letter Codes

PP0180

4-8

Comment

I attended the public meeting for the I-26 Connector in Asheville held on May 12, 2014. Thank you of providing this opportunity for public input. Road construction such as the I-26 Connector through Asheville has vast implications on the surrounding city; impacting this city for centuries to come. It is most important to get it right!

To this regard, I strongly encourage either plan 4A or 4B, and even more so the well-considered design developed by the Asheville Design Center. Any plan to reorganize the I-26 Connector without separation of local traffic from interstate traffic as it crosses the French Broad

River will be a failure. Only plan 4A and 4B achieve this.

Please strongly work toward a separate I-26 crossing of the French Broad River.

Response

Letter Codes

PP0189

5. Social Impacts

5-1

Comment

We're owners of a property that has been repeatedly identified as potentially in the path of Project # 34165.1.2 I'd appreciate you giving me an update on exactly what NCDOT's latest plans are for this.

Response

At this time we are working on completing the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and plan to hold a public hearing in Spring of 2008 in Asheville. We will send out a newsletter several weeks before the hearing to everyone on the project mailing list with the time and place. There is a project web site at <http://www.ncdot.org/projects/I26Connector/> that has maps of the alternatives currently being considered. There are also hard copies of the maps at the NCDOT Division office in Asheville. The City of Asheville, in a co-operative effort with the ADC is also preparing an additional alternative they will ask NCDOT to consider. If it appears to be feasible it will be shown at the public hearing and included in the alternatives. I would strongly recommend that you attend the public hearing as everything will be on display and we will have many people there to answer any questions you might have. If you are not sure if you are on the project mailing list please send your mailing address to me and I will make sure you are on it.

Letter Codes

PP0002

5-2

Comment

I would like to add my comments on the I-26 expansion. Since I live in Montford Hills, on Westover Drive, I live in one of the houses that will be greatly impacted by the proposed plan. I think that increased traffic noise and increased pollution would be extremely detrimental to our wonderful, close community. I think a plan that separated local and interstate traffic and routed heavy interstate traffic away from our Montford Hills neighborhood would be much better.

Response

Environmental consequences of the project alternatives are addressed in Chapter 4 of the DEIS.

Letter Codes

PP0011

5-3

Comment

Neighborhoods that were fragmented by previous highway construction should be re-connected.

Response

Comment noted. Issue of community cohesion are addressed in Chapter 4 of the DEIS.

Letter Codes

PP0061

5-4

Comment

6/9/2015

I-26 Connector

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Personally, I would like to emphasize that West Asheville, particularly the Burton Street community and the commercial districts, suffered greatly when the I-240 by-pass was constructed originally & divided them. It is vital that we consider alternatives that preserve and reconnect the community. Else will Asheville ever be whole?

Response

Refer to Section 4.1 where community impacts are addressed. Also refer to Section 4.2 where indirect and cumulative effects are addressed.

Letter Codes

PP0113

5-5

Comment

New Belgium Brewery trucks (1 every 14 minutes 24 hours a day, every day) are forced up Haywood Rd. through a thriving neighborhood (residential) up to I-26/I-240 to get to Brevard Rd. to get the "Distribution Center" at Sandis/Sandhill. DOT must look seriously at the access of Riverside Drive northerly to get onto Patton Bridge and through to I-26/I-240.

Response

Letter Codes

PP0150

5-6

Comment

Guiding Principle - Data drivers must be secondary (i.e. constrained) by values of neighborhood integrity and sustainability, which includes reducing/minimizing carbon impact, multimodal opportunities (bike/pedestrian).

The cost is not only monetary. Eight laning I-26 has a very high cost in destroying neighborhood fabric, driving out multi-modal opportunities and increasing carbon pollution through excessive automobile use.

(8) When property is taken, compensation must be generous reflecting real and current real estate market conditions (not be confined to below market assessed values).

Response

Letter Codes

PP0152

5-7

Comment

Please look at Westwood Place in west Asheville needing traffic calming measures in place.

Response

Letter Codes

PP*0195

5-8

Comment

I feel that the section A interchange at Haywood Rd is excessive. Exit ramps onto I-240 W takes too much of the neighborhood.

Response

Letter Codes

PP0173

5-9

Comment

Detail of Section A including Montana Avenue (Requested map at public meeting).

Response

Good afternoon,

It was good to meet you during the public meeting for the I-26 Ashville Connector project. During the meeting you requested me to send you a project map of the project showing the Montana Avenue area. I have attached pdf file of Section A of the project. You should be able to open the file with Adobe Reader and zoom into your area of interest on Montana Avenue.

You also asked about the typical height of a noise wall. The height of a noise wall is dependent on several factors including topography and predicted (modeled) noise levels, but the minimum height along an interstate freeway such I-26, is between 14 and 15 feet.

Thank you for your interest in the project. Please do not hesitate to contact me or Michael Wray (copied) if you have further questions or comments.

Letter Codes

PP0178

5-10

Comment

Per notes from MGWray, project mgr:

One gentleman spoke in depth about the NCDOT's need to shift away from a focus on single occupant vehicles and the roadways that accommodate them, and instead use funding to provide access to multi-modal facilities as much as possible. He was adamant that more impoverished citizens cannot (or will not be able to) afford to drive and that the transportation system will fail if the focus remains as is.

Response

Letter Codes

6/9/2015

I-26 Connector

PP0179

5-11

Comment

I have been following this project actively, through Asheville Design Center, and as VP of the Montford Neighborhood Association.

Count me among the other designers and planners who understand enough about urban planning to know that as proposed, the alternatives will significantly degrade our community, on so many levels. I continue to find the lack of urban planners and Landscape Architects on your project team frustrating, as I know that you are supposed to have them as functioning members, and I would hope that they could bring some balance to the overly engineered approach to this transportation project. Let me focus my comments and questions on the I-240 section, since I-26 really boils down to a conduit for freight from Charleston to the midwest, as it was championed at a forum a year or two ago at the Arboretum. The community has been clear, and with consensus, that we don't want a uni-modal highway link across the river. We want Patton ave, lined with businesses and neighborhoods, to stitch West and East Asheville back together again. To that goal, you have given us two heavy-handed alternatives 4/4b, and another alternate that just completely ignores our community goals. 1. With the completion of the I-26 connector, why is a portion of it still called I-240? Why is this section labeled as two highways? Since I-240 evolves to a shortcut between two different highways (I will call this I-46), rather than an urban loop from I-40, what does that mean in terms of the design standards for I-46? We don't want to encourage truck traffic shortcutting through our city, so we don't want it to have the same design standards as I-40 and I-26 right? 2. So what are the design standards for I-46? Obviously, current portions of I-240 near downtown do not meet 60 mph standards; there are even 45 mph speed limit signs posted on the Jersey barrier. Ramps are short, etc. So why can't we all work together and create an acceptable vision for this "highway"? 3. Can we see this I-46 section as an urban boulevard (think Wendover in Greensboro, or Hwy 74/Andrew Jackson Hwy/E Dickson blvd near Kings Mtn), that evolves in response to urban conditions? 4. Wouldn't slowing traffic down allow the footprints to be tightened, and perhaps allow more connections to local roads, and allow our tax base to find more development opportunities along this corridor? Wouldn't this lower the cost of all the alternatives? Wouldn't it even allow Alt. 3 to meet our community goals of a non-highway connection over the river? 5. How can we repair the destruction created when your predecessors ended Patton Ave at Clingman ave, replacing it with a sprawling ramp/highway that isolated neighborhoods, and removed valuable land from our community? 6. How can we solve more of our transportation needs OUTSIDE of the highway footprint? 7. Are you aware that cultural/social trends are moving toward walkable, mixed-use communities, and the I-240 portion of this project moves us in the opposite direction? Where is most of the growth and value in your community? I bet it is in the older neighborhoods, where folks purposely avoid the stress and costs associated with commuting and spending so much time behind the wheel of a car.

Response

We are in receipt of your comments submitted during the May 12, 2014, Public Meeting for the I-26 Asheville Connector Project. Thank you for submitting your comments and for participating in the public involvement process for this project. I am writing to let you know NCDOT has been contacted

Letter Codes

PP0185

6/9/2015

I-26 Connector

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Comment

Below are my comments on the plans that NCDOT showed at the public hearing on May 12 at the meeting in Asheville NC

- How will selection of a preferred alternative be made?
- Will cost vs benefits be weighed for each alternative in the EIS?
- Will compliance with City development plans be considered in the selection process? As you know, city calls for separation of interstate traffic from local traffic. I-240 not considered interstate traffic? Please consider a design that would separate Patton & I-240 traffic.
- The prior Figg-Lochner plan had a much smaller footprint and conformed to DOT's design criteria. Why did it need to be changed?

Response

We appreciate your interest in the I-26 Asheville Connector Project. Representatives from NCDOT and URS reviewed each of your comments and questions related to the Public Meeting conducted on May 12, 2014, and offer the following responses.

How will selection of a preferred alternative be made?

This project is being developed and studied in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and the Section 404/NEPA Interagency Merger Process, and is being processed as an Environmental Impact Statement.

The following Detailed Study Alternatives were selected by the Interagency Team on December 15, 2009, and were represented at the Public Meeting:

- Section C Alternatives: A-2, C-2, D-1, and F-1
- Section A Alternatives: Upgrade existing
- Section B Alternatives: 3, 4, and 4-B

A new alternative, Alternative 3-C, was added to the list of Detailed Study Alternatives for Section B since then, and was also presented at the Public Meeting.

Environmental studies are being conducted to evaluate these alternatives with respect to the need for an purposes of this project, the potential impacts to the human and natural environments, compliance with environmental laws and regulations, interagency comments, public comments, and project costs. Results of those studies, the estimated impacts, and project costs will be presented in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement that is anticipated to be completed and ready for public review by the middle of 2015. The associated roadway design plans will be presented at a Public Hearing that is anticipated to be conducted by the middle of 2015. Comments on the document and design plans will be compiled for presentation to the Interagency Team in order to reach concurrence on the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative (LEDPA). After the LEDPA is selected by the Interagency Team, NCDOT will designate its Preferred Alternative, which is generally the LEDPA.

Will cost vs benefits be weighed for each alternative in the EIS?

Yes. They will be presented in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Will compliance with City development plans be considered in the selection process? As you know, city calls for separation of interstate traffic from local traffic. I-240 not considered interstate traffic? Please consider a design that would separate Patton & I-240 traffic. Yes, consistency with local land use plans and with the local and state transportation plans is evaluated for each alternative. Two of the alternatives, 4 and 4B, are being studied with the purpose of separating the I-240 through-traffic from the local traffic, and decreasing volumes on Patton Avenue.

The prior Figg-Lochner plan had a much smaller footprint and conformed to DOT's design criteria. Why did it need to be changed? I contacted Mr. Charlie Flowe, a roadway design engineer that has served on this project for many years. Mr. Flowe offered the following response to your question:

“We used the concept to create Alternate 4B. It violated some design parameters and had some constructability issues and grew as we resolved those. It crossed the river much further south than the original 3 alternatives and impacted the Montford neighborhood along US 19-23 far more than the other alts. The biggest difference between the ADC/Figg/Lochner alternative and what developed as Alternate 4 was that ADC crossed the river on a double decker bridge with I-240 above I-26. We had trouble making that geometry work and eventually convinced everyone that it was not practical. We attempted to incorporate the ideas into alternate 4B – moving the crossing to the south, tightening the footprint of the interchange, rebuilding US 19-23 through Montford as I-26, etc. 4B was carried forward for evaluation as a viable alternative.”

NCDOT will keep you apprised as this project continues to develop. You will be invited to future events and will receive all future correspondence. Please let us know if you want to discuss any of our responses or need more information about the I-26 Asheville Connector Project.

Letter Codes

PP0186

5-13

Comment

Dear Mr. Wray:

I am writing on behalf of the City of Asheville's Multimodal Transportation Commission, an advisory body whose goal is "to assist the City in furthering, advancing and promoting a broad comprehensive and integrative transportation system that incorporates multimodal concepts, including but not limited to transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, greenways, complete streets, and highways." We are encouraged by the positive momentum to incorporate multimodal transportation facilities into the alternatives being evaluated for the I-26 Connector project. The conversations that occurred at many stations during the May 12 public meeting were very positive and we appreciate NCDOT staff, its consultants, and the Division 13 Board Member and Division Engineer speaking in support of multimodal transportation as part of I-26. The I-26 Connector project is an excellent opportunity to enhance all of these modes to create a safer journey for motorized and non-motorized people traveling through and within the City. The City of Asheville, at the request of NCDOT, recently amended its Greenways Master Plan (with approval from the Multimodal Transportation Commission) to include multimodal facilities in the vicinity of the I-26 Connector to bolster the case that these elements are a necessary component of the project. We are also embarking on a citywide Multimodal Transportation Plan that will further refine the city's needs. The Multimodal Transportation

Commission supports continued inclusion of nonmotorized transportation elements as part of the I-26 Connector project and requests that NCDOT consider including this group in discussions about routing and design concepts for multimodal elements of I-26 to help ensure the chosen option reflects the context of Asheville and diversity of our population. Currently, NCDOT's Complete Streets Guidelines do not address the concepts posed by NCDOT for a project integrating multimodal facilities alongside a freeway, nor do they address design elements at interchanges. Further, NCDOT does not currently have design standards for multi-use trails. For these reasons, we request NCDOT work with the City and others in the area to form a working group to focus on these elements. Materials such as AASHTO's recently updated Bicycle Facilities Design Guidelines (which includes more clarity on multi-use trail design); NACTO's recent publications; and ITE's draft publication on incorporating pedestrian and bicyclists needs into interchange design should be used as guides to help NCDOT and other stakeholders gain a better perspective on the nuances of designing for non-motorized system users.

We look forward to working with you to improve multimodal transportation for our City.

Response

Letter Codes

PP0187

5-14

Comment

On behalf of the members of the Western North Carolina Alliance, I submit these comments on the latest presentation of alternatives for the I-26 Connector Project. This letter will address proposed bike/pedestrian improvements and the various sections and alternatives in turn.

Bike/Pedestrian Improvements

We very much appreciate the Department of Transportation's (DOT) willingness to work with bike/ped leaders in Asheville to identify improvements that can be incorporated into or otherwise advanced through this project. The bike/ped charrette DOT hosted last year was enormously helpful in advancing these goals, and we hope to continue those conversations in the coming months as the project develops. We are also grateful for DOT's commitment to include bike/ped improvements in all alternatives, and I was pleased to see the rendering of a possible multi-use path that would be added to the Jeff Bowen Bridges should Alternatives 3 or 3C be chosen.

We also support the letter submitted by the City of Asheville's Multi-Modal Transportation Commission and specifically incorporate it into this letter by reference.

Section A

As you know, the Alliance has long had concerns about Section A, namely our strong disagreement with the unusual requirement that this project meet Level of Service (LOS) D; our disagreement with the traffic studies that show that a minimum of eight lanes will achieve LOS D; and DOT's inclusion of only one alternative for Section A.

Taking the second point first, hopefully the new local model better predicts traffic volumes into the future and will reflect a future reality

that makes more sense that DOT's past and current projections. Our main request at this point is that DOT undertake a new analysis using the local model prior to issuing the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in case other alternatives are warranted and can be included in the EIS. It matters immensely to the community and to the Alliance that only one alternative is currently offered, and it would benefit everyone if the EIS could include other alternatives and so avoid provoking community outcry and a potential legal fight.

Closely related is the first point mentioned above - the continued inflexibility of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in requiring LOS D for this project. You are likely aware of a letter sent last year by the French Broad River MPO to FHWA on this topic, but I attach it here for your information. The Alliance supports every argument and appeal for flexibility made in that letter. FHWA's stated reasons for denying the request were because it has not come through DOT and because FHWA's regulations require LOS D for urban interstates.

In light of FHWA's position, we request that DOT ask FHWA to consider design flexibility for this project, especially Section A. The attached letter provides justification for flexibility, but we have also recently become aware of an FHWA policy that allows flexibility on LOS D for urban interstates if the project is an interstate improvement rather than new construction. Loretta Barren with FHWA made this policy known at the April 12 meeting of the French Broad River MPO, and it was confirmed to me by Mitch Batuzich at the public meeting on May 12.

While part of this project is new interstate construction, Section A is signed I-26/I-240 and so should be eligible for whatever design flexibility is allowed by FHWA policy. I have recently taken a video of all the signs on I-240/I-26 and on surface roads that intersect it in West Asheville to show the road's plan designation as an interstate, not as a "future" interstate. The "future" designation does not appear until one gets to the Jeff Bowen Bridges. Again, based on the MPO letter and on the fact that Section A is an existing interstate, we respectfully request that DOT ask FHWA to consider design flexibility for at least Section A. The MPO would likely be interested in joining any conversation that arises out of that request and consideration.

To the third point, DOT has repeatedly justified its rejection of other alternatives for Section A based on their failure to meet the purpose and need of the project. It seems clear, however, that FHWA's own policy might allow for sufficient flexibility that would result in additional alternatives for Section A that also meet the project's purpose and need. Given this, the National Environmental Policy Act would seem to require DOT to pursue a conversation with FHWA about LOS and design flexibility that might result in additional alternatives being included in the EIS.

Section B, Alternatives 3 and 3C

Both of these alternatives are much improved over the earlier Alt. 3 due to their reduced impacts on the Emma community, and we commend DOT for making these improvements. However, these alternatives remain less desirable due to the vastly increased complexity of the road network on the west side of the river and the significant impacts on the Burton Street community. In addition, by separating the east and westbound lanes on Patton Avenue, these alternatives preclude the option of Patton Avenue becoming a gateway from West Asheville into downtown and prevent the Jeff Bowen Bridges from becoming a local boulevard as called for in the Asheville 2025 plan. It seems unclear at this point how the difference in the location of the river crossing will impact Montford. It clearly shifts impacts

on business from the west to the east side of the river, but we will have to see what the EIS says about these impacts to know which crossing location is better from the standpoint of environmental and community impacts.

In short, while these alternatives cost the least, they also increase complexity on the west side of the river, place an enormous burden on one of Asheville's historically African-American communities, and preclude the full implementation of Asheville's long range development plan. When looking at these designs, what comes to mind is that there has to be a way to build the missing segment of I-26 without also complicating the local traffic infrastructure, burdening neighborhoods quite so much, and impeding the City's long range plan.

Section B, Alternatives 4 and 4B

These alternatives do, in fact, address many of the concerns cited for Alternatives 3/3C. They make better use of existing infrastructure on the west side of the river and reduce complexity there, they minimize impacts on Burton Street, and they actually help achieve a major goal of the City's 2025 plan by allowing Patton Avenue to become a multi-modal gateway boulevard that connects West Asheville to downtown. These alternatives also greatly reduce projected traffic on the Bowen Bridges, thus extending the life of the bridges more than Alts. 3/3C. While Alts. 4/4B do require more new construction ramps and bridges over the river, and therefore are more expensive, this also creates more options for local traffic, reduces congestion, and provides alternative routes in the case of accidents. These alternatives also improve connections on the east side of the river by providing Hillcrest a direct connection to Patton Avenue and reducing its isolation.

These alternatives are more expensive because they do more. They are the options that best address the purpose and need of the project while also honoring local plans and minimizing impacts on neighborhoods.

Response

Letter Codes

PP0190

6. Induced Socioeconomic Impacts

6-1

Comment

Whatever choice is selected for Asheville, it will profoundly affect development and livability for the next century. Let's not let assumptions based on past mistakes force us into bad decisions for the future.

Response

Comment noted. Refer to Section 4.2 where indirect and cumulative effects are addressed.

Letter Codes

PP0004

6-2

Comment

As you have undoubtedly found in your work on this project, Asheville has a strong tourism component to it's local economy. It is important that the community and it's economic base not be scarred by a project that does not compliment the community both in scale and in design.

Response

Comment noted.

Letter Codes

PP0046

6-3

Comment

...the issue at stake also concerns the condition of future development patterns following the I-26 reconfiguration: neighborhood connectivity, environmental conditions, the future wealth and state of the community.

Response

Refer to comment response 6-1.

Letter Codes

PP0065

7. Air Quality

7-1

Comment

I have been told that there are no studies about increased pollution as a result of both the building and the presence of the highway expansion. This is a serious mistake as children and adults who live near busy highways suffer from more asthma and respiratory diseases.

Response

Air quality impacts are addressed in Section 4.1.3 of the DEIS.

Letter Codes

PP0011

7-2

Comment

The statement should also address other issues that are related to the potential project. It is surprising that in this day there is no recognition of the problem of global warming; instead, the assumption is business as usual, with ever-increasing traffic volumes. Any urban project that is built in the future should attempt to reduce the future volumes of traffic, not simply accommodate future volumes based on past, and now unsustainable trends.

Response

Comment noted.

Letter Codes

PP0061

8. Hazardous Materials

8-1

Comment

I think that it is also important to include within the EIS information about the impacts of various types of hazardous materials which will travel on the newly designed freeway to compare with the impacts from the types of materials which are currently allowed to travel on the freeway. This should include radioactive materials. Impacts to consider should include possibilities of accidents which cause leakage or spillage of such hazardous materials.

Response

Highway safety is FHWA's and NCDOT's primary concern in the development of any interstate project. Developing the I-26 project with current interstate design criteria should improve safety on I-26 through the Asheville area. The types of materials, hazardous or otherwise, transported on the future interstate is not like to change from what is currently being transported.

Letter Codes

PP0067

16. Energy and Natural Resources

16-1

Comment

This statement about capacity also fails to factor in future declines in the rate of private passenger vehicle use per capita which will occur as a result of the increase of fuel costs due to anticipated reductions in the worldwide supply of oil and the necessity of humans to reduce fossil fuel consumption due to global climate change....

...Also there are likely to be significant decreases in per capita use of private passenger vehicles by the year 2030, due to increasing fuel costs because of reductions in the worldwide supply of oil and the necessity of humans to reduce fossil fuel consumption due to global climate change/

Response

NCDOT uses a traffic forecast derived from the traffic model adopted the Asheville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization. Capacity is addressed in Chapter 1 of the DEIS.

Letter Codes

PP0067

16-2

Comment

May I respectfully suggest that what Asheville and Western North Carolina really needs are not more investments in roadways, but rather an extension of passenger rail service. NCDOT presently provides some subsidy which makes possible regular daytime passenger rail service between Raleigh and Charlotte. The tax dollars of WNC residents are helping to pay for this service, but we do not get any benefit for it. Presently, when we want to take the train, we must drive ninety miles to Greenville, SC. The northbound Amtrak Crescent arrives after 11PM (if it is even on time), the southbound leg arrives before sunrise (ditto). This is simply unacceptable. Oil prices are going up fast, and motor fuel prices are sure to follow this trend. Given the increasing difficulty and expense in finding and developing new reserves of oil, this trend is unlikely to reverse; more likely, it will accelerate. People will very soon be needing alternatives to private passenger cars. That "very soon" will likely occur within NCDOT's normal planning horizon. As I understand that there are several technical issues that will require several years to extend passenger rail service to Asheville, it is time to bring this project off the back burner and move forward with it now. I understand that the project would also require funding, which is why I am opposing the I-26 connector project; the funds can be better spent on passenger rail. The same energy price increases that drive more people toward energy-efficient passenger rail will be driving more people off the road. It would be a tragedy to spend money that could have been used to provide passenger rail service on yet another roadway project that will end up being under-used. In just a few years time, it is likely that reduced traffic will take care by itself of the problems that this connector project is intended to solve. Forget the connector, let's move forward with passenger rail to Asheville now!

Response

Refer to comment response 2-25.

Letter Codes

PP0134

6/9/2015

I-26 Connector

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21. Public Involvement

21-1

Comment

In response to the request for public comment I offer the following for your consideration.

This project has a long history and is recognized as needed to correct a bad, and often times dangerous highway situation that has grown as Asheville has grown, and will get worse with the projected growth in this area. Many good and knowledgeable people have worked on this project; with I hope and believe the good intent of solving the highway problem with its related issues.

Various proposals for the project have been put forth which have plus and minuses that are difficult to fully evaluate for anyone who is not very knowledgeable in the subject matter, and who has not been deeply immersed in the project. It seems that even being moderately informed does not fully lead to a truly good understanding of the best way to go.

Please actively listen to and work with local groups who have worked on this project to fairly evaluate options. I believe that having a connector in character with the Asheville area, along with a well functioning highway system, will significantly add to the economy of the region. As there are many things to balance in a project of this magnitude, input from people, who will live with the decisions made for many years to come, is very important.

Response

Public input is very import to project development process and each comment collected through the public involvement process is considered by the project team.

Letter Codes

PP0024

21-2

Comment

The evaluation criteria of the CCC report were adopted by the city and the MPO as a means of gaining and expressing public input on the connector project and were written to be included in the Purpose and Needs Statement. In the name of fairness and the democratic process, I am requesting that they be included.

Response

The evaluation criteria and Key Design Goals of the CCC report have been considered. Refer to Chapter 1 of the DEIS.

Letter Codes

PP0119

21-3

Comment

We thank you for taking the time to hear the concerns of members of the community here in Asheville. A great part of this process and this proposal is that it has greatly energized members of the community to create solutions and ideas that serve the needs of the commuters who travel through the region as well as the people who live here and value the character of our town. Your time and consideration is greatly valued by those of us invested and enthusiastic about this project.

Response

6/9/2015

I-26 Connector

61

Comment noted.

Letter Codes

PP0141

21-4

Comment

You staff was excellent taking the time to explain the different proposals. They were friendly, well informed and very cooperative. Thank you all for the good effort!

Response

Letter Codes

PP0163

21-5

Comment

As a realtor focusing in areas that will be impacted by this project, access to information and availability of resources is important to my business. When I have used the project website in the past, the detail in the maps provided are severely lacking in specifics. The maps available here today hold extremely necessary information that must be made available to the public. I understand that some of these are proposals and subject to change.

Response

Letter Codes

PP0164

21-6

Comment

-Paul Himberger was very helpful, took all the time we needed to answer all of my questions. I felt valued for having him take the time to talk with me.

I'm very impressed with all of the hard work, dedication everyone is working towards a good and productive outcome.

Rick Tipton was also very patient and helpful. So thanks everyone for taking the time and effort to being here.

Response

Letter Codes

PP0169

21-7

Comment

Visualizations online (youtube, etc.)

6/9/2015

I-26 Connector

Response

Letter Codes

PP0175

21-8

Comment

I want to see Patton Ave as a Boulevard to allow West Asheville to continue its development.

Response

Letter Codes

PP0176

21-9

Comment

My name is ** and I need to express my dismay regarding the public meeting held in Asheville on May 12. I received the notice by mail on May 13! Given that my home is Asheville is very likely to be impacted in a negative way by the proposed changes, I most certainly would have attended if the notice had arrived even a day earlier.

I certainly hope that you intend to hold additional public meetings, and that the timing for those meetings is communicated in a timely fashion.

Response

I sincerely apologize for the late arrival of your notification; we will be holding a formal public hearing sometime next year, so will we make absolutely certain that everyone has ample advance notice. In the meantime, if you have any specific questions or concerns, please do let me know and I will do my best to assist you.

Letter Codes

PP0181

23. EIS Process and Scope

- 23-1 **Comment**
My impression is that your minds have been made up by whatever or whomever the powers that be regarding the widening I-26 in West Asheville. Unless things have changed recently even the old models of traffic flow prediction, let alone the newer models, don't justify the four lanes in each direction. How about restoring some faith in the publics mind for DOT by not just doing what some decision maker wants done regardless of what the data says and without regard to the impact on people's lives who loose their homes unnecessarily.
- Response**
Careful consideration has been given to the number of lanes required for the project. Refer to Chapters 1 and 2 of the DEIS.
- Letter Codes**
PP0009
- 23-2 **Comment**
Please help to move this project in timely manner so that it is not delayed further. This important project for the region is very much needed.
- Response**
Comment noted.
- Letter Codes**
PP0024
- 23-3 **Comment**
Asheville also has a high level of citizen participation, and it is important that the local voice is listened to and respected. All of the recommendations of the community coordinating committee that were adopted by the city and the MPO in 2000 should receive consideration in the purpose and needs statement for the project. I recognize that some alternatives were created with those criteria in mind, but I suggest that those recommendations as to purpose and need be included in the formal statement.
- Response**
The comments and concerns from local communities has been and will continue to be considered throughout the course the project. The recommendations of the Community Coordinating Committee have been considered in the development of the project and the DEIS. Refer to Chapter 1 of the DEIS.
- Letter Codes**
PP0046
- 23-4 **Comment**
As decision makers for the City of Asheville, North Carolina, the State of North Carolina, and the entire Southeastern Region, it is the NCDOT's responsibility to design and build that which will efficiently and effectively, service current needs of the people, improve the

quality of life, preserve natural resources, and create profitable situations for now and for many years to come. The most effective means of meeting these goals is to follow the goals set forth by the Community Coordinating Committee Report....

...To ignore the contents of the CCC report, would be comparable to ignoring the people of the Asheville community, residents of the State of North Carolina, American citizens, and the democratic process; anything less than aspiring to these goals would be regressive and unsustainable.

Response

Refer to comment response 23-3.

Letter Codes

PP0065

23-5

Comment

I believe these goals echo the points conveyed in many community forums and guide-lines painstakingly developed by local citizens on volunteer time, because of a strong local commitment to local quality of life. Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to a positive process and outcome of which we can all be proud, and confirmation that our state government is interested in what is best for the citizens, not just the trucking or transportation interests.

Response

Comment noted. Comments received during the EIS process are considered and addressed in the DEIS.

Letter Codes

PP0066

23-6

Comment

I am writing to you as a resident of Biltmore Forest regarding the I-26 connector proposals. I strongly support the principles outlined by the I-26 Awareness Group and the proposal put forward by the Asheville Design Center based on those principles. Highways in urban areas must be designed to relate to the cities they go through. Context Sensitive Design is now part of the vocabulary of many State DOT'S. Some do better than others in implementing CSD. CSD is in the guidelines adopted by the NCDOT. These guidelines should be followed. The impact of the I-26 connector on the future of the Asheville region will be very great. This project should be designed with sensitivity to surrounding land uses, the French Broad River, and to the economic base of the city and county. I urge the NCDOT to review the proposals being put forward by the community and to work cooperatively to make this project a success, one which will be appropriate to the special place that Asheville is.

Response

Refer to comment response 2-2.

Letter Codes

PP0071

23-7

Comment

6/9/2015

I-26 Connector

This could be accomplished by incorporating local community suggestions to reconnect the community with a local traffic connection. I understand the period for local comment will close next week. Please consider the feedback from our community before investing tax payer dollars in a solution that may look good on paper but not serve our local business and personal needs.

Response

Please refer to the purpose and need statement presented in Chapter 1 of the DEIS. The comments and concerns from local communities has been and will continue to be considered throughout the course the project.

Letter Codes

PP0072

23-8

Comment

I think it is time to get this project off top dead center. The main thing is, stop studying and GET TO WORK on the connector. I'd like to see it done in my lifetime (I'm turning 70 in April).

Response

Comment noted.

Letter Codes

PP0122

23-9

Comment

We appreciate your time and consideration in listening to the concerns of Asheville citizens. This project has tremendous potential for serving

the traffic needs of the community and all that travel through the area while also protecting the character of our town.

Response

Comment noted.

Letter Codes

PP0128

23-10

Comment

As a person who appreciates the unique beauty of my hometown and who wishes to see this expensive-but-necessary upgrading of the bridge portions of the Connector, I also STRONGLY advocate your cooperation with the Asheville Design Center and the Asheville City Council and the many, many involved citizens of this area who have produced an alternative route for the Connector that would benefit drivers (first and foremost), our heritage, our aesthetics, our economic development, and other aspects that make a city thrive.

Do the right thing. Work with these good people who want to have a DOT project that will make everyone proud!

Response

Refer to comment response 2-2.

Letter Codes

PP0140

6/9/2015

I-26 Connector

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24. Quality of Life

24-1

Comment

Please scale this project to the unique characteristics of the city. We are having a hard enough time preserving this city's beauty and character; Roadways, as necessary as they are, don't preserve beauty. Please be considerate in your decisions.

Response

Consideration is given to potential environmental impacts through the environmental impact study process and the selection a "least environmentally damaging practicable alternative" (LEDPA). Where possible, adverse project impacts will be avoided. Unavoidable project impacts, will be minimized to the extent possible and mitigated where practicable. Environmental Consequences are addressed in Chapter 4 of the DEIS.

Letter Codes

PP0009 PP0101

24-2

Comment

To preserve the character of our fine little city, I strongly urge NCDOT to revisit all proposed plans, and to choose the one which will separate the interstate traffic from local traffic.

Response

Comment noted. Prior to selection of a preferred alternative, potential impacts of the project, as document in the DEIS, and comment form agencies and public will be considered.

Letter Codes

PP0017

24-3

Comment

This project should reflect the values of the Asheville community as captured in the CCC report of September, 2000, because the Asheville community will have to live with this project for most of a lifetime. It should enhance the quality of life in Asheville.

Response

Comment noted. The project has considered the information provided in the CCC report and will include this consideration in the DEIS. Refer to Chapter 1 of the DEIS.

Letter Codes

PP0038

24-4

Comment

The scale of the project must match the character of this unique city.

Response

Comment noted.

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I-26 Connector

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Letter Codes
PP0062 PP0090

24-5

Comment

As an Asheville native, I'm excited about new ideas that have been proposed in connection with plans for I-26. The Community Coordinating Committee report of 2000 calls for separating local and Interstate traffic. Removing Interstate highway traffic from the Smoky Park Bridge would allow development of an attractive local boulevard joining Asheville and West Asheville. It would free up land for public uses other than a highway interchange. These would bring economic benefit and new amenity to what has been a bleak part of town. Greenville and Chattanooga have created delightful, pedestrian-friendly connections to their riverfronts and added public facilities such as museums and theaters to those areas, drawing tens of thousands of visitors every year. Asheville should have the opportunity to do the same. I urge the NC DOT to join in support of the wonderful possibilities your work can offer our community.

Response

Refer to comment response 24-3.

Letter Codes

PP0082

24-6

Comment

We are one of the top destinations in the country. We care about good urban design, livable scale, environmental sustainability, connectivity within our community, and the protection of local businesses and neighborhoods through thoughtful, progressive design.

Response

Over the last 12 years NCDOT has worked with the community and citizen groups in the project development process and has incorporated many of the ideas and suggestion received into the development of project alternatives.

Letter Codes

PP0087

24-7

Comment

Please do seriously consider keeping Asheville in the lead of innovative, forward moving planning. Don't let us become just another busy city. We want to be a green city, with many modes of alternative transportation, clean energy, green space, and community spirit.

Response

Refer to comment response 24-1.

Letter Codes

PP0110

27. Traffic

27-1

Comment

I can tell you from a users point of view that the stretch of highway in question, with entrances, exits on the left and right is difficult to navigate. Traffic congestion is high during a significant amount of time which adds to the reasonably high potential for accidents.

Response

Traffic and congestion is addressed in Chapters 1 and 2 of the DEIS.

Letter Codes

PP0024

27-2

Comment

As a property owner in Buncombe County I am often crossing the I-26/Patton Ave. bridge and find it alarmingly difficult to maneuver in the speeding traffic as well as quite dangerous. How unrealistic is it to expect people traveling through town on I-26 to pass through our little Patton Avenue bridge?

Response

Completion of the I-26 Connector project would remove I-26 traffic from the Smoky Park (Patton Avenue) Bridges. Chapters 1 and 2 address traffic and freeway operation.

Letter Codes

PP0036

27-3

Comment

Capacity should not be over-estimated based on past trends.

Response

Traffic capacity analysis is presented in Chapter 1 of the DEIS.

Letter Codes

PP0061

27-4

Comment

The statement should also address other issues that are related to the potential project. It is surprising that in this day there is no recognition of the problem of global warming; instead, the assumption is business as usual, with ever-increasing traffic volumes. Any urban project that is built in the future should attempt to reduce the future volumes of traffic, not simply accommodate future volumes based on past, and now unsustainable trends.

Response

Traffic capacity analysis is presented in Chapter 1 of the DEIS.

Letter Codes

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PP0061

27-5

Comment

This section should also include the need to remove Interstate traffic from the local traffic crossing the Smoky Park bridge. Under the sub-section Capacity, if local traffic were to be separated from the Interstate traffic, it is unclear whether I-240 would need additional capacity (ie: more than 4 lanes, two lanes each way). It has been shown in studies that the largest volume of traffic on the Smoky Park bridge is local, not interstate.

This statement about capacity also fails to factor in future declines in the rate of private passenger vehicle use per capita which will occur as a result of the increase of fuel costs due to anticipated reductions in the worldwide supply of oil and the necessity of humans to reduce fossil fuel consumption due to global climate change.

Response

Traffic capacity and the need for 8 lanes in Section A (I-240) of the project is presented in Chapter 1 of the DEIS. NCDOT uses a traffic forecast derived from the traffic model adopted the Asheville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Letter Codes

PP0067

27-6

Comment

I was unable to attend the May 12 2014 meeting.

With Alternate 3C, there is absolutely NO attention devoted to the actual traffic congestion problem that the city of Asheville has. The problem of short lane merging traffic from US 19/23 or future I-26E to I-240 towards Asheville or eliminating traffic issues on the Smoky Park Bridge or Jacksons curve. The local traffic is the real problem here. Is this being addressed?

Response

Thank you for taking the time to comment on the proposed project. The local traffic is definitely an issue that has been and will continue to be studied in depth by NCDOT and various consultants. Your comment, along with all others made by citizens in the area, will be reviewed and discussed as we move forward in the planning process. If you have any further questions or concerns, please let me know.

Letter Codes

PP0182

28. Design, Art, Architecture

28-1

Comment

We deserve and can find funding for a beautiful bridge. We need a design that will contribute to the beauty of Asheville for the next 100 years. The present I-240 east of the Beaucatcher cut is a travesty, as is the current mess on Smoky Park Bridge.

Response

Before a bridge design can be determined a preferred alternative alignment must first be selected through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. Bridge structure type and design can be considered during the Final EIS and final design phases of the project.

Letter Codes

PP0016

28-3

Comment

Having a bridge that accomplishes these goals as a signature bridge that makes Asheville stand out in our beautiful mountains would be such an accomplishment for our city.

Response

Refer to comment response 28-1.

Letter Codes

PP0036

28-4

Comment

We need to preserve as much of the natural beauty of the land that we can with the new design. Reunification and connectivity of community

Incorporation of community-selected design features

The local community wants/hopes for/ and strongly needs

- A design that relates to and enhances the look and feel of Asheville.

- A beautifully designed bridge that is on the par with other great cities like Chattanooga, Milwaukee, etc.

The scale of the project must match the character of this unique community.

Response

Refer to comment response 28-1.

Letter Codes

PP0022

28-5

Comment

I urge you, both as a concerned tax-paying citizen and as a design professional (architect) with 15 years of working history in the Asheville area to include the following comments in the revised documents in the Purpose and Needs Statement.

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- 1) First priority is to design a freeway interchange that separates local, east/west river-crossing traffic from interstate traffic. This can only be achieved via a (or several) new bridges to serve the new Interstate traffic as the existing Smokey Park bridge is not suited, either by design or alignment for anything but local traffic.
- 2) Reworking of local lanes to improve community connectivity to the primary urban East/West artery- Patton Ave. including accommodations for bike, pedestrian and rapid transit.
- 3) Placement and alignment of Interstate structures so as to minimize negative visual impact, for example by staying within the low-ravine property and passing UNDER Patton Ave. to tie-in with the existing low grade of I-240 south of the bridge, thereby reducing noise, pollution, and visibility of thru-traffic.
- 4) Efforts applied to the new bridge(s) design that is compatible with the scale and character of Asheville and can be admired as a scenic asset to the riverway.

Response

Refer to comment responses 1-1. Where practicable and within the scope of the project, improvements to pedestrian and bicycle facilities will be considered. Visual impacts, noise, and air quality are addressed in Section 4.1.3 of the DEIS. Also refer to comment response 28-1 which addresses bridge design.

Letter Codes

PP0066

28-6

Comment

Also, with regard to the current Smokey Park Bridge--I consider this bridge to be an eyesore doing very little to enhance the unique architectural style of our community. I would be in favor of a bridge with a unique architectural design with possibly two stacked tiers of traffic much like is found in California--one level for local traffic and the second level for Interstate traffic. This would prevent the need for local traffic to merge onto the Interstate-26. I would also like to see this bridge have a unique architectural design with a character that enhances our community like the bridges in Charleston, SC, and certainly on a much smaller scale, a bridge like the Golden Gate has done for San Francisco. I realize that the costs of such a bridge would be higher but like with any beautiful piece of unique architecture, in future years, the design would pay dividends. The Biltmore House, the Grove Arcade, and the Parkway are examples of architectural design that enhances our community.

Response

Refer to comment response 28-1.

Letter Codes

PP0073

28-7

Comment

Please build us a bridge we can be proud of.

Response

Comment noted.

Letter Codes

PP0101

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I-26 Connector

30. Safety

30-1 **Comment**

I am writing you concerning the I-26 connector that is going to be built in Asheville. I am a homeowner who lives literally blocks from the current and future connector. I would like to offer a very brief account of my transportation habits since moving to West Asheville. If the roads enabled me to, I could jog to the outer part of downtown (where my job is) in probably about ten minutes. If the roads enabled me to, I could ride my bike downtown even more quickly. Instead I am stuck to a convoluted and dangerous trek towards downtown. Or I can travel way out of my way, adding a safer but more inconvenient amount of time to my commute. Anyone who lives in Asheville and lives anywhere off of Hazel Mill Road and West Patton, and the hundreds of streets that service these, would have these same issues. There are thousands of people who are in need of a system that suits the needs of the community more completely than the current design(s). It would be unfortunate to miss an opportunity to create a positive change for this community. Whatever the final design, it must support all types of transport.

Response

Where practicable and within the scope of the project, improvements to pedestrian and bicycle facilities will be considered.

Letter Codes

PP0020

30-2 **Comment**

As a property owner in Buncombe County I am often crossing the I-26/Patton Ave. bridge and find it alarmingly difficult to maneuver in the speeding traffic as well as quite dangerous. How unrealistic is it to expect people traveling through town on I-26 to pass through our little Patton Avenue bridge?

Response

Improving safety and reducing traffic volumes on the Patton Avenue (Smoky Park) Bridges are stated purposes of the I-26 Connector project. This issue addressed in Chapters 1 and 2 of the DEIS.

Letter Codes

PP0036

30-3 **Comment**

I can tell you from a users point of view that the stretch of highway in question, with entrances, exits on the left and right is difficult to navigate. Traffic congestion is high during a significant amount of time which adds to the reasonably high potential for accidents.

Response

Comment noted. The issues of congestion and safety are addressed in Chapter 1 of the DEIS.

Letter Codes

PP0024

30-4

Comment

Most importantly, the Purpose and Needs Statement must include the separation of local and interstate traffic, which will result in eliminating the dangerous merging situations that currently exist on the Smokey Park Bridge. I advise my 2 teenage drivers and visiting guests to avoid those areas because, even when familiar with it, I have often found it a crazy and unsafe place to drive. Creating a local traffic connection will eliminate this safety issue and reunify the disconnected parts of the community.

Response

Please see response to comment 1-1.

Letter Codes

PP0062

30-5

Comment

Under the sub-section entitled Safety, there is a sentence which is unclear. It states: "Multiple segments of I-240, west of Asheville, currently have an accident rate for similar North Carolina facilities, demonstrating the need for safety improvements..." It is unclear if the statement means that the accident rate is less, the same or more than the rate on similar North Carolina facilities. If the accident rate is less or the same, then there would seem to be no need demonstrated and this sub-section should be removed from the Summary of Need.

Response

The sentence should read as follows, "Multiple segments of I-240, west of Asheville, currently have an accident rate that exceeds the critical crash rate for similar North Carolina facilities, demonstrating the need for safety improvements along this section of the facility." Please refer to Section 1.3 of the DEIS.

Letter Codes

PP0067

30-6

Comment

This letter is to voice concern about the plans for future I-26 through Asheville. I am worried primarily that an already hazardous road will be made more dangerous for me and my family and my community by further merging Interstate traffic with our already heavy local traffic. It is a truly risky proposition exiting from 19/23 into Asheville, or from 240 onto an Asheville exit already. The plan for merging all future traffic from I-26 with our local town traffic will funnel speeding cars just wanting to "get through" Asheville and on their way with those of us who live here and try to drive in a manner which will ensure our safety as we go about our daily lives. Asheville's highway and exiting systems are already so poorly laid out, without thought to future traffic growth, that compounding it with the plan for I-26 will seriously endanger all of us. As the mother of young children who are my sacred duty to protect, and who are at the mercy in our car of those who drive around us, please rethink the plans for I 26 and come up with a proposal which takes into account Asheville as a community. Thank you,

Response

Safety is an identified need for the project. Adding capacity and reducing traffic congestion are stated purposes of the I-26 Connector

project and should help to improve safety with the project study area. Please refer to Chapters 1 and 2 of the DEIS.

Letter Codes

PP0080

30-7

Comment

I believe strongly that "Purpose and Need Statement" must specifically call for separation of local and interstate traffic. I cross the Smokey Park Bridges traveling east and west on I 26 frequently and each time it's a "white knuckle" event. This is especially true when I'm traveling on I 26 West. I can only imagine the confusion and terror of the I 26 traveler encountering this connection for the first time.

I trust that you will agree to change the "Purpose and Need Statement" so that it is clear that separation of local and Interstate traffic is an urgent need in order to correct the very dangerous situation that exists on the Smokey Park Bridges today for both local and Interstate travelers.

Response

Please see the response to comment 1-1.

Letter Codes

PP0137

30-8

Comment

The reason our state and federal government keeps pushing 8 lanes of traffic is so nuclear waste can be transported to the Savannah River plant. There is a huge plan to take all of the northeast coming down Highway 81, the Midwest, coming down highway 75, and 26 is a perfect connector to go right down through South Carolina to the processing plant.

Response

Letter Codes

DP0234 PP0140

30-9

Comment

Build the I-26 Connector Project ASAP. Today would be too late for health and safety reasons.

Response

Letter Codes

PP0174

30-10

Comment

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I am concerned about increased traffic on Westwood Place due to lack of direct access to Earthfare from I-26 (coming from the South/West).

Response

Letter Codes
PP0162

32. Permitting

32-1

Comment

NCDOT is reminded that all impacts, including but not limited to, bridging, fill, excavation and clearing, to jurisdictional wetlands, streams and riparian buffers need to be included in the final impact calculations. These impacts, in addition to any construction impacts, temporary or otherwise, also need to be included as part of the 401 Water Quality Certification Application.

Response

Letter Codes
DS0008

32-2

Comment

The 401 Water Quality Certification application will need to specifically address the proposed methods for stormwater management. More specifically, stormwater shall not be permitted to discharge directly into stream or surface waters.

Response

Letter Codes
DS0008

32-3

Comment

The magnitude of impacts and streams may require an individual permit application to the Corps of Engineers and corresponding 401 Water Quality Certification. Please be advised that a 401 Water Quality Certification requires satisfactory protection of water quality to ensure that water quality standards are met and no wetland or stream uses are lost. Final permit authorization will require the submittal of a formal application by the NCDOT and written concurrence from the NCDWQ. Please be aware that any approval will be contingent on appropriate avoidance and minimization of wetland and stream impacts to the maximum extent practical, the development of an acceptable stormwater management plan, and the inclusion of appropriate mitigation plans where appropriate.

Response

Letter Codes

DS0008

32-4

Comment

If foundation test boring are necessary; it shall be noted in the document. Geotechnical work is approved under General 401 Certification Number 3494/Nationwide Permit No. 6 for Survey Activities.

Response

Letter Codes

DS0008

32-5

Comment

While the use of National Wetland Inventory (NWI) maps, NC Coastal Region Evaluation of Wetland Significance (NC-CREWS) maps and soil survey maps are useful tools, their inherent inaccuracies require that qualified personnel perform onsite wetland delineations prior to permit approval

Response

Letter Codes

DS0008

32-6

Comment

The following permits may be needed to comply with North Carolina Law: NPDES, Dredge and Fill Permit, 401 Water Quality Certification.

Response

Letter Codes

DS0010

33. Aesthetics

33-1

Comment

NCWRC encourages Implementation of the City's "smart growth" principles, protection of aesthetic amenities and greenways (existing

and proposed), and development of opportunities for public access and recreation. Context Sensitive Solution principles should be employed to compliment and benefit the local community and natural environment important to the community and region.

Response

Letter Codes

DS0009

33-2

Comment

The I-26 project has the potential to create an eyesore that will have unnecessary environmental impacts and stifle the development of the urban fabric of its area, or it can improve the livability of a city that perennially appears on lists of the best places to live in the country. Alternative 4B, with modifications presents the best opportunity to do the latter.

Response

Letter Codes

DP0228

33-3

Comment

Asheville is blessed geographically. Plan 4B allows for more pedestrian and outdoor activities in an outdoor setting graced by beautiful mountain vistas. Plan 4B allows Asheville to more fully capitalize on its scenic assets in an environmentally responsible way.

Response

Letter Codes

DP0119

33-4

Comment

Please look at increasing the size of plantings to include trees and not just small shrubs at intersections & medians.

Response

Letter Codes

DP0031

33-5

Comment

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I-26 Connector

Riverlinks efforts for increased beautification and utilization of the French Broad will be very negatively impacted by the present I-240 expansion plan. The new bridge to move along the French Broad will detract from the present openness of the area and could provide a problem residence for an increased number of homeless people.

Response

Letter Codes

DP0252

33-6

Comment

Resolution in Support of Aesthetically Pleasing Bridges Over the French Broad River for The 1-26/I-240 (petition).

Response

Letter Codes

DP0253 SC0253

33-7

Comment

The commented requests a signature bridge over the river. Pay attention to Asheville's Design center and their inspired vision.

Response

Letter Codes

DP0012

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