

**Categorical Exclusion Action Classification Form  
I-40 Lenoir-Rhyne Blvd. Interchange Improvements  
Project I-5716**

STIP Project No. I-5716  
WBS Element 50133.1.FS1  
Federal Project No. NHPP-040-2 (166) 131

A. **Project Description:** The project area is in a highly commercial location in the southern portion of the City of Hickory, Catawba County, North Carolina, at the interchange of Interstate 40 (I-40) and Lenoir Rhyne Boulevard (exit 125). The project improvements will include:

- Construction of a loop on-ramp in the northeast quadrant of the Interstate 40 (I-40) interchange at Lenoir-Rhyne Boulevard (Exit 125);
- Lengthening the westbound I-40 acceleration taper;
- Construction of a monolithic concrete island that will prohibit left turning movements from northbound Lenoir-Rhyne Boulevard onto the existing westbound I-40 on ramp;
- Constructing a concrete monolithic center island on the existing overpass structure;
- Restriping Lenoir-Rhyne Boulevard to improve lane continuity;
- Lengthening the left turn lane on Lenoir-Rhyne Boulevard to eastbound 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue Drive;
- Widening and adding an additional right turn lane to the eastbound I-40 off-ramp to Lenoir-Rhyne Boulevard; and
- Resurfacing Lenoir-Rhyne Boulevard and portions of each on-and off-ramp throughout the project area.

Please refer to the attached project vicinity, study area, and environmental feature maps and photos Appendix A.

B. **Description of Need and Purpose:** Queuing and congestion along Lenoir Rhyne Boulevard are common during the peak hour. Hence, the need to improve traffic flow in this location. The purpose of the project is to reduce turning conflicts at on- and off-ramps, optimize lane continuity on Lenoir Rhyne Boulevard, and optimize the flow of traffic.

C. **Categorical Exclusion Action Classification:**

Type I              X              Type II            \_\_\_\_\_            Type III            \_\_\_\_\_



D. **Proposed Improvements:** (See Section A.)

E. **Special Project Information:**

- Lenoir Rhyne Boulevard had 32,000 and 30,000 AADT, north and south of the interchange, respectively in 2016.
- Based on the results of the project's Synchro/SimTraffic and FREEVAL analyses, the proposed on-ramp loop in the northeast quadrant could be expected to decrease queuing and delay along southbound Lenoir Rhyne Boulevard without significant operational impacts to I-40.
- The latest verified costs for right of way (ROW) and construction of the proposed improvements is \$280,000.00 and \$6,500,000.00, respectively.
- No bicycle or pedestrian improvements are proposed as part of the project improvements.
- A public involvement meeting was held on October 26, 2017. The proposed project improvements appeared to be generally supported by the public and City of Hickory officials.
- NCDOT Geoenvironmental Section surveyed the project area and found four underground storage tank sites and one hazardous waste site. No landfills were found. Based on the locations of the sites found, none of the proposed improvements would have potential to cause impacts.



**F. Project Impact Criteria Checklists:**

<u>Type I - Non-Ground Disturbing Action</u>		Yes	No
If the proposed improvement (described above in Sections C & D) is a Non-Ground Disturbing Type I Action for 1, 4, 5, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, &/or 29 then answer questions 1, 2, & 3. If question 3 is marked "yes," FHWA approval is required.			
1.	Is the project not consistent with the State Transportation Improvement Program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2.	Is the project located within a Historic District? If yes, FHWA coordination is required to determine the effects of the project on the district. FHWA signature (Section I of this Form) on the CE may not be required (see Question 3).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3.	Does the project include adverse effects that cannot be resolved with a Memorandum of Agreement under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act or have an adverse effect on a National Historic Landmark?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

<u>Type I &amp; II - Ground Disturbing Actions</u>		Yes	No
<b><u>FHWA APPROVAL ACTIVITIES THRESHOLD CRITERIA</u></b> (FHWA Signature Required If "Yes" Selected)			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If the proposed improvement (identified above in Sections C & D) is a: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Type I Action for #s 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, &amp;/or 30; &amp;/or</li> <li>• Type II Action</li> </ul> then answer the threshold criteria questions (below) and questions 8 - 31 for ground disturbing actions. In addition, if any of questions 1-7 are marked "yes" then the CE will require FHWA approval.			
1.	Does the project require formal consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) or National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2.	Does the project result in impacts subject to the conditions of the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGPA)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3.	Does the project generate substantial controversy or public opposition, for any reason, following appropriate public involvement?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4.	Does the project cause disproportionately high and adverse impacts relative to low-income and/or minority populations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>



5.	Does the project involve a residential or commercial displacement, or a substantial amount of right of way acquisition?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6.	Does the project require an Individual Section 4(f) approval?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7.	Does the project include adverse effects that cannot be resolved with a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) or have an adverse effect on a National Historic Landmark (NHL)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If any of questions 8 through 31 are marked "yes" then additional information will be required for those questions in Section G.			
<u>Other Considerations</u>		Yes	No
8.	Does the project result in a finding of "may affect not likely to adversely affect" or less for listed species, or designated critical habitat under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
9.	Does the project impact anadromous fish? The project area is over 200 miles from the nearest marine environment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
10.	Does the project impact waters classified as Outstanding Resource Water (ORW), High Quality Water (HQW), Water Supply Watershed Critical Areas, 303(d) listed impaired water bodies, buffer rules, or Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
11.	Does the project impact waters of the United States in any of the designated mountain trout streams?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
12.	Does the project require a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Individual Section 404 Permit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
13.	Will the project require an easement from a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) licensed facility?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
14.	Does the project include a Section 106 of the NHPA effects determination other than a no effect, including archaeological remains?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
15.	Does the project involve hazardous materials and landfills?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
16.	Does the project require work encroaching and adversely affecting a regulatory floodway or work affecting the base floodplain (100-year flood) elevations of a water course or lake, pursuant to Executive Order 11988 and 23 CFR 650 subpart A?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>



17.	Is the project in a Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA) county and substantially affects the coastal zone and/or any Area of Environmental Concern (AEC)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
18.	Does the project require a U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) permit? The project area contains no navigable waters.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
19.	Does the project involve construction activities in, across, or adjacent to a designated Wild and Scenic River present within the project area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
20.	Does the project involve Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA) resources?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
21.	Does the project impact federal lands (e.g. U.S. Forest Service (USFS), USFWS, etc.) or Tribal Lands?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
22.	Does the project involve any changes in access control?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
23.	Does the project have a permanent adverse effect on local traffic patterns or community cohesiveness?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
24.	Will maintenance of traffic cause substantial disruption?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
25.	Is the project inconsistent with the STIP or the Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO's) Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) (where applicable)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
26.	Does the project require the acquisition of lands under the protection of Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Act, the Federal Aid in Fish Restoration Act, the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), or other unique areas or special lands that were acquired in fee or easement with public-use money and have deed restrictions or covenants on the property?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
27.	Does the project involve Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) buyout properties under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
28.	Does the project include a <i>de minimis</i> or programmatic Section 4(f)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
29.	Is the project considered a Type I under the NCDOT's Noise Policy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
30.	Is there prime or important farmland soil impacted by this project as defined by the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
31.	Are there other issues that arose during the project development process that affected the project decision?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>



## G. Project Commitments

### I-40 Lenoir-Rhyne Boulevard Interchange Improvements

City of Hickory, Catawba County, NC

Federal Project No. NHPP-040-2 (166) 131

WBS No. 50133.1.FS1

TIP No. I-5716

- NCDOT Division 12
  - The City of Hickory has requested that the proposed improvements include pedestrian facilities, landscaping upgrades, and artistic features on both sides of Lenoir Rhyne Boulevard. Additional coordination with the City of Hickory is needed to determine details and costs associated with this request. A municipal agreement and cost participation will be required for these betterments prior to construction. The City will also need to maintain these betterments after construction.
  - NCDOT Division 12 will not make improvements to the private driveway of Mellow Mushroom restaurant under this project. However, the Division will engage the City of Hickory and Greater Hickory MPO about potential opportunities for future access management improvements along this corridor.
- Environmental Analysis Unit and Division 12 Construction
  - Because of the close proximity of the Dwarf-flowered heartleaf (*Hexastylis naniflora*) to the project area, further surveys of this species will be required prior to construction.
  - Construction authorization will not be requested until Endangered Species Act compliance is satisfied for the Northern long eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*).

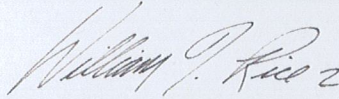


H. **Categorical Exclusion Approval**

STIP Project No.	I-5716
WBS Element	50133.1.FS1
Federal Project No.	NHPP-040-2 (166) 131

**Prepared By:**

Date: 3/9/18



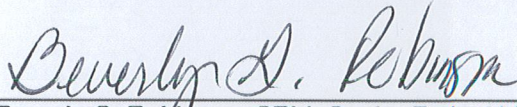
William Rice, AICP, North Carolina Planning & Environmental Lead  
A. Morton Thomas & Associates, Inc. (AMT)

**Prepared For:**

North Carolina Dept. of Transportation NCDOT Project Delivery Unit

**Reviewed By:**

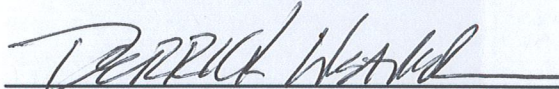
Date: 3/26/18



Beverly G. Robinson, CPM, Senior Project Manager  
NCDOT Project Management Unit

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Approved</b>	If all of the threshold questions (1 through 7) of Section F are answered "no," NCDOT approves this Categorical Exclusion.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Certified</b>	If any of the threshold questions (1 through 7) of Section F are answered "yes," NCDOT certifies this Categorical Exclusion.

3/26/18  
Date



Derrick Weaver, P.E. Project Team Lead  
NCDOT Project Management Unit – Divisions 11, 12, 13 and 14

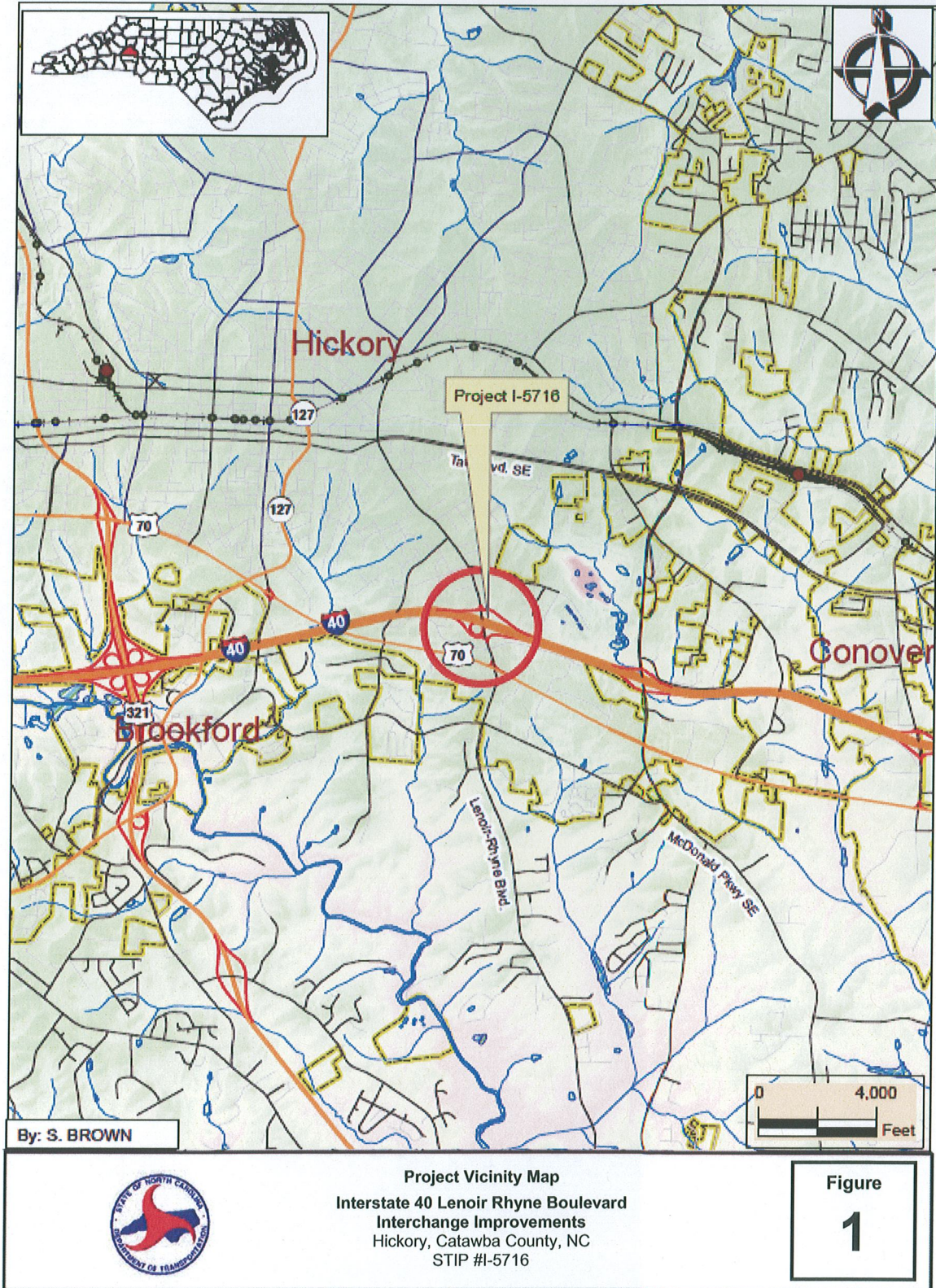
FHWA Approved: For Projects Certified by NCDOT (above), FHWA signature required.

Date

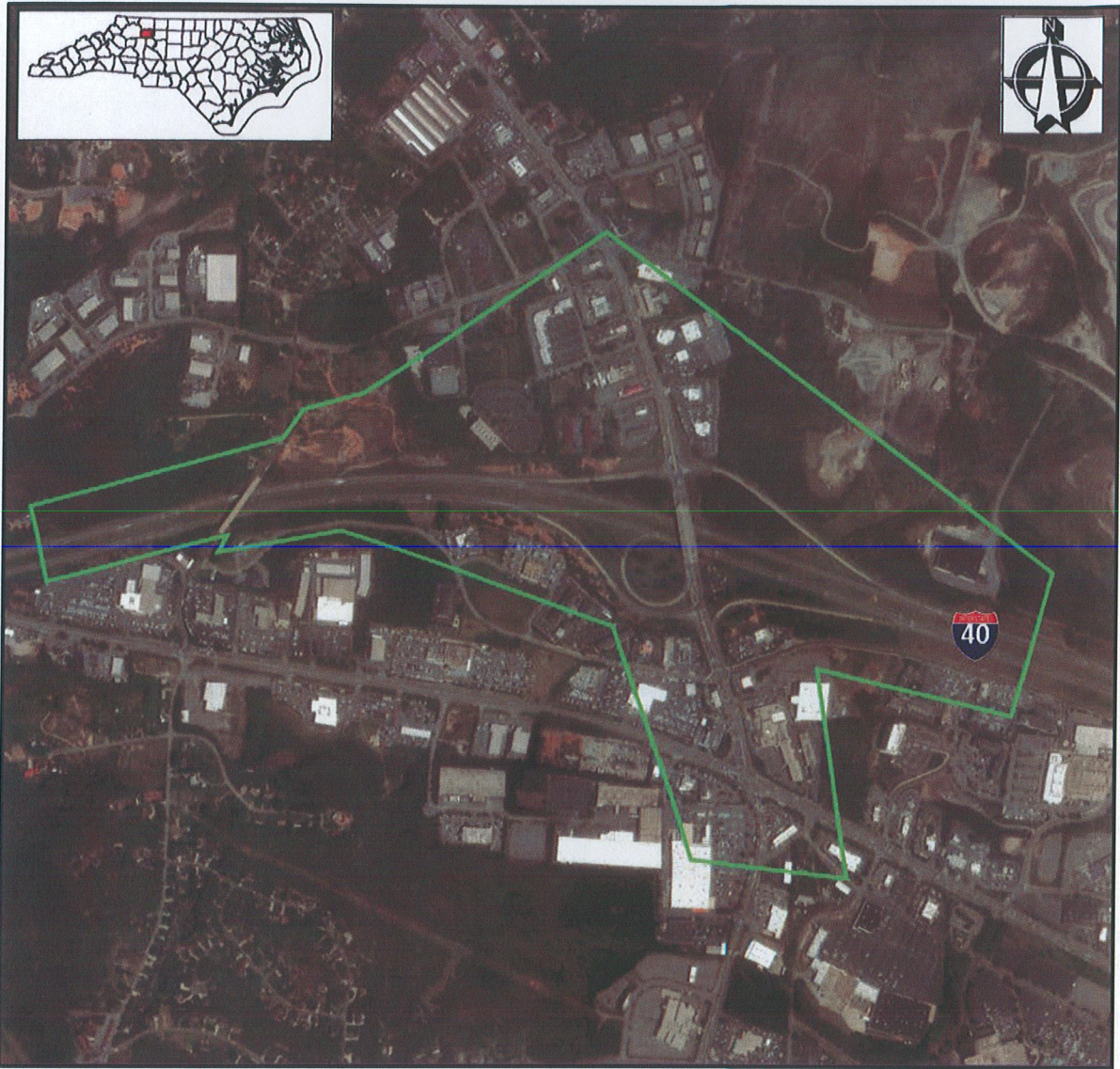
John F. Sullivan, III, PE, Division Administrator  
Federal Highway Administration



Appendix A.



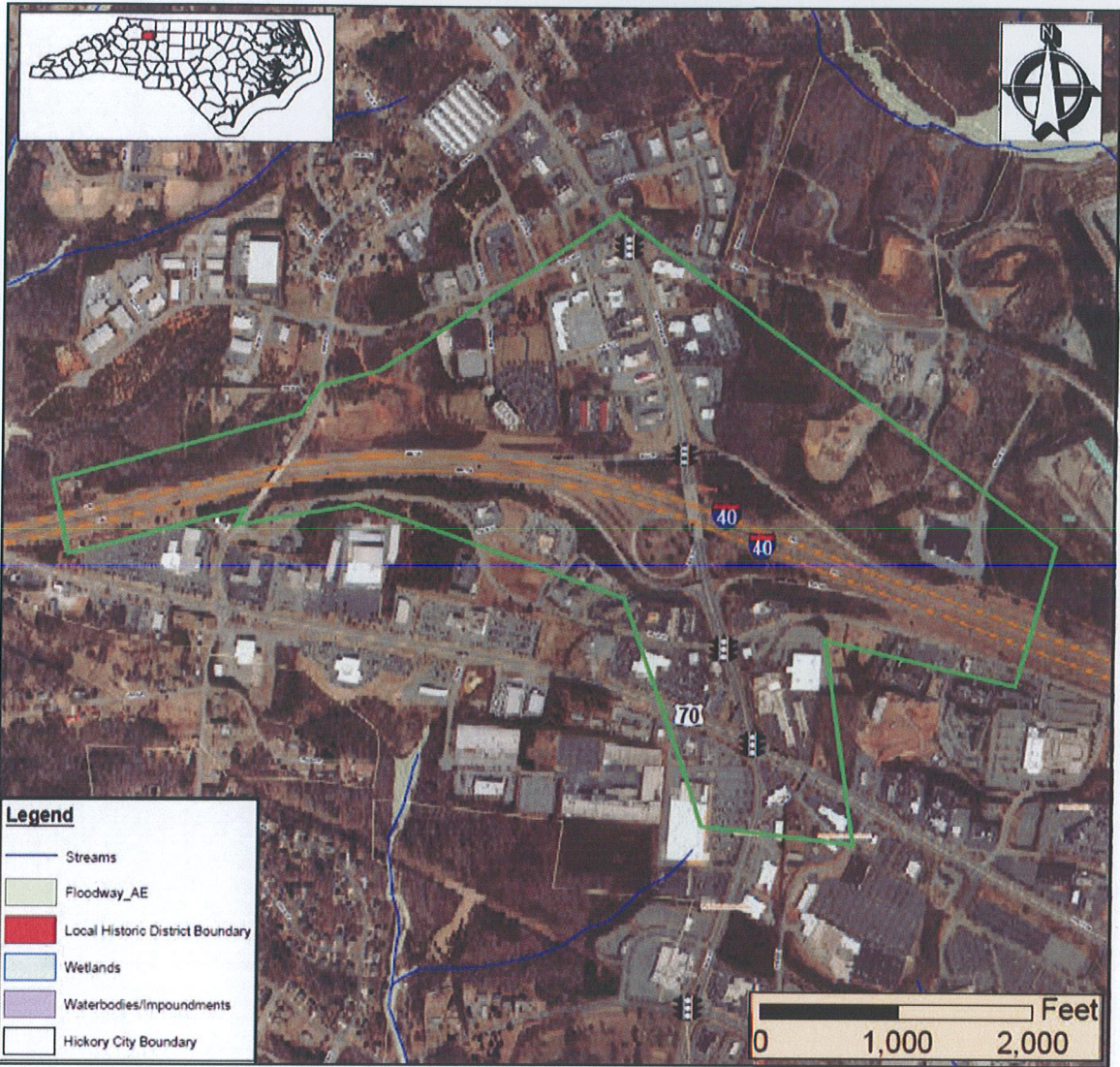




**Project Study Area Map**  
**Interstate 40 Lenoir Rhyne Boulevard Interchange**  
**Improvements**  
Hickory, Catawba County, NC  
STIP # I-5716

**Figure**  
**2**





**Project Environmental Features Map**  
**Interstate 40 Lenoir Rhyne Boulevard**  
**Interchange Improvements**  
 Hickory, Catawba County, NC  
 STIP # I-5716

**Figure**  
**3**

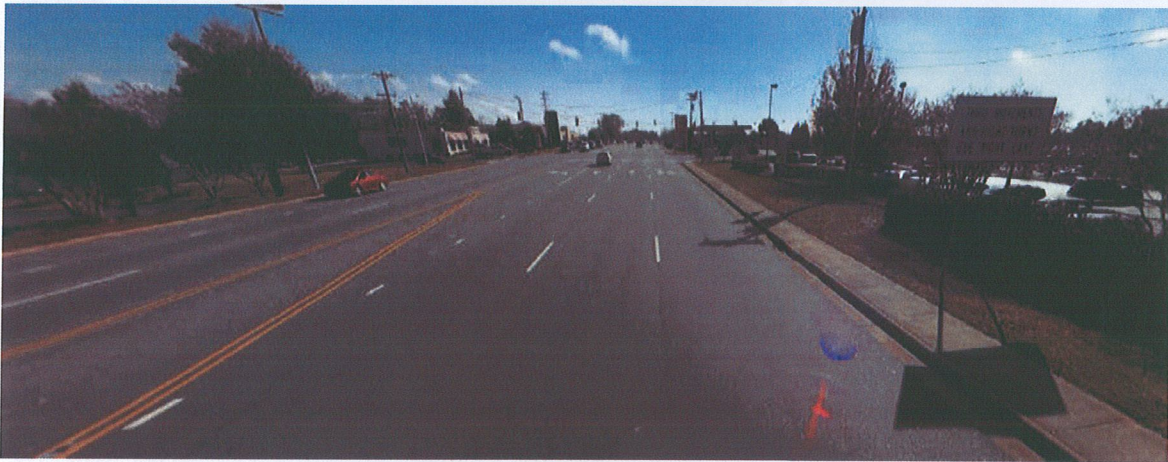


**Figure 4.** End of eastbound I-40 off-ramp at Lenoir Rhyne Blvd. looking east.



An additional right turn lane will be constructed at this location.

**Figure 5.** Southbound Lenoir Rhyne Blvd. looking south at the intersection of 13th Ave. Dr. SE.



The left turn lane will be lengthened at this location.