

**Buncombe County  
Bridge No. 528 on Texas Road  
over Flat Creek  
Federal Aid Project No. BRZ-1329(6)  
W.B.S. No. 45252.1.1  
T.I.P. No. B-5196**

**CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION**

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

**FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION**

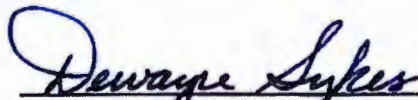
**AND**

**NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

**DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS**

Prepared By:

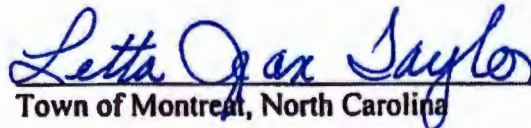
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1/7/2015  
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Town of Montreat, North Carolina

Reviewed:

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Approved:

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DATE

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Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration



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**INTRODUCTION:** Improvements to Bridge No. 528 are included in the latest approved North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) as project B-5196 and is eligible for the Federal-Aid Highway Bridge Program. The location is shown in Figure 1. No substantial environmental impacts are anticipated; therefore, the project is classified as a Federal “Categorical Exclusion.”

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

NCDOT Bridge Management Unit records indicate Bridge No. 528 has a sufficiency rating of 21.9 out of a possible 100 for a new structure. It was constructed in 1960 and has reached the end of its useful life, exhibiting a degree of deterioration that can no longer be addressed by maintenance activities; therefore, the existing bridge is currently closed to vehicular traffic due to safety concerns related to its state of deterioration. Replacement of the bridge is needed to provide safer access and mobility in the study area as well as to improve community connections. The project is needed to support event circulation and ongoing access to Montreat College and the Montreat Conference Center, a retreat and conference center around which the Town of Montreat was founded and which remains a focus of activity for the community. Additionally, the replacement would maintain safe pedestrian access across Flat Creek and between several adjacent recreation areas, supporting an existing pedestrian path that crosses the bridge.

## **II. EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The project is located within the limits of the Town of Montreat in Buncombe County, near the intersections of Texas Road with Texas Spur Road and Assembly Drive (see Figure 1). An existing bridge (Bridge No. 528) crosses Flat Creek. Land use in the project study area consists primarily of a maintained park interspersed with forestland and streams, along with residential and institutional development along surrounding roadways. Montreat College is located 1,500 feet to the northeast of the existing bridge. The Montreat Conference Center, a large facility that hosts approximately 35,000 visitors per year, is located 1,450 feet northeast of the bridge and uses Texas Road to provide additional access during events.

The area immediately surrounding the bridge contains a number of park and recreational facilities that are integral to the community, including youth during summer programs hosted by the Montreat Conference Center. Welch Field, which includes a baseball field, is owned by the Montreat Conference Center and is located immediately to the west of the bridge. East of the bridge is Robert Lake Park, a recreational resource with a variety of facilities including the Patricia Cornwell Tennis Center, the Bill Wilde Youth Center, the Updike Child Care Center, a playing field, playground, and recreational trail. The majority of this property is owned by the Montreat Conference Center; however, the Town of Montreat has two small inholding parcels in this area (see Figure 1).

Bridge No. 528 is on Texas Road, which is not classified in the Statewide Functional Classification System as it is not a state road or a National Highway System Route. The 1981 traffic volume of 150 vehicles per day (VPD) is projected to increase to 300 VPD by the year 2025. As noted above, the bridge is currently closed to vehicular traffic, but the posted speed limit in the project area is 20 miles per hour.

Bridge No. 528 is a single-span structure that consists of a timber deck on steel beams supported by timber abutments. The overall length of the structure is 27.5 feet. The clear roadway width is 19.5 feet. The bridge is currently closed to vehicular traffic due to its deteriorated condition. There are no utilities attached to the existing structure, but an existing sewer crosses Flat Creek in an aerial crossing just south of the existing bridge. Overhead power and communication lines also cross directly above the bridge.

In the vicinity of the bridge, Texas Road has a 16-foot pavement width with 2-foot unpaved shoulders (see Figures 2 and 3). The existing roadway alignment includes a poorly aligned intersection with steep gradients (Texas Road Spur) just east of the bridge, and severe curvature just west of the bridge. Texas Road intersects with Assembly Drive approximately 185 feet north of Bridge No. 528.

Assembly Drive is the primary north-south roadway through the Town of Montreat. In the vicinity of the project, it is a two-lane paved roadway with a 2-foot paved shoulder on the west side and a 4-foot paved shoulder on the east side. This wider shoulder is marked for use by bicycles. There are concrete sidewalks on the west side of Assembly Drive and a gravel pull off area on the east side of Assembly Drive immediately north of its intersection with Texas Road. Several intersections are located along Assembly Drive within a short distance. Approximately 100 feet north of the intersection of Texas Road and Assembly Drive, Tennessee Road intersects Assembly Drive. Georgia Terrace Drive intersects with Assembly Drive another 250 feet to the north.

This section of Texas Road, including Bridge No. 528, is not part of a designated bicycle route, nor is it listed in the STIP as needing incidental bicycle accommodations. Pedestrian activity in the vicinity of the bridge is heavy. Although sidewalks are not currently present on the existing bridge, a recreational trail parallels Flat Creek from Assembly Drive just north of its intersection with Texas Road Extension through Robert Lake Park and uses existing bridge #528 to cross Flat Creek. The trail is actively used by youth summer camps associated with the Montreat Conference Center, as well as by residents who access the park and its amenities year round.

### **III. ALTERNATIVES**

Multiple alternatives were considered for the project, including the no-build alternative, rehabilitation of the existing bridge, replacing the existing bridge in its current location, and constructing a new bridge on a new alignment. Options for pedestrian access across Flat Creek were also considered.

#### **A. Alternatives Eliminated From Further Consideration**

The **no-build alternative (Option A)** would include continued closure of the existing bridge. This would not be acceptable due to the traffic service provided by Texas Road, the surrounding road network, and pedestrian facilities in the project vicinity.

**Rehabilitation** of the existing bridge would not be practical due to its age and deteriorated condition. The bridge has a sufficiency rating of 21.9 out of a possible 100 for a new structure and is currently closed to vehicular traffic due to safety concerns related to its state of deterioration.

**Staged construction** is not feasible or applicable for this bridge, as the bridge is currently closed to traffic and traffic need not be maintained on the bridge during construction.

One preliminary alternative to **replace the bridge** was eliminated from further consideration.

**Option C** (New Location at Welch Field) would cross Flat Creek upstream of the existing bridge at Welch Field. This alternative was eliminated early in the planning process due to public comments regarding impacts to the Field.

## **B. Reasonable and Feasible Alternatives**

Three alternatives for replacing Bridge No. 528 were studied and are described below (see Figure 2).

**Option B** involves replacement of the existing structure along the current roadway alignment. Based on preliminary hydraulic modeling, the existing bridge would be replaced with a 1 @ 65-foot 24" cored slab bridge on a 90 degree skew. Since the proposed bridge is a tangent structure located along a curved alignment, the bridge would need to be significantly wider than the other alternate bridges. The minimum grade across the bridge would be 0.3% and vertical sags should not be located on the structure or approach slab. The minimum low chord would be set above elevation 2,594.6 feet based on preliminary hydraulic modeling. The size of the proposed bridge and the recommended roadway elevation may be adjusted (increased or decreased) to accommodate design floods as determined in the final hydraulic design. A retaining wall would be installed along the side of Texas Road to avoid impacts to the adjacent recreational field. A pedestrian sidewalk would be included on one side of the bridge.

**Option D** involves construction of a new bridge approximately 170 feet upstream of the existing bridge, intersecting Assembly Drive directly opposite Tennessee Road. The existing bridge would be retained for pedestrian use. Based on preliminary hydraulic modeling, the proposed bridge should be a 1 @ 100-foot 39" box beam bridge on a 70 degree skew. The minimum grade across the bridge should be 0.3% and vertical sags should not be located on the structure or either approach slab. The minimum grade should be set above elevation 2,600.0 feet based on preliminary hydraulic modeling. The length of the proposed bridge and the recommended roadway elevation may be adjusted (increased or decreased) to accommodate design floods as determined in the final hydraulic design.

**Option E** would be a new bridge located approximately 300 feet upstream of the existing bridge. Based on preliminary hydraulic modeling, the proposed bridge should be a 1 @ 80-foot 33" box beam bridge on a 90 degree skew. The minimum grade across the bridge should be 0.3% and vertical sags should not be located on the structure or approach slab. The minimum low chord should be set above elevation 2,605.8 feet based on preliminary hydraulic modeling. The length of the proposed bridge and the recommended roadway elevation may be adjusted (increased or decreased) to accommodate design floods as determined in the final hydraulic design.

This alignment would cross the Robert Lake Park adjacent to the Patricia Cornwell Tennis Center and in close proximity to other recreational resources at the park, including the Youth Center and playground areas. This alternative would also create a new intersection with Assembly Drive that is offset from the existing intersection of Assembly Drive and Tennessee Road.

**C. Preferred Alternative**

Bridge No. 528 will be replaced in place as shown by Option B in Figure 2. No detour would be required during construction, as the bridge is currently closed to vehicular traffic, and travelers are using alternate routes. This alternative is preferred by the Town of Montreat and was selected because it would have the lowest environmental and community impacts and would not impact adjacent recreational areas. In addition, as described in Section VI below, the replacement bridge would better reflect the character of the National Register-eligible Montreat Historic District than the current bridge with some commitments, including use of stamped and stained concrete on some surfaces and use of native plant materials to revegetate disturbed areas.

**IV. ESTIMATED COSTS**

The estimated construction cost of the project, based on 2013 prices, is as follows:

	<b>Option B</b>	<b>Option D</b>	<b>Option E</b>
Structure & Utilities	\$ 378,000	\$ 451,000	\$ 345,000
Roadway Approaches	\$ 165,000	\$ 133,000	\$ 102,000
Misc. & Mob.	\$ 135,000	\$ 128,000	\$ 97,000
<u>Eng. &amp; Contingencies</u>	<u>\$ 102,000</u>	<u>\$ 107,000</u>	<u>\$ 82,000</u>
<b>Total Construction Cost</b>	<b>\$ 780,000</b>	<b>\$ 819,000</b>	<b>\$ 626,000</b>

## V. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Natural resources in the project study area were reviewed in the field in October 2012 and documented in a Natural Resources Technical Report (NRTR) (KCI, January 2013), incorporated by reference. This section includes a summary of the existing conditions, as well as the potential environmental impacts of the alternatives.

### A. Physical Characteristics

#### Water Resources

Water resources in the study area are part of the French Broad Basin [U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Hydrologic Unit 06010105]. Two streams were identified in the study area – Flat Creek [NCDWQ Index Number 6-78-6-(4)] and an unnamed tributary (UT) to Flat Creek.

Stream Name	Map ID	Bank Height (ft)	Bankful Width (ft)	Water Depth (in)	Channel Substrate	Velocity	Clarity
Flat Creek	Flat Creek	9	20	2	Gravel/Cobble	Fast	Clear
UT to Flat Creek	SA	3	4	1	Sand/Gravel	Moderate	Clear

Flat Creek has been designated as Class C from Big Piney Branch to its confluence with Swannanoa River (NCDENR, 2006). The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) has not identified Flat Creek as a trout water, however Swannanoa River located approximately 2 miles downstream of the project site is classified as a hatchery supported trout water. There are no designated anadromous fish waters or Primary Nursery Areas (PNA) present in the study area and no designated High Quality Waters (HQW) or water supply watersheds (WS-I or WS-II) within 1.0 mile downstream of the study area. There are no benthic/or fish monitoring data available for any streams in the study area. Flat Creek is not listed on the North Carolina 2012 Draft 303(d) list of impaired waters. However, the list identifies the Swannanoa River downstream of the study area as an impaired water due to ecological/biological integrity benthos (NCDENR, 2012).

#### Floodplains/Floodways

The proposed bridge replacement would not adversely affect the floodplain and therefore, floodway modification is not required. Buncombe County is a participant in the National Flood Insurance Program. As shown in the Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) for Buncombe County (panel 0710, dated January 6, 2010), the proposed project is located in an area within the 100-year flood (Zone AE), and where base flood elevations have been determined.

### B. Biotic Resources

Terrestrial communities in the study area can be classified as maintained/disturbed, mixed hardwood, or Acidic Cove Forest (typic subtype). Detailed descriptions of these community types and species observed in the study area can be found in the NRTR.

Community	Coverage (ac)
Maintained/Disturbed	1.7
Mixed Hardwood	0.2
Acidic Cove Forest (Typic Subtype)	0.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.8</b>

## C. Jurisdictional Topics

### Surface Waters and Wetlands

As noted above, two jurisdictional streams were identified in the study area (Flat Creek and Puncheon Branch). The location of these streams is shown on Figure 1. These streams are both perennial and have been designated as cold water streams for the purposes of stream mitigation.

Based on a review of waters of the US in the office and in the field, no jurisdictional wetlands were identified within the study area.

### Permits

The proposed project has been designated as a Categorical Exclusion (CE) for the purposes of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation. As a result, a Nationwide Permit (NWP) 23 will likely be applicable. A NWP No. 33 may also apply for temporary construction activities such as stream dewatering, work bridges, or temporary causeways that are often used during bridge construction or rehabilitation.

### Federally Protected Species

As of January 14, 2014, the United States Fish and Wildlife (USFWS) lists thirteen federally-protected species for Buncombe County. However, there are no habitats for these protected species within the study area; therefore, the biological conclusion for each is No Effect.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Federal Status	Habitat Present	Biological Conclusion
<i>Glyptemys muhlenbergii</i>	Bog turtle	T(S/A)	No	Not Required
<i>Glaucomys sabrinus coloratus</i>	Carolina northern flying squirrel	E	No	No Effect
<i>Myotis grisescens</i>	Gray bat	E	No	No Effect
<i>Erimonax monachus</i>	Spotfin chub/turquoise shiner	T	No	No Effect
<i>Alasmidonta raveneliana</i>	Appalachian elktoe	E	No	No Effect
<i>Microhexura montivaga</i>	Spruce-fir moss spider	E	No	No Effect
<i>Epioblasma florentina walkeri</i>	Tan riffleshell	E	No	No Effect
<i>Solidago spithamaea</i>	Blue Ridge goldenrod	T	No	No Effect
<i>Sagittaria fasciculata</i>	Bunched arrowhead	E	No	No Effect
<i>Sarracenia rubra ssp. jonesii</i>	Mountain sweet pitcherplant	E	No	No Effect
<i>Geum radiatum</i>	Spreading avens	E	No	No Effect
<i>Spiraea virginiana</i>	Virginia spiraea	T	No	No Effect
<i>Gymnoderma lineare</i>	Rock gnome lichen	E	No	No Effect

A USFWS proposal for listing the Northern Long-eared Bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) as an endangered species was published in the Federal register in October 2013. The listing will become effective on or before April 2015. NCDOT is working closely with the USFWS to understand how this proposed listing may impact NCDOT projects. NCDOT will continue to coordinate appropriately with USFWS to determine if this project will incur effects to the Northern long-eared bat, and how to address these potential effects if necessary.

### Bald Eagle and Golden Eagle Protection Act

Habitat for the bald eagle primarily consists of mature forest in proximity to large bodies of open water for foraging. Large dominant trees are utilized for nesting sites, typically within one mile of



open water. There are no large bodies of open water within one mile of the project study area. Suitable habitat for bald eagle does not exist within the project study area.

## **VI. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

### **A. 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**

A survey of historic resources was conducted within the preliminary viewshed of the proposed options in June 2013. Findings were presented to the HPO on June 25, 2013. At this meeting, the HPO recognized a potential Montreat National Register Historic District with as-yet undetermined boundaries, and stated that a reconnaissance-level architectural survey should seek to identify potential contributing resources to this district within the visual Area of Potential Effect (APE) of the bridge project, but without surveying the remainder of the Town of Montreat. The HPO defined the APE for this project and its three build alternatives (Options B, D, and E) as an area within Montreat comprising 32 tax parcels and their associated structures.

In September 2013, TRC conducted archival research and field survey of those 32 parcels. One previously surveyed architectural resource, the Community Building (BN 0340), and 29 newly surveyed resources (including the Texas Road Bridge) were recorded, mapped, and photographed during the survey. Two properties within the survey area, 310 Texas Road and 239 Assembly Drive, contained buildings constructed in 1988 and 2009, respectively, and were not surveyed due to age. Of the 30 surveyed properties, 23 are recommended as contributing to the potential Montreat Historic District. One property, the former Community Building, is recommended as individually eligible for listing in the National Register under Criteria A and C. The existing Texas Road Bridge is not eligible as an individual resources and is not a contributing resource to the historic district. The findings of this study are documented in a Historic Structures Report and National Register Evaluation (November 2013).

There would be no direct impacts to any of the properties that contribute to the potential Montreat Historic District. Based on coordination with the HPO, a replacement bridge would better reflect the character of the historic district than the current bridge with some commitments, including use of stamped and stained concrete on some surfaces and use of native plant materials to revegetate disturbed areas.

The Preferred Alternative was determined to have no adverse effect on the Montreat Historic District with the following commitments:

- Exterior bridge rails, wing walls, and retaining wall (side facing recreational field) will be stamped and stained concrete to match the appearance of the Lookout Road bridge treatment as closely as possible.

- The side of the bridge with the pedestrian sidewalk will have a one-bar metal rail set on the parapet, with a minimum height of 42 inches. The final design of the rail will be coordinated with NCDOT Structure Design and approved by HPO.
- All plant materials needed to restore the disturbed areas will be native plants.
- Standard metal guardrail will be used.
- The final design will be provided to the HPO for review and comment.

A copy of the HPO's determination of effects dated October 28, 2014, is included in the appendix.

### **Archaeology**

An archaeological survey of a 500 by 200 foot area encompassing the three build alternatives considered (Options B, D, and E) was conducted in September 2013 (*Archaeological Survey for the Proposed Replacement of Bridge No. 528 on Texas Road over Flat Creek*, November 2013). Some historic artifacts, likely related to the former Montreat post office, general store, and other commercial buildings that once stood in the area, were found on the north side of Flat Creek. However, the site (31BN989) is ineligible for the National Register. Additionally, much of the proposed project will be constructed on fill, and construction activities will not impact any intact soils that might exist along Flat Creek beneath existing fill. Therefore, no further archaeological investigations are required.

### **B. Community Impacts**

Potential community impacts are documented in a Community Impact Assessment (November 2013). No adverse impact on families or communities is anticipated. 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. Right-of-way acquisition will be limited, and no relocatees are expected with implementation of any alternative.

As the existing bridge is closed, there is no risk of direct impact on traffic flows and no transit, school, or -S concerns should arise from construction. Reopening of the bridge will improve access and traffic flows around the Updike Child Care Center and Robert Lake Park, as well as provide additional connection via Texas Road to Montreat College and the Montreat Conference Center.

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

### **C. Section 4(f) Resources**

The Preferred Alternative would not result in any use of Section 4(f) resources. As discussed above, the study area includes privately-owned lands that are used for recreational purposes; however, these resources are part of Robert Lake Park, which is privately-owned by the Montreat Conference Center. While the Town of Montreat owns property adjacent to this park, the town's property is not considered to be part of the park. Therefore, Section 4(f) does not apply to the park. Also, as discussed above, the Texas Road Bridge is not a contributing element to the potential Montreat Historic District, and because the town owns all property associated with the construction of the

replacement bridge, there is no direct, temporary, or constructive use, and therefore Section 4(f) does not apply.

#### **D. Noise & Air Quality**

The project is located in Buncombe County, which is in compliance with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. The proposed project is located in an attainment area; therefore, 40 CFR Parts 51 and 93 are not applicable. This project is not anticipated to create any adverse effects on the air quality of this attainment area.

This project will not result in any meaningful changes in traffic volume, 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. As such 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 mobile source air toxics (MSAT) concerns. Consequently this effort is exempt from analysis for MSATs.

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. Construction of a new bridge will result in safer traffic operations and improve circulation and access in Montreat and around the Montreat Conference Center.

The replacement of Bridge No. 528 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.

No sites presently or formerly containing petroleum underground storage tanks (UST's) have been identified within the project limits.

Buncombe 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.

### **VIII. COORDINATION & AGENCY COMMENTS**

NCDOT has sought input from the following agencies as a part of the project development:

- Federal Highway Administration
- North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources State Historic Preservation Office
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources Natural Heritage Program

- North Carolina Division of Environmental Assistance and Outreach
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- North Carolina Department of Public Safety Division of Emergency Management
- Buncombe County
- Town of Montreat

A Scoping Letter for this project was distributed to these agencies, as well as other state agencies through the State Environmental Clearinghouse, on October 26, 2012. Below is a summary of comments received in response to these letters and responses to comments, if appropriate (comments which were responded to are underlined). Responses of “No Comment” were received from NC Department of Agriculture and NCDOT-Statewide Planning. Copies of all letters are included in the appendix.

The **North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources (Natural Heritage Program)** in a letter dated November 14, 2012, indicated that the State Special Concern Hellbender (*Cryptobranchus alleganiensis*) is present in Flat Creek approximately one-half mile southwest of the bridge site and could potentially be present closer to the bridge. Additionally, as drainage from the bridge site flows toward the identified Hellbender location, the Natural Heritage Program recommends that proper sedimentation controls be implemented during construction to avoid creek and species impacts. This response further noted that while much of the forested area near the bridge site is part of a large North Carolina Clean Water Management Trust Fund easement, no direct impacts are anticipated to these lands.

The **North Carolina Department of Natural Resources** (Division of Environmental Assistance and Outreach) also submitted a project review form with permit information. According to this form, the project will require a 401 Water Quality Certification and the regional office should be notified if “orphan” underground storage tanks are discovered during any excavation operation.

The North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources (**State Historic Preservation Office (HPO)**) in a letter dated November 20, 2012, indicated that no recorded archaeological sites are located within the project study area. If the replace-in-place alternative is selected, SHPO anticipates that no significant archaeological resources will be impacted and that no investigations will be needed. However, if a new location is selected, HPO would like to receive a map of the new alignment in order to evaluate potential effects on archaeological resources.<sup>1</sup>

This response also indicated that the Community Building (BN 0340), a structure of historical or architectural importance, is located in the general project area. This building was placed on the State Study List in 1980. HPO recommends that any structures over fifty (50) years of age within the area of potential effect be evaluated by a qualified architectural historian, and that the findings of this analysis be reported to HPO.<sup>2</sup>

**RESPONSE 1:** An archaeological survey of a 500 by 200 foot area encompassing the three build alternatives considered (Options B, D, and E) was conducted by TRC in September 2013 (*Archaeological Survey for the Proposed Replacement of Bridge No. 528 on Texas Road over Flat Creek*, TRC, November 2013) and submitted to HPO.

**RESPONSE 2:** As described above, a Historic Structures Report and National Register Evaluation (TRC, November 2013) was completed and submitted to HPO.

The **North Carolina Department of Crime Control and Public Safety** (Geospatial and Technology Management (GTM) Office) in a letter dated December 7, 2012, indicated that the project will cross the Special Flood Hazard Area and Floodway of Flat Creek into Swannanoa River, and a hydraulic analysis is required for any new, replacement, or modification to an existing hydraulic structure within the regulatory floodway of this area.<sup>1</sup>

This response further recommends that the project team coordinate with Mr. David Chang, NCDOT Hydraulics, to determine whether the project falls within the NC Floodplain Mapping Program MOA. Finally, the respondent noted that new or replacement structures that cause an increase in the Base Flood Elevation (BFE) require approval of a Conditional Letter of Map Revision (CLOMR) prior to construction, while those structures that do not cause an increase in the BFE would be reviewed under the MOA.<sup>2</sup>

RESPONSE 1: A preliminary hydraulic analysis was completed to determine approximate bridge characteristics; however, length of the proposed bridge and the recommended roadway elevation may be adjusted (increased or decreased) to accommodate design floods as determined in the final hydraulic design.

RESPONSE 2: The proposed bridge replacement would not adversely affect the floodplain and therefore, floodway modification is not required.

## **IX. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

A public meeting was held from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. on November 27, 2012 at the Walkup Building (300 Community Center Circle) in Montreat, North Carolina. A public notice/press release about the public meeting was published in two local newspapers, including the Asheville Citizen Times (November 14, 18, and 25) and the Mountain Xpress (November 14 and 21). In addition to the press releases, approximately 100 newsletters were mailed to property and business owners within the project study area, as well as to local officials and area stakeholders. The Town of Montreat also distributed meeting announcements and information to the Town's "Sunshine List" and via social media channels, including Facebook, Twitter, and the Town's event calendar.

The public meeting offered an opportunity for the general public to learn about the project and its objectives, review information on existing conditions and general locations for alternatives, and provide input and feedback. The workshop was held in open house format with no formal presentation or opening remarks. Materials included comment forms, informational handouts, study area maps, boards displaying the build alternatives, and large map printouts for participants to mark up. A total of 39 individuals attended the public meeting, including Town residents, local officials, and Montreat Conference Center representatives. The project team collected 14 comment forms at the meeting, while an additional 24 comments were received via email during the comment period following the public meeting.

Commenters most frequently cited a preference for Option B or Option D. Reasons provided for selecting Option B included minimization of property and environmental impacts, maintenance of access and traffic flow, use of the existing right of way, preservation of recreational resources, and perceived lower costs. Several respondents commented that although the existing design/alignment is not ideal, it has not been a traffic hazard in the past due to slow speeds and low traffic volumes.

Those expressing opposition to Option B primarily cited safety and visibility concerns with the existing alignment and intersection with Assembly Drive.

Among those selecting Option D as their preferred option, respondents indicated that this alternative would protect recreational resources, provide safer travel for vehicles and pedestrians, have limited property impacts, provide a four-way (rather than offset) intersection, and clear invasive vegetation. Those not in favor of Option D primarily cited impacts to specific properties along Texas Road and open space at the proposed replacement site.

Although Options B and D were the most frequently preferred alternatives, several respondents expressed support for Option A (No Build). These respondents cited cost concerns and traffic impacts and noted that residents have adapted to closure of the bridge. However, a greater number of respondents expressed opposition to Option A—which would leave the bridge closed indefinitely—due to safety and aesthetic concerns as well as the need to provide greater connectivity and emergency vehicle access.

No respondents indicated a preference for Option C (New Location at Welch Field), and comments about Option C most frequently addressed impacts to Welch Field as well as to specific residential properties along Texas Road. Option E was also not widely supported; however, some indicated it would be their second choice to Option D over Option B. Those who expressed opposition to Option E noted its impacts to recreational resources—including the Patricia Cromwell Tennis Center and a Town of Montreat playing field—and to specific residential properties on Texas Road.

## **X. CONCLUSION**

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

## **FIGURES**

Figure 1: B-5196 Project Study Area  
Figure 2: B-5196 Alternatives

## APPENDIX

Start of Study Letter (with distribution list)	October 26, 2012
State Environmental Clearinghouse NC Department of Public Safety	December 12, 2012 December 7, 2012
State Environmental Review Clearinghouse • State Historic Preservation Office	November 29, 2012 November 20, 2012
State Environmental Review Clearinghouse • NC Department of Environment & Natural Resources • NC Natural Heritage Program • NC DENR – Asheville Regional Office • NC Department of Agriculture • NCDOT – Statewide Planning	November 26, 2012 November 19, 2012 November 14, 2012 November 15, 2012 November 9, 2012 November 13, 2012
Concurrence Form for Assessment of Effects	October 28, 2014