

**Catawba County**  
**Bridge No. 34 on SR 1404 (29<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE)**  
**over Falling Creek**  
**Federal Aid Project No. BRZ-1404(13)**  
**W.B.S. No. 42311.1.1**  
**T.I.P. No. B-5150**

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

AND

NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS

6/20/13  
DATE

For William F. Grochin  
Gregory J. Thorpe, PhD,  
Manager, Project Development & Environmental Analysis Unit

6-20-13  
DATE

For Michael V. Salyer  
John F. Sullivan, III, Division Administrator  
Federal Highway Administration

Catawba County  
Bridge No. 34 on SR 1404 (29<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE)  
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CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

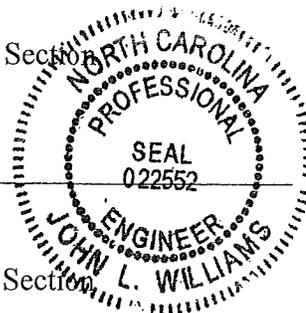
Documentation Prepared in  
Project Development and Environmental Analysis Unit By:

6-20-13  
DATE

Natalie Lockhart  
Natalie Lockhart  
Project Planning Engineer  
Bridge Project Development Section

6-20-13  
DATE

John L. Williams  
John L. Williams, PE  
Project Engineer  
Bridge Project Development Section



**PROJECT COMMITMENTS:**

**Catawba County  
Bridge No. 34 on SR 1404 (29<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE)  
Over Falling Creek  
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**Hydraulic Unit – FEMA Coordination**

The Hydraulics Unit will coordinate with the NC Floodplain Mapping Program (FMP), to determine status of project with regard to applicability of NCDOT'S Memorandum of Agreement, or approval of a Conditional Letter of Map Revision (CLOMR) and subsequent final Letter of Map Revision (LOMR).

**Division Construction-FEMA**

This project involves construction activities on or adjacent to FEMA-regulated stream(s). Therefore, the Division shall submit sealed as-built construction plans to the Hydraulics Unit upon completion of project construction, certifying that the drainage structure(s) and roadway embankment that are located within the 100-year floodplain were built as shown in the construction plans, both horizontally and vertically.

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**INTRODUCTION:** Bridge No. 34 is included in the latest approved North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Transportation Improvement Program and is eligible for the Federal-Aid Highway Bridge Program. The location is shown in Figure 1. No substantial environmental impacts are anticipated. The project is classified as a Federal “Categorical Exclusion”.

## **I. PURPOSE AND NEED STATEMENT**

NCDOT Bridge Management Unit records indicate Bridge No. 34 has a current sufficiency rating of 37.2. The rating increased from 13.1 mainly due to a crutch bent that NCDOT maintenance unit built to shore up one of the spans. The bridge is considered structurally deficient due to a structural evaluation of 2 out of 9 and functionally obsolete due to deck geometry of 2 out of 9 according to Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) standards and therefore eligible for FHWA’s Highway Bridge Program.

Bridge No. 34 was built in 1954 and is approaching the end of its useful life as the typical life expectancy of timber structures is between 40 to 50 years. Rehabilitation of a timber structure is generally practical only when a few members are damaged or prematurely deteriorated. However, past a certain degree of deterioration, timber structures become impractical to maintain and upon eligibility are programmed for replacement.

Bridge No. 34 currently carries 11,000 vehicles per day with 24,100 vehicles per day projected for the design year 2035. The posted weight limit on the bridge is to 14 tons for single vehicles and 18 tons for truck-tractor semi-trailers. Replacement of the bridge will result in safer traffic operations.

## **II. EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The project is located in northeastern Hickory (see Figure 1). Development in the area is residential in nature.

SR 1404 is classified as a local route in the Statewide Functional Classification System and it is not a National Highway System Route.

In the vicinity of the bridge, SR 1404 has a 20-foot pavement width with 2-foot grass shoulders (see Figures 3). The roadway grade is in a sag vertical curve through the project

area. The existing bridge is on a tangent. The roadway is situated approximately 18 feet above the creek bed.

Bridge No. 34 is a three-span structure that consists of timber deck on I-beams. The interior bents consist of timber caps on timber piles, with end bents consisting of timber bulkheads. The existing bridge (see Figure 3) was constructed in 1954. The overall length of the structure is 100 feet. The clear roadway width is 23 feet.

There are Duke Power lines running parallel with SR 1404 (29<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE) on the southern side of the road. Sprint phone lines appear to be above ground near the bridge but are buried on either end of the project outside of the current project limits. A sanitary sewer line runs underneath the bridge on the northern side appearing to be a 15 inch iron pipe line. A 24 inch rcp runs parallel with 5<sup>th</sup> St. Pl. NE on the eastern side on the back of the property lines adjacent to 5<sup>th</sup> St. Pl. NE. A 12 inch water line runs parallel with 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. A 12 inch water line also runs parallel with 5<sup>th</sup> St. Ext. NE as well as an 8 inch water line down 5<sup>th</sup> St. Place NE. Utility impacts are anticipated to be high.

The current traffic volume of 11,000 vehicles per day (VPD) is expected to increase to 24,100 VPD by the year 2035. The posted weight limit on this bridge is 14 tons for single vehicles and 18 tons for TTST's. The projected volume includes one percent truck-tractor semi-trailer (TTST) and three percent dual-tired vehicles (DT). The posted speed limit is 45 miles per hour in the project area. The bridge is between two school districts therefore; no school buses cross the bridge.

There were 15 accidents reported in the vicinity of Bridge No. 34 during a recent three-year period. One sideswipe opposite direction crash occurred on the bridge and five run off road-right type crashes occurred to the right side of the bridge. It should also be noted that four crashes occurred when vehicles were traveling in the westbound direction. The combination of excessive speed and the presence of the horizontal and vertical curves could be the contributors of the crashes. The remainder of these accidents was associated with the alignment or geometry of the bridge or its approach roadway.

The City of Hickory has requested bicycle and pedestrian accommodations. Since the proposed structure is a culvert and not a bridge, Roadway Design in coordination with the City of Hickory have come to agree that the proposed design of four-foot paved shoulders and four foot grass shoulders will provide adequately for the needs of both bicyclists and pedestrians, and will not preclude sidewalk construction in the future (see attached e-mail dated December 14, 2011).

### **III. ALTERNATIVES**

#### **A. Preferred Alternative**

Bridge No. 34 will be replaced on the existing alignment while traffic is maintained on-site with a runaround detour to the north (see Figure 2).

The permanent replacement structure will be a triple barrel 10-foot wide by 13-foot high reinforced concrete box culvert. The roadway grade of the new structure will be approximately the same as the existing grade.

The total project length is 750 ft. The existing roadway will be widened to a 24-foot pavement width to provide two 12-foot lanes. Eight-foot shoulders will be provided on each side; four feet of which will be paved in accordance with the current NCDOT Design Policy (The shoulder will include three additional feet where guardrail is required). The roadway will be designed as a Local Route using Sub-Regional Tier Guidelines with a 50 mile per hour design speed.

The detour alignment is located north of the existing bridge on 3-120" temporary drainage pipes. The detour length is 721 ft. Although environmental impacts are higher than a replace in-place structure with offsite detour, concerns regarding a high ADT and no feasible offsite detour are the reason why an on-site detour is preferred.

NCDOT Division 12 concurs that this is the preferred alternative.

#### **B. Alternatives Eliminated from Further Consideration**

The "do-nothing" alternative will eventually necessitate closure of the bridge. This is not acceptable due to the traffic service provided by SR 1404.

"Rehabilitation" of the old bridge is not practical due to its age and deteriorated condition. Bridge No. 34 has a fifty-five year old timber substructure has a typical life expectancy between 40 to 50 years due to the natural deterioration rate of wood. Rehabilitation of a timber structure is generally practical only when a few members are damaged or prematurely deteriorated.

An offsite detour is not feasible due to the cross section not being able to support the high ADT.

Bridge No. 34 will be replaced at the existing location with traffic being maintained on-site with a runaround detour to the north as shown by Alternative 1 in Figure 2.

NCDOT Division 12 concurs with the selection of Alternative 1 as the preferred alternative.

#### IV. ESTIMATED COSTS

The estimated costs, based on 2012 prices, are as follows:

	Alternative 1 Preferred
Structure (Culvert)	\$ 211,000
Roadway Approaches	\$ 196,000
Detour Structure and Approaches	\$ 354,000
Structure Removal	\$ 35,000
Misc. & Mob.	\$ 270,000
Eng. & Contingencies	\$ 184,000
Total Construction Cost	\$ 1,250,000
Right-of-way Costs	\$ 153,000
Right-of-way Utility Costs	\$ 281,000
Total Project Cost	\$ 1,684,000

#### V. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

##### Physical Characteristics

##### Water Resources

Water resources in the study area are part of the Catawba River basin (U.S. Geological Survey [USGS] Hydrologic Unit 03050102). Two streams were identified in the study area (Table 1). The physical characteristics of each stream are provided in Table 2.

**Table 1. Water resources in the project study area.**

Stream Name	Map ID	DWQ Index Number	Best Usage Classification
Falling Creek	Falling Creek	11-60	C
UT1 to Falling Creek	UT1 to Falling Creek	11-60	C

**Table 2. Physical characteristics of water resources in the project study area.**

Map ID	Bank Height (ft)	Bankful Width (ft)	Water Depth (in)	Channel Substrate	Velocity	Clarity
Falling Creek	6-8	15-25	12-24	Sand and gravel	Moderate	Clear
UT1 to Falling Creek	1-3	3	6-12	Sand, gravel, boulders	Moderate	Clear

There are no designated anadromous fish waters or Primary Nursery Areas present in the study area. This project is not located in a trout county. There are no designated High Quality

Waters (HQW), Outstanding Resource Waters (ORW) or water supply watersheds (WS-I or WS-II) within 1.0 mile downstream of the study area. There are no streams included in the North Carolina 2012 Final 303(d) list of impaired waters does with sedimentation and/or turbidity impairments within 1.0 mile of the project.

No benthic monitoring stations are located within one mile of the project study area. No fish surveys have been conducted on Falling Creek within one mile of the project study area.

**Biotic Resources**

Two terrestrial communities were identified in the study area: maintained/disturbed community, and mesic mixed hardwood forest.

**Surface Waters and Wetlands**

No wetlands were found in the project study area.

**Permits**

The proposed project has been designated as a Categorical Exclusion (CE) for the purposes of NEPA documentation. As a result, a Nationwide Permit 23 will likely be applicable. Other permits that may apply include a NWP No. 33 for temporary construction activities such as stream dewatering, work bridges, or temporary causeways that are often used during bridge construction or rehabilitation. The USACE holds the final discretion as to what permit will be required to authorize project construction.

In addition to the 404 permit, other required authorizations include the corresponding Section 401 Water Quality Certification (WQC) from the NCDWQ. A NCDWQ Section 401 Water Quality General certification for a Categorical Exclusion may be required prior to the issuance of a Section 404 Permit. Other required 401 certifications may include a GC 3688 for temporary construction access and dewatering.

**Federally protected species listed for Catawba County.**

Scientific Name	Common Name	Federal Status	Habitat Present	Biological Conclusion
<i>Hexastylis naniflora</i>	Dwarf flowered heartleaf	T	No	No Effect
<i>Helianthus schweinitzii</i>	Schweinitz's sunflower	E	Yes	No Effect

T - Threatened  
E - Endangered

**Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act**

The bald eagle has been delisted from the Endangered Species Act as of August 8, 2007. It is still protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. There are no large water bodies within 1 mile and 660 feet of the project study area, therefore no survey is needed.

## **VI. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

### **Section 106 Compliance Guidelines**

This project is subject to compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and implemented by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's Regulations for Compliance with Section 106, codified at Title 36 CFR Part 800. Section 106 requires Federal agencies to take into account the effect of their undertakings (federally funded, licensed, or permitted) on properties included in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places and afford the Advisory Council a reasonable opportunity to comment on such undertakings.

#### **Historic Architecture**

NCDOT – Human Environment Unit, under the provisions of a Programmatic Agreement with FHWA, NCDOT, HPO, OSA and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (effective July 1, 2009), reviewed the proposed project and determined that no surveys are required (see form dated December 14, 2009).

#### **Archaeology**

NCDOT – Human Environment Unit, under the provisions of a Programmatic Agreement with FHWA, NCDOT, HPO, OSA and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (effective July 1, 2009), reviewed the proposed project and determined that no surveys are required (see form dated May 25, 2010).

### **Community Impacts**

No adverse impact on families or communities is anticipated. Right-of-way acquisition will be limited. No relocatees are expected with implementation of the proposed alternative.

No adverse effect on public facilities or services is expected. The project is not expected to adversely affect social, economic, or religious opportunities in the area.

The project is not in conflict with any plan, existing land use, or zoning regulation. No change in land use is expected to result from the construction of the project.

The Farmland Protection Policy Act requires all federal agencies or their representatives to consider the potential impact to prime farmland of all land acquisition and construction projects. All construction will take place along existing alignment. There are soils classified as prime, unique, or having state or local importance in the vicinity of the project. Therefore, the project will involve the direct conversion of farmland acreage within these classifications. An AD 1006 form resulted in a score of 17 points out of 160 totals were calculated for this project site. Because the total site assessment score does not exceed the 60 point threshold this indicates a notable impact on protected farmland soils is not anticipated as a result of this project.

The project will not have a disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effect on any minority or low-income population.

### **Noise & Air Quality**

This project is an air quality neutral project in accordance with 40 CFR 93.126. It is not required to be included in the regional emissions analysis (if applicable) and project level CO or PM2.5 analyses are not required. This project will not result in any meaningful changes in traffic volumes, vehicle mix, location of the existing facility, or any other factor that would cause an increase in emissions impacts relative to the no-build alternative. Therefore, FHWA has determined that this project will generate minimal air quality impacts for Clean Air Act criteria pollutants and has not been linked with any special MSAT concerns. Consequently, this effort is exempt from analysis for MSATs. Any burning of vegetation shall be performed in accordance with applicable local laws and regulations of the North Carolina State Implementation Plan (SIP) for air quality compliance with 15 NCAC 2D.0520.

Noise levels may increase during project construction; however, these impacts are not expected to be substantial considering the relatively short-term nature of construction noise and the limitation of construction to daytime hours. The transmission loss characteristics of nearby natural elements and man-made structures are believed to be sufficient to moderate the effects of intrusive construction noise.

## **VII. GENERAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS**

The project is expected to have an overall positive impact. Replacement of an inadequate bridge will result in safer traffic operations.

The bridge replacement will not have an adverse effect on the quality of the human or natural environment with the use of the current North Carolina Department of Transportation standards and specifications.

The proposed project will not require right-of-way acquisition or easement from any land protected under Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966.

An examination of records at the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Division of Environmental Management, Groundwater Section and the North Carolina Department of Human Resources, Solid Waste Management Section revealed no underground storage tanks or hazardous waste sites in the project area.

Catawba County is a participant in the National Flood Insurance Program. There are no practical alternatives to crossing the floodplain area. Any shift in alignment will result in an impact area of about the same magnitude. The proposed project is not anticipated to increase the level or extent of upstream flood potential.

The Federal Highways Administration has determined that a U.S. Coast Guard Permit is not required for this project.

## VIII. COORDINATION & AGENCY COMMENTS

NCDOT has sought input from the following agencies as a part of the project development: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, NC Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, N.C. Wildlife Resource Commission, N.C. Environmental Protection Agency, N.C. Division of Parks & Recreation, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, and City of Hickory.

The **N.C. Wildlife Resource Commission** and **U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service** in standardized letters provided a request that they prefer any replacement structure to be a spanning structure.

**Response:** The current structure is a bridge built in 1954 and has a drainage area of 4.2 square miles. The reason for building a bridge was not because a culvert would not work but because the design, materials and labor were not practical in the time when this structure was built. Based on the drainage area and design discharges, a 3 @ 10 foot wide by 13 foot high reinforced concrete box culvert was determined to be adequate from a hydraulics standpoint. The culvert will be buried below the streambed and will be designed with alternating sills and low flow channel in one barrel and with a 2 foot high sill on the other barrel with floodplain benches at the entrance and outlet of the culvert to maintain normal channel flow. The culvert will be designed such that the slope, low flow velocities and low flow channel designs are consistent with the existing stream. Because culverts generally cost less, require less maintenance throughout their service life and last longer than bridges, a culvert is the preferred structure type.

The **City of Hickory** noted that the City's Sidewalk Master Plan calls for sidewalks along SR 1404, 29<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE. The City of Hickory requested that 7.5 ft. offset be included on the north side of the bridge to accommodate a future sidewalk that the town would construct.

**Response:** Requests had originally been made to include sidewalk on the north side of the bridge replacement, mainly fueled by notion the replacement structure would be a bridge. After discussing the proposed replacement structure and typical section, the City of Hickory and NCDOT agreed the four foot paved shoulders would adequately allow for pedestrian/bike passage.

The **N.C. Division of Water Quality, the Army Corps of Engineers, the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, N.C. Environmental Protection Agency, and N.C. Division of Parks & Recreation** had no special concerns for this project.

## **IX. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

A letter was sent by the Location & Surveys Unit to all property owners affected directly by this project. Property owners were invited to comment. No comments have been received to date.

A newsletter has been sent to all those living along SR 1404. No comments have been received to date.

Since this project is within the Hickory City Limits, a Citizen's Informational Workshop was determined necessary. A CIW for B-5150 in Hickory, N.C. was held at the Highland Recreation Center on 5/21/13 from 5:00 to 7:00. There were five citizens who attended and all feedback regarding the bridge project was positive. In a short conversation with Rick Patton near the end of the evening, the City is very comfortable in moving forward with the project as proposed.

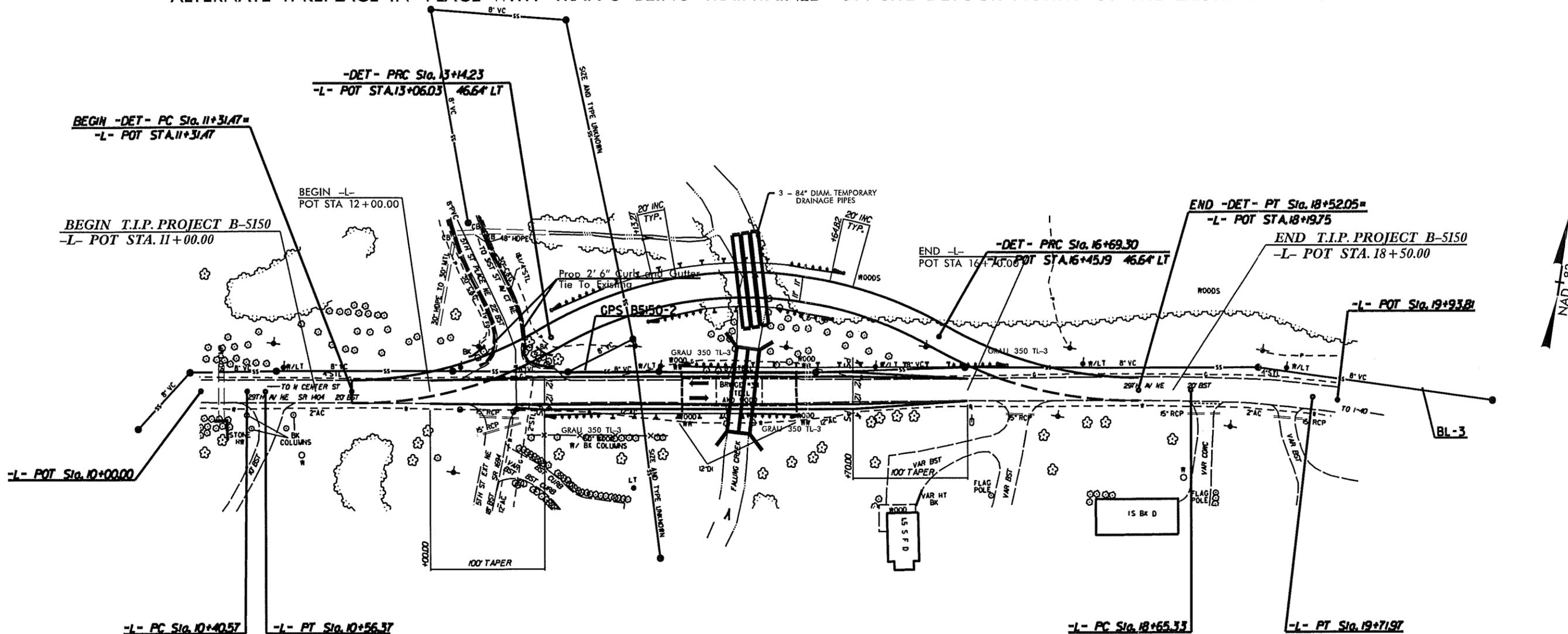
There is not substantial controversy on social, economic, or environmental grounds concerning the project.

## **X. CONCLUSION**

On the basis of the above discussion, it is concluded that no substantial adverse environmental impacts will result from implementation of the project. The project is therefore considered to be a federal "Categorical Exclusion" due to its limited scope and lack of substantial environmental consequences.



ALTERNATE 1: REPLACE IN PLACE WITH TRAFFC BEING MAINTAINED ON-SITE DETOUR NORTH OF THE EXISTING BRIDGE



NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT  
OF TRANSPORTATION  
DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS  
PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS UNIT

CATAWBA COUNTY  
REPLACE BRIDGE NO. 34 ON SR 1404  
OVER FALLING CREEK  
B-5150

FIGURE 2

**B-5150**

**Bridge No. 34 on SR 1404 (29<sup>th</sup> Ave.) over Falling Creek**



**West Approach**



**South Face of Bridge No. 34**

Figure 3  
B-5150

## Williams, John L

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**To:** Lockhart, Natalie N  
**Subject:** FW: B-5150: No Sidewalks - Paved Shoulders OK  
**Attachments:** B5150\_Rdy\_psh\_4\_RW\_Est.pdf; B5150\_Rdy\_psh\_5\_RW\_Est.pdf

**From:** Moore, Jason  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 14, 2011 10:44 AM  
**To:** [chansen@hickorync.gov](mailto:chansen@hickorync.gov); Lockhart, Natalie N; Mosher, Robert F; Rackley, Steven D  
**Cc:** Tyson, Jeanie  
**Subject:** B-5150: No Sidewalks - Paved Shoulders OK

Chuck & Others,  
I am sending this e-mail to share the details of a conversation I had today with Chuck Hansen, Hickory Public Services Director.

I explained B-5150 proposes to replace the existing bridge with a reinforced box culvert (2 @ 10' X 11'), and a typical section consisting of 12' lanes, 4' paved shoulders and 4' grass shoulders. There will be an additional 3' grass shoulder to allow for guardrail installation over the culvert and 2:1 side slopes ending at the culvert headwall. Traffic will be maintained on-site with a runaround detour to the north.

Requests had originally been made to include sidewalk on the north side of the bridge replacement, mainly fueled by notion the replacement structure would be a bridge. After discussing the proposed replacement structure and typical section, we (Chuck & I) agreed the paved shoulders would adequately allow for pedestrian/bike passage and the design will be advanced with the parameters above.

The current schedule has R/W Feb 2014 and LET Feb 2015.

*Chuck ~ We will send you preliminary plans with our request for Hydraulic recommendations probably in the Spring of 2012.*

Thanks,  
Jason

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Email correspondence to and from this sender is subject to the N.C. Public Records Law and may be disclosed to third parties.

09-11-0019

**NO SURVEY REQUIRED FORM****PROJECT INFORMATION**

Project No: B-5150 County: Catawba  
 WBS No: 42311.1.1 Document: CE  
 F.A. No: BRZ-1149(5) Funding:  State  Federal

Federal (USACE) Permit Required?  Yes  No Permit Type:

*Project Description:*

Replace Bridge No. 34 on SR 1404 over Falling Creek.

**SUMMARY OF CULTURAL RESOURCES REVIEW***Brief description of review activities, results of review, and conclusions:*

Review of HPO quad maps, relevant background reports, historic designations roster, and indexes was undertaken on December 11, 2009. Based on this review, there were no existing NR, SL, LD, DE, or SS properties in the Area of Potential Effects Catawba County GIS mapping (2009) including aerial photography and tax information revealed no structures more than 50 years old exists within the APE. Google maps "street view" confirmed the absence of historic structures/landscapes in the APE and that no properties eligible for National Register Listing were identified.

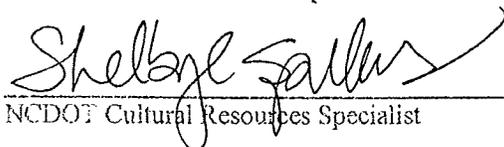
*Brief Explanation of why the available information provides a reliable basis for reasonably predicting that there are no unidentified historic properties in the APE:*

The Catawba County Tax Parcel Data is considered valid for the purposes of determining the likelihood of historic resources being present. Since all of the structures in the project area were constructed between 1990 and 2004 it is reasonable to assume that the area is part of a planned community. Aerial photographs and Google maps "street view" confirm that this is a typical late twentieth century suburban community.

**SUPPORT DOCUMENTATION**

See attached: Map and Aerial Photograph

**FINDING BY NCDOT CULTURAL RESOURCES PROFESSIONAL**NO SURVEY REQUIRED

  
 NCDOT Cultural Resources Specialist

12/14/09  
 Date

09-11-0019

**NO SURVEY REQUIRED FORM****PROJECT INFORMATION**

Project No: B-5150 County: Catawba  
 WBS No: 42311 Document: CE  
 F.A. No: Funding:  State  Federal  
 Federal (USACE) Permit Required?  Yes  No Permit Type:

Project Description: Replace Bridge No. 34 on SR 1404 over Falling Creek. No design plans available.  
 "Study Area" includes a 500-foot long and 80-foot wide corridor.

**SUMMARY OF CULTURAL RESOURCES REVIEW***Brief description of review activities, results of review, and conclusions:*

Review consisted of background research and a visual reconnaissance of the study area. The study area has been previously surveyed for archaeological sites (CH 90-E-4220-0737; Hargrove 1991). The survey identified no archaeological sites within the study area. Examination of historic maps (1886, 1902, 1938) shows the bridge and road were constructed between 1902 and 1938. Visual reconnaissance indicates the southeaster, northeastern and southwestern quadrants have low potential for archaeological sites, and the northwest quadrant has moderate potential for archaeological sites.

*Brief Explanation of why the available information provides a reliable basis for reasonably predicting that there are no unidentified historic properties in the APE:*

The project area has been previously surveyed for archaeological sites. The project will not impact any sites that are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

**SUPPORT DOCUMENTATION**

See attached:  Map(s)  Previous Survey Info  Photos  Correspondence  
 Photocopy of County Survey Notes

**FINDING BY NCDOT CULTURAL RESOURCES PROFESSIONAL**NO SURVEY REQUIRED

Caleb Smith

5/25/2010

NCDOT Cultural Resources Specialist

Date