

1 **OFFICIAL PUBLIC HEARING TRANSCRIPT**
2 **Public Hearing Transcript**
3 **R-2559/R-3329 Monroe Connector Bypass**
4
5

6 Alright, let's go ahead and get started. We had sound troubles last night. I don't want to
7 have a repeat of that tonight. Can everyone hear me fine? I would like to welcome you all
8 to the North Carolina Department of Transportation's Public Hearing on the Monroe
9 Connector Bypass Project, also known as State Transportation Improvement Program
10 Project Numbers R-2559/R-3329. Just as a note that at one point these were two separate
11 projects, but a decision was made based on their mutual relationship and some other
12 factors to combine these projects into one.

13
14 Now, my name is Jamille Robbins. I am a Public Involvement Officer with the
15 Department of Transportation and I'll be your moderator for tonight's public hearing.
16 Before I move any further, I do want to take the time to cover some housekeeping rules
17 and ground rules. If you have a cellphone on, please turn it to silent. This is a formal
18 proceeding. We are recording it. And we don't want to interrupt that with a ringtone. Just
19 to let you know restrooms are just outside the door and down the hallway.

20
21 As far as ground rules go, I only have one rule and that is the "golden rule". I think we're
22 all adults here tonight. So, the golden rule covers everything especially for a proceeding
23 like this. This project has solicited a variety of opinions and feelings. We've got people
24 on both sides of the project, some for it, some against it. So, if we follow the golden rule,
25 we will show respect and we will get respect. If someone gets up to speak that you don't
26 agree with, just provide them with the same respect that you would like if you got up to
27 speak.

28
29 Now, I do want to make a quick note, there was a function down the hallway that was an
30 independent function. It was not sponsored, paid for, or endorsed by NCDOT.

31
32 I do want to take the time to recognize all of the NCDOT staff and consulting staff that
33 are here tonight, assisting us with this public hearing. A lot you had a chance to interact
34 with them and get your questions answered. You can recognize them by these name tags,
35 big white name tags. I'm not going to go through and introduce every staff that is here in
36 the interest of time, but I do want to acknowledge a few people. One would be our
37 Deputy Division Engineer, Mr. Scott Cole and our Assistant Division Construction
38 Engineer, Mr. Rick Baucom.

39
40 And also with NCDOT, we have NCDOT Project Manager for this project, Mrs. Jennifer
41 Harris. And assisting us tonight, we have a consulting firm Atkins and Michael Baker
42 Engineering. We have Carl Gibilaro and his staff here tonight from Atkins, who assisted
43 us with the preparation of the maps and the environmental document that we're here to
44 talk about. And also Mr. Scudder Wagg with Michael Baker Engineering, he and other
45 staff of Michael Baker are here and they assisted us with the development of the ICE or

46 the Indirect and Cumulative Effects Analysis. And we'll talk more about that in a few
47 minutes.

48

49 Alright, so let's go ahead and get started. Just to let you know we'll start with how
50 tonight is going to go. We'll start with the purpose of tonight's hearing. I'll do the project
51 overview, the history. We'll talk about litigation that has gone on and taken place on this
52 project, the recent activities that have taken place since the litigation. We'll talk about the
53 schedule and where we go from here. And then we will open it up for comments.

54

55 I want to start with the *purpose of tonight's hearing*. Simply, the purpose of tonight's
56 hearing is to make you, the public, a part of the project development process. We are here
57 to give you a brief overview of the project. Of course, the project has been around for
58 several years. The majority of the people are aware of the project, but there may be
59 people that are new to the area or are unaware and we'll do a brief overview of the
60 project. We will go over the hearing maps. Again, the hearing maps have not changed
61 since the 2009 public hearings that were held. The preferred alternative is the same from
62 what it was back then.

63

64 But the main focus of tonight's hearing is to get your input on the new environmental
65 document that was prepared as a result of the litigation. And that new document is the
66 Draft Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement. And you'll hear me say or
67 use the term EIS. That's just an abbreviation or an acronym for Environmental Impact
68 Statement. But that is the focus of tonight's hearing.

69

70 Now, copies of the maps that you've seen here tonight along with the environmental
71 document, that Draft Supplemental Final EIS have been available since November 18th at
72 the following locations. And these locations are in your handout that you received when
73 you signed in. They've also been available on the project website. Now, as a side note the
74 environmental document was published in the Federal Register on November 22nd.

75

76 As I said the purpose of tonight's hearing is to make you, the public a part of the project
77 development process. Your input in that process is critical. And you do that by having
78 your comments recorded tonight during these formal proceedings or by submitting
79 written comments. And you can send comments in to myself or Mrs. Jennifer Harris.
80 Again, our contact information is in the handout that you received. And we'll talk a little
81 about written comments a little later in the presentation.

82

83 So, *what do we do with the comments* that we receive? Well, in about six to eight weeks,
84 the project team will convene and hold what is known as a post-hearing meeting to
85 discuss all of the comments that have been received throughout the public hearing
86 process. And take those comments into consideration as the project moves forward.

87

88 But I do want to be clear that the Department of Transportation cannot just solely take
89 public comment into consideration when making decisions. We have to balance that
90 against good, sound, engineering criteria. We have to look at factors. We have to look at
91 cost. We have to look at traffic service, impacts to the natural and human environment,

92 safety, as well as some other factors. We have to do a balancing act. So, we have to take
93 all of that into consideration to make sure that we put the best product we can on the
94 ground.

95
96 Now, minutes of this meeting will be prepared and made available to the public. So, if
97 you desire a copy and send in a written comment, or send me an email or whatever, just
98 put a note that you would like a copy of the meeting minutes. And once they are
99 finalized, I will make sure that you get a copy. Also let me know how you would like to
100 receive it, whether or not you would like to receive an electronic copy via email or if you
101 would like a hard copy via snail mail.

102
103 Let's talk about the *project purpose*, the "why" of the project. Why are we building this
104 project? And this is specifically known as the *purpose and need of the project*. This is
105 essentially the cornerstone of the project development process; because all of the
106 alternatives that are evaluated throughout that process are compared and evaluated
107 against the purpose and need statement and other factors that I just talked about and also
108 to what degree does it meet the purpose and need statement.

109
110 Now, I will read this verbatim because this comes straight from the environmental
111 document. The purpose of this project is to improve mobility and capacity within the
112 project study area by providing a facility for the US 74 Corridor and near I-485 in
113 Mecklenburg County to between the towns of Wingate and Marshville in Union County
114 that allows for high-speed regional travel consistent with the designations of the North
115 Carolina Strategic Highway Corridor Program and the North Carolina Intrastate System,
116 while maintaining access to properties along existing US 74.

117
118 Now, the proposed project will be a fully controlled access toll road again from US 74
119 near I-485 in Mecklenburg County eastward to US 74 between the towns of Wingate and
120 Marshville. And the project is about 20 miles long.

121
122 Now, the preferred alternative and I won't spend a lot of time going through the *history*
123 and how we got to the preferred alternatives; all that has been covered previously. But
124 again, the preferred alternative is Detail Study Alternative D initially from the Draft
125 Environmental Impact Statement but preferred in the Final Environment Impact
126 Statement. And as I said I'll cover that in just a second.

127
128 But before I do that I'm going to talk about the "typical section". This is the "cross
129 section" of the roadway. This is basically if I had a magic Ginsu knife and cut a piece of
130 the roadway out and turned it up on its side, this is what it would look like. Again, this is
131 another word for cross section. But the top graphic is the typical section for the first
132 mile...

133
134 Audience Members: Your mic just went out.

135
136 Moderator: I tell you, it's always something isn't it.

137

138 Audience Member: Always.

139

140 Moderator: I think my battery died. Okay, technical difficulties...alright, again
141 the top graphic is the cross section basically the first mile of the project where the project
142 falls with existing US 74 basically from I-485 to just east of Stallings Road. Again, here
143 we have three 12-foot travel lanes in each direction separated by a jersey barrier. The
144 main line will be elevated and you will have one-way frontage roads on either side. They
145 will vary from two the three lanes.

146

147 At the bottom is the cross section for the majority of the project, which is our new
148 location. And that is two 12-foot travel lanes in each direction separated by grass median.

149

150 Alright, let's take a quick look at the maps. Again, the maps have not changed since 2009
151 so I'm not going to spend a lot of time on this, but I do have to cover it. The preferred
152 alternative is this green color connected to the orange and then this bluish green color
153 here. This is existing US 74. This is I-485. Here is US 601.

154

155 The alignment follows this corridor and this is the preferred alternative. I do want to point
156 out where the interchanges are on this preferred alternative. We have the first interchange
157 with existing US 74. Here we take off on new location. Here's an interchange with Indian
158 Trail-Fairview Road. The next interchange is at Unionville-Indian Trail Road. Then we
159 have an interchange at Rocky River Road; then that at US 601; then that NC 200 at
160 Morgan Mill Road. Here is Austin Chaney Road. And then you have a partial interchange
161 with Forest Hills School Road and at US 74 on the eastern end. On this map you see the
162 relationship with the preferred alternative to the other alternatives.

163

164 Alright, so we're going to back up a little bit and give you the *history of the project*. I'm
165 sure a lot of you have been involved the entire time are aware of this, but as I stated
166 before the decision was made to combine these projects into one. That was done in early
167 2007 and Federal Highway Administration issued a Notice of Intent to prepare an
168 Environmental Impact Statement for the combined projects. Well, in June of that year we
169 held our first series of public meetings where we introduced the public to the project, as
170 well as the purpose and need of the project and got input on that.

171

172 In April 2009, the Draft Environmental Impact Statement was completed and approved.
173 And in May of 2009 we held a series of public hearings presenting the 16 Detail Study
174 Alternatives that were evaluated during the project development process. During that
175 process Alternative D was the recommended alternative, which was shown to the public.

176

177 We got public comments from the public hearing. We got input from the resource
178 agencies. We did additional environmental studies and prepared a Final Environment
179 Impact Statement in May 2010, which included the preferred alternative, which again
180 was the Detail Study Alternative D from the Draft Environmental Impact Statement;
181 which is the same one I just showed you we just covered.

182

183 In August 2010, the Record of Decision was signed stating that the selected alternative
184 was the Alternative D. In November 2010, the Southern Environmental Law Center filed
185 suit on behalf of the three environmental agencies against the Federal Highway
186 Administration and NCDOT alleging that we did not comply with the requirements of the
187 National Environmental Policy Act.

188
189 In October 2011, the Federal District Court ruled in our favor. Subsequently, we awarded
190 the project to the Design-Build Team in November of that year. And the Design-Build
191 Team actually held a public meeting in December of that year. Now, backing up
192 following the ruling in our favor, the Southern Environmental Law Center filed an
193 appeal.

194
195 Well, in May 2012, the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals overturned the lower court's
196 decision. We subsequently suspended construction and right-of-way activities.

197
198 In June of that year, we filed a petition for re-hearing. We also held a public meeting to
199 update the public to let you know what was going on with the project and basically where
200 we were at that point. In June 29th of 2012, our petition for re-hearing was denied. So, on
201 July 3rd of 2012, Federal Highway Administration rescinded the Record of Decision.

202
203 Now, the full opinion of the Court of Appeals is available on that website. And you can
204 search by Monroe Connector to see the full opinion. But if you look at the last paragraph
205 it summarizes the court's ruling or finding. But what the ruling says is that the
206 Department of Transportation did not fully disclose the underlining assumptions in the
207 socioeconomic projections that we used and therefore, we did not take...we failed to take
208 a hard look at the environment consequences of the project.

209
210 So, what have we been doing for the past 18 months? Well, we've been trying to address
211 the Circuit Court's concerns. And so, we've done additional environmental studies,
212 additional field reviews, and additional analysis in preparation of the Draft Supplemental
213 Final EIS, which brings us to tonight. And the Draft Supplemental Final EIS, that's a lot
214 to say, was signed on November 8th of this year. And again, that brings us to tonight to
215 get your input on the findings of the new environmental document.

216
217 Now, topics evaluated or I guess I should more accurately say re-evaluated in the new
218 document along with the purpose and need, traffic, cultural resources, farmland impacts,
219 utilities, noise impacts, air quality, just to name a few. So, again we took a look at all of
220 that information. This is information we cover in all of our environmental documents.
221 And we went back and re-evaluated the alternatives and everything.

222
223 What we found in doing the re-evaluation was that the conclusions it reconfirmed the
224 purpose and need and it also confirmed the conclusions that were made in the Final
225 Environmental Impact Statement and one of those conclusions was the preferred
226 alternative. So, again it stayed the same.

227

228 Now, central to the litigation was the Indirect and Cumulative Effects Analysis, which is
229 what we call the ICE Analysis. The purpose of the Indirect and Cumulative Effects
230 Analysis is to understand the impacts a project will have on the environment beyond the
231 direct impacts of building the project.

232

233 So, in doing that we had to take a look at three different scenarios or situations. One, we
234 had to take a look at the existing environment again as it exists now; what is the
235 environment now. Then we have to look at what the environment will be in the future
236 without the project and that's called the "no-build" scenario. Then we take a look at the
237 environment in the future with the project and that is the "build" scenario.

238

239 Now, for most projects we conduct what is known as a Qualitative ICE Analysis, where
240 we look at the expected changes and basically the general magnitude of those changes for
241 a specific project. And that was done on this project and included in the Draft
242 Environmental Impact Statement.

243

244 Now, in talking with the resource agencies and others, a decision was made to do a more
245 in-depth analysis, which is known as a Quantitative ICE Analysis, which is a more
246 precise estimate of the potential impacts of that project. And we did that in 2010 and that
247 was included in the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

248

249 Again, this was a big issue in the litigation. So, the methods that we used and the results
250 were critical issues. So, in order to address those concerns, we went back and conducted a
251 new Quantitative ICE Analysis. And to talk about that in depth is Mr. Scudder Wagg, and
252 I'm going to turn it over to him now to cover a lot of the technical data so, just bear with
253 us. We want to make sure that we give you all of the information.

254

255 Scudder Wagg: Thank you Jamille. I want to start out by just saying that we
256 typically don't go into as much technical detail on presentations that we do on an ICE
257 like this in public hearings but because of the central nature of this issue with the
258 litigation and it being a central issue with the update to this document we wanted to go
259 through this in detail tonight so, that we can try and help you understand what we did,
260 help the public understand.

261

262 And to that end as well, I just want to note that this is a fairly detailed technical report
263 that I'm going to summarize relatively in a short presentation and so I may not be able to
264 cover all of your questions about it. If you have any questions about it I will be here after
265 the meeting. Ken Dillon who is another one of our staff members will be here. And there
266 are a number of other staff members with the white name tags who can try to answer your
267 questions afterwards.

268

269 So, precisely what are we looking at when we're talking about indirect and cumulative
270 effects? A direct effect, which is what most of the rest of the environmental document is
271 focused on is if you build this road and it requires NCDOT to take a house, that's a direct
272 impact because you have to take a house in order to build the road. And obviously, there
273 are quite a few of those in this instance.

274

275

276 An indirect effect is different. It's an affect that occurs further away from the road and
277 further away in time. So, for example if you build a road with a new interchange and a
278 bunch of new shopping centers were built that wouldn't have been built without the
279 roadway and that took away a bunch of forested land that was habitat for protected
280 species. That would be an indirect impact.

281

282 Now a cumulative effect is a little bit different. Basically, it's assessing if you have that
283 shopping center plus a bunch of other developments that might have occurred anyway. If
284 you've added that altogether and it had some sort of effect on a protected species for
285 example, that would be a cumulative effect.

286

287 So, the challenge we face in trying to assess these problems is that we're trying to
288 identify changes that are occurring potentially far away from the road. The decisions
289 behind those changes are being made by local landowners, by developers, by you know
290 people that are not NCDOT. So, we have to guess to some degree what they're going to
291 do.

292

293 And we also have to identify what sort of changes are going to happen far into the future.
294 So, we're looking at the year 2030, which is obviously a challenge because no one has a
295 perfect crystal ball.

296

297 As with any analysis like this we are looking at some specific issues that are critical to
298 this specific study area in question. And when NCDOT and others went to the EPA, to
299 the Fish and Wildlife Service, and to the public and asked what is important to study
300 about potential indirect and cumulative effects for critical issues for the protected species
301 in the study area, which we show here.

302

303 But some other particular concerns were the general loss of wildlife habitat for all
304 wildlife and the potential loss of agricultural forested lands overall. In the process of our
305 update we did working with the rest of the team complete new surveys to see if there
306 were any new populations of these species. There have been no new populations found.
307 So, that did not affect our results at all. And we are continuing to work with the Fish and
308 Wildlife Service on any and all issues related to these protected species.

309

310 So, as you can imagine studying and trying to understand what sort of changes are going
311 to occur for the long term is a challenging problem to solve. The other issue we have to
312 look at is given the problems we're looking at loss of farmland, loss of habitat and affects
313 to things like the heelsplitter. How can we analyze those? So, we analyzed them using
314 watersheds. If you've never heard that term before, a watershed is the area where any rain
315 that falls on the land drains to the same place.

316

317 So, for example, this area in brown up here is the Goose Creek Watershed, which you
318 may have heard of before, because it's a critical watershed, where it's habitat for the
319 Carolina Heelsplitter.

320 So, we divided, excuse me I should say we analyzed and looked at the watersheds in the
321 study area, which there are 18 to analyze the change in land use. So, what would happen
322 in terms of how many new homes, how many new jobs, how many new people, how
323 many new stores to understand how that development would affect the water going into
324 those streams and affecting the heelsplitter, how it would affect the loss of wildlife
325 habitat, how it would affect the loss of farmland, and so on?

326
327 And it's also useful to break the study area up because it is a very large study area. We're
328 looking at an area of about 5-miles around the project, 2002 thousand acres total. So, it
329 gives us a reasonable size to summarize the results and provide people with a reasonable
330 way to see what the impacts are.

331
332 So, the challenge is how can we say how much new development is going to occur in
333 each of these watersheds in the future. How do we figure that out? Well, we developed
334 three scenarios as Jamille said, existing, and then a future with the road, and then a future
335 without the road. And then we assess the differences between those. And an important
336 thing to note is just because there's a difference doesn't mean there's an impact. We may
337 have a small difference that doesn't actually result in any impact to a species that's
338 protected. The difference may be small enough that it doesn't actually affect things
339 substantially.

340
341 So, first existing land use, this is a picture of land use. The yellow colors that you see up
342 more in Mecklenburg County are residential development. The green colors are forested.
343 The purplish and red colors are industrial and commercial. This is relatively easy to build
344 a land use estimate because it's what's out there today. So, we can use aerial imagery and
345 we can use data from the counties by tax parcel to understand what the world looks like
346 out there today.

347
348 The challenge is okay how do we look at the future. And to estimate that at a scale of
349 those watersheds is very challenging because a number of different government agencies
350 and organizations developed forecasts and projections of what how many jobs or how
351 many people are going to be say in Union County or Mecklenburg County in 2030. The
352 NC State Data Center, which is actually an official state agency, they do that. But they
353 only do it for the entire county.

354
355 So, how do we figure out how many people will be just in one watershed? Well, in most
356 regions, and Charlotte is one of them, the only organization that gives you an estimate of
357 the future of people and jobs at a scale smaller than the county is a Metropolitan Planning
358 Organization or MPO. And so, we work with the MPO to get their data and to assess their
359 data to see if it works and what would make the most sense to use to estimate growth.

360
361 So, what are MPO projections? The MPO develops estimates of people and jobs by zone.
362 They call them Traffic Analysis Zones. For 11 counties across the entire Charlotte
363 Region, including parts of North and South Carolina, they divided into zones. So, you can
364 see on this map for example, this is one zone right here, roughly approximately 2900

365 zones across that entire study area that they work with. And you can see in blue, our
366 study area we have about 383 of their zones in our study area.

367

368 So, they have a lot more zones than we have watersheds, which is useful for us because
369 as you can imagine all of these estimates have a certain level of uncertainty to them.
370 Now, what's actually in there? Well, they give us information of what's there now. So,
371 this is an example zone, Zone 9082, which is actually right here at the intersection of US
372 74 and US 601. And their estimate of population in 2010 is 1,006 people and the estimate
373 number of jobs is 344. And they have an estimate for 2030, a population of 1,041 and
374 employment of 647. So, not much change in population, a bigger change in employment
375 here.

376

377 So, with this data we can start to estimate about how many people about how many jobs
378 will there be in all these different watersheds. And from that we can start to estimate how
379 much development is going to be needed for all these new people and jobs.

380

381 So, the question is what picture is this painting? Is this picture painting a picture of the
382 world what's going to be if we build the road or is it a picture of what the world's going
383 to be if we don't build the road? So, we went through a pretty detailed process of
384 assessing the projections, looking at it from about five different angles.

385

386 The first thing we did is we worked with the MPO staff in detailed to understand all of
387 the different pieces of the puzzle that went into how those numbers were developed. And
388 as you can see the numbers we used were the most recently adopted numbers that were
389 developed and completed in 2010 by the MPO.

390

391 But the process that went into developing those started in 2003. So, it's about a 7 year
392 process. And we assessed all the different assumptions and methods that went into those
393 numbers. And when we did that we found of the three big pieces of the puzzle that they
394 used. The first two what they called the LUSAM Model, which they used for their most
395 recent updates and their "top-down" control total process, which they used in 2003 at the
396 very beginning of their process. Those two pieces had no influence whatsoever on the
397 project, from the roadway or the Monroe Connector Bypass.

398

399 The "bottom-up" projection developments that they used in 2004, we found may have
400 been influenced by the Monroe Connector Bypass. And what they used a "travel time to
401 employment" factor, which if you are familiar with the litigation, you might have heard.
402 It was one piece of the puzzle that they used to develop those "bottom-up" projections
403 and so I'm going to get a little more detailed on this because again it was pretty central to
404 the litigation and pretty essential to understanding the update.

405

406 They were trying to find out how accessible any place in their entire study area was to a
407 job. So, they estimated the travel time from everywhere in their study area to every
408 employment center that they had. So, on this map you see these red blobs, these were the
409 employment centers that they were calculating travel times to. And this map is actually
410 showing the original travel time results that they had from their original model.

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So, in this particular travel time analysis they were using, if you lived in say Stallings, Hemby Bridge area over here, it was calculating your travel time to Matthews. Whereas if you lived in Wingate, it was calculating your travel time to this industrial employment center here on the east side of Monroe, and so on and so on around the study area.

Now, you can see if you look closely in their results this area right here and we've got the proposed project shown over top there's this little river of green between Hemby Bridge and US 601 and that suggest that the project was affecting the travel time results there because the travel times are better. But if you look further east, you don't see the same sort of river of green following the roadway, which suggest in that at least in that part of the study area the project wasn't affecting travel time.

So, seeing this it looked like the project didn't affect the results significantly, but we wanted to be absolutely sure. So, NCDOT worked with the original researcher from UNC Charlotte who did all of this work in 2004. And he went back working with the MPO Staff to take project out of his model entirely, rerun all of his numbers again, and compare the results. And when he did that he showed that there was no difference whatsoever if you took the project out of his travel time model. So, we concluded from that the project had no influence on his process. Even though they had it in here, it didn't actually affect the final results at all.

So, the conclusion then was that these projections, assumptions, and methods that went into their development weren't affected by the project. But we want to look a little more closely. So, we looked at a couple of other things. We looked at how is the pattern of development look in general. And so we looked at what does the actual numbers say. This is a population and household density map of what these projections say, how many people will be in different parts of our study area in the future. So, you can see we have US 74 here. This is the Wingate area. This is Monroe. This is the Matthews area.

So, you can kind of see if we actually laid the proposed project over top, the densities along that corridor are not substantially different than densities to the south of US 74 on the other side, so there's not a pattern that suggested that there were higher levels of development along the corridor, which indicated to us that they were not influenced by the project. We also talked to the MPO Staff about everything that went into their projections. And they all agreed that there was not an influence from the project in their projections.

Lastly, let's go back a little bit. Lastly, we also looked at a couple of other things. We talked to other researchers; one in particular who had worked with the same data to try and build a scenario to create a scenario of the future with the project. And he used the MPO data. And when he did that he actually adjusted the data because in particular putting more people and jobs along the corridor out at central and eastern Union Counties; which suggest again that these projections was not influenced by the project.

456 So, after all that assessment from five different angles, we looked at it and determined
457 that the MPO projections were good data. They were useful data that was the best that we
458 could use to do an estimate of land use in the study area. And that they best reflected a
459 situation without the roadway, a no-build scenario.

460
461 And we took the information about the number of people and jobs and then working with
462 local information from planners, from local planning documents converted those
463 additional people, additional jobs into acres of development. How many more actual
464 acres of housing and development you get and created a no-build scenario.

465
466 And then we looked at what are the factors that would change growth in the future if you
467 did build the road. So, the first piece is the no-build results. So, if you compare our no-
468 build results by watershed to our existing results you see this is the percentage change in
469 developed land. This is the percentage change in agricultural land for each watershed.
470 And in green here is the percentage change for forested land for each watershed.

471
472 And you can see for each watershed you're having some increase in development,
473 whether it's residential or commercial or whatnot. And because of that in every
474 watershed you're seeing some decrease, sometimes small sometimes large, in agricultural
475 land or forested land because that's pretty much all of the undeveloped land that's out
476 there.

477
478 You see the biggest increases though generally occurring in western and towards central
479 Union County suggesting that obviously a lot of people want to get to major job centers
480 in Charlotte and so those are the areas that are going to see the largest increase in
481 developments looking out to 2030. So, once we had our results there we had to assess
482 what the situation is going to be like if we do build the project. What's the land use going
483 to look like?

484
485 We used basically four different methods to look at that question. We did what we call
486 an accessibility analysis. So how much easier would it be to get to the I-485 Interchange,
487 if you built this road? When we talked to local planners and we talked to others. They all
488 said that getting to I-485 was the central or the main thing that people looked towards as
489 the main improvement. Because once you got there you could go up to UNC Charlotte,
490 you could go over to Ballantyne, or you could just keep going into downtown Charlotte.

491
492 So, it was access to that point that was really most critical for a lot of people in defining
493 the benefits of this project. So, we did a simplified travel time analysis to see mostly to
494 gauge which parts of the study area are going to see the biggest improvements of travel
495 time. So, this map shows, this is US 601 from down. This is existing US 74 and this is the
496 Wingate area. That's the Monroe area. That's the Matthews area; and the darker the color
497 the greater the improvement in travel time if you built the road.

498
499 Now, this is a relatively simplified analysis so the actual, the specific number of minutes
500 saved is not as important as the areas that see the benefits. And as you can see, it's really
501 most of the areas east of US 601 and north of US 74 that see a lot of the benefit. So, that

502 suggested to us that those are the areas that are most likely to see induced growth or
503 growth that's going to be caused by building the project.

504

505 We also did two other important things. We looked at what we looked at called "scenario
506 writing approach", which is using information from interviews with local planners about
507 what did they think will happen to specific interchanges or specific areas if we do build
508 the road. Looking at planning documents like the updated Union County Comprehensive
509 Plan, the Wingate-Marshville Economic Development Plan. And then also a build-out
510 analysis, which is effectively looking at what is the capacity or how much undeveloped
511 land is out there that could be built on. And in both of those analyses combined showed
512 that you have the most capacity for growth and the most desire among local governments
513 for growth in central and eastern Union Counties.

514

515 You can see for example the future land use plan here for Union County, this is the
516 Monroe area. This is the Wingate area. The Marshville area. And, you know, they have a
517 large block here in that central to eastern part of the county where they expect to see
518 more development, residential in this case with the roadway. We also used what's called
519 a Parker Analysis which is named for a researcher from UNC Charlotte, which is using a
520 combination of roadway volume, the distance to the nearest town, the availability of
521 water and sewer and so on to give us a rough idea of what kind of commercial
522 development is viable at different interchanges. So, this is mostly just about getting a
523 rough idea of that type of development.

524

525 So, we combined this with all of the other information we got to development an estimate
526 of induced road or how much more growth can you expect if you do build a road. In
527 total, the results showed you could expect about 2,100 acres of additional growth. This is
528 over and above the fact that the roadway itself actually requires 1,200 acres. So, it's
529 important to point out that direct impact. Our focus though is just on the indirect impact
530 which is 2,100 acres. Of that 2,100 the most we expect to be additional residential
531 development, about 1,800 acres which would result in approximately 4,900 additional
532 households.

533

534 Again, that's a rough estimate. We also would expect about 300 acres of additional
535 commercial and 100 acres of additional industrial development. Now, none of these are
536 necessarily small numbers but when we compare these results to the overall study area,
537 when we compare them to the amount of growth that is expected to occur. In the no-build
538 scenario, these are relatively marginal and modest additions. And that's what I mean
539 when I say that thus having a difference doesn't mean necessarily have an impact.

540

541 If we look at the results of the build compared to the no-build, you see there are a couple
542 of watersheds affected. You have Crooked Creek, Stewarts Creek and Rays Fork
543 Watersheds. All three have small, relatively small percentage increases in development.
544 You see somewhat larger increases in two of the watersheds for Richardson Creek and
545 then for Salem Creek as well. Now, again, these are not necessarily small changes but in
546 the context of the overall change that's expected to occur with no-build it's relatively
547 modest.

548

549 But more importantly when we look at the actual affects the impact results are, number
550 one, the induced growth is generally concentrated in eastern Union County. The indirect
551 farmland and forested land losses are fairly marginal compared to what you are seeing in
552 context to the overall study area and with the no-build road. But also important for the
553 protected species, none of them aren't likely to be impacted by the project.

554

555 And if you look at those specifically, the Carolina Heelsplitter is only found in two
556 watersheds in our study area, Goose Creek and Sixmile Creek. And neither of those are
557 expected to see any induced growth because of their distance from the project and from
558 their distance from benefits of the project.

559

560 So, we've concluded that they may be affected because there's always a little bit of
561 uncertainty, but it's not likely to adversely affect the species. For the three other plant
562 species; for the Sunflower, there are some populations relatively close to the actual
563 project. And so, there's a possibility that they may be affected but it's not likely to be
564 adversely affected because of some protections that are in place. And then for the
565 coneflower and the sumac they're not going to be affect due to their location.

566

567 So, those were our general conclusions. Again, this was a pretty short summary of
568 everything that went into our analysis and our report. I encourage you if there is anything
569 that you have more questions about, we'll be available afterward. I will be towards the
570 back of the room if you want to come ask any questions we haven't answer because the
571 comment period really won't go specifically on direct comments. So, I will be happy to
572 take any questions one on one afterwards, if you have any of those. Now, Jamille will
573 give you a little more detail about the other aspects.

574

575 Moderator: Thank you Scudder. Is this working again? Can you hear me?

576

577 Audience Members: Yes.

578

579 Moderator: Scudder, I appreciate that. That was a very detailed presentation. I
580 hope all of you got that. That was a lot of information he covered.

581

582 Scudder Wagg: Sorry, I used all your time (*inaudible*).

583

584 Moderator: You messed me up. Let's talk about the *schedule*. Where we go
585 from here again, we are taking comments through January 6th of 2014. Again, I talked
586 about the post-hearing meeting. We will review all of those comments and incorporate
587 those into the project development process as we move forward. But we do anticipate
588 completing a combined Final Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement with a
589 Record of Decision in the spring of 2014. Now, after that, we don't have a specific
590 timetable but construction and right-of-way activities could resume sometime after the
591 environmental document is signed.

592

593 I just want to touch on the **Right-of-Way Process** real briefly. Once final decisions are
594 made regarding the final design of the project, limits of the project will be staked in the
595 ground. If you are an affected property owner, then our Right-A-Way Agents will arrange
596 a meeting with you to explain the project to you, your rights as property owner, how the
597 project affects you. And if permanent right-of-way is required, then an appraisal will be
598 done on your property and the monetary compensation will be offered. That will be based
599 on the property value at its highest and best use.

600
601 Alright now, during this process, the Department of Transportation must:

- 602 • Treat all owners and tenants equally.
- 603 • We must pay just compensation in exchange for property rights.
- 604 • We must fully explain the homeowners rights and;
- 605 • We must provide relocation advisory assistance.

606
607 That is if you home or business, not just your property, but your home or business has to
608 be acquired as a result of the project then we have additional assistance in the form of
609 advice and/or monetary compensation available to you. And we do have pamphlets that
610 summarize the process both the general right-of-way process as well as the relocation
611 process at the sign in table. So, if you didn't get a copy and you are interested and think
612 that you may be affected, pick up a copy before you leave.

613
614 And real quickly, I've kind of talked about comments already. Again, written comments
615 carry the same weight as verbal comments. We don't penalize people that aren't as
616 comfortable speaking in front of a crowd, but they want to get their voices heard so, again
617 written comments carry the same weight as verbal. We have provided a **comment sheet**
618 for you in the handout that you have. Again, you can send in comments to myself and
619 Jennifer and to the project team. All of that information is in there. You can send it via
620 email. You can send comments in on your own stationary. It doesn't matter. But
621 whatever you do, please make your voices heard and send us something. Let us know
622 what you think about the project, whether you hate it or not. But do let us know your
623 thoughts.

624
625 There's also a **Title VI Form** that you were given or should have been given. That is a
626 completely voluntary form. We would like for you to fill that out. It is an anonymous
627 form to but it does give us some demographic information of people attending our public
628 meetings. And we hope to use that in the future to better serve you. Again, we are taking
629 comments through January 6th.

630
631 Again, this is my contact information and Jennifer's contact information. The project
632 website has a general project email that you can send comments too, which is the
633 Monroe@ncdot.gov. There's a general project hotline. There's a right-of-way team email
634 and there's a Right-of-Way Office number. So, you have a lot of ways to contact us and
635 get comments into us.

636
637 Alright, now for the purpose of tonight's hearing is to get your comments. Now, I do
638 want to let everyone know that in the interest of time, please keep your comments to 3

639 minutes. And we have several people signed up to speak. Now, if you run over the 3
640 minutes, I will ask that you sit down and once we've gone through that list, you can come
641 back up to speak and complete your thoughts. We'll also open it up to anyone who has
642 not signed up to speak, but may have decided they wanted to make a comment.

643

644 Alright, when you come up, please state your name and address. That is your complete
645 address. So, please state your name and where you live and the name of the city as well.
646 Depending on which row, just come up to the mic. Alright, we'll start with Mrs. Karen
647 Thomas.

648

649 Karen Thomas: Jamille, can you put the slide back up there first showing
650 the purpose of the road please before I start? In the meantime, my name is Karen
651 Thomas. I'm a lifelong and that means 58 year resident of Union County. I have property
652 in this right-of-way path. I'm going to turn around and face the people. I don't like
653 looking the other way because I want to look my people straight in the eye.

654

655 I have property in this right-of-way. It's a family farm. We first heard about this project
656 in 1990. 1990 is when we first heard about this job. I was 34 years old. That's 24 years of
657 my life I'm not getting back.

658

659 Before we start, I'm going to look back at this purpose because this really surprised me;
660 because in all of the years, I never really saw this purpose written out before. I live in
661 Wingate. I never heard this purpose of this job described before as to get commuters from
662 Wingate and Marshville up to the Charlotte area. Has anybody that has been planning this
663 road ever driven that commute?

664

665 For 30 years, I commuted from Wingate to Charlotte. There were probably a half a dozen
666 of us commuting; \$1,000,000,000 for a road, yet for a handful of people. How many
667 people live out in the Wingate and Marshville area? And you're justifying the road for a
668 handful of us? I was one of them. I'm being displaced. So, you're building a road to get
669 commuters in and you've knocked out one of the commuters in the process. It makes no
670 sense.

671

672 One other thing, the guy that spoke, I don't know where he went. He pointed out that the
673 Wingate and Marshville Economic Development Plan, the amount of growth that was
674 projected. That is a fairly high amount of growth that they're projecting in the next 20 or
675 30 years. Well, guess what, I've read it. They're basing that growth on the bypass being
676 in place. In fact, that document says the bypass is necessary for this road. So, if the road
677 doesn't happen, they don't think the growth is going to be there.

678

679 So, why? Why? I'm sorry all of these things are surprising to me. After following this
680 closely for 24 years, I keep finding surprises, things that just keep popping up. I don't
681 know. That's just mindboggling.

682

683 I'm an engineer. I commuted to Charlotte for 30 years. I don't know how many other
684 people were commuting at the time. How many people live in the eastern part of Union

685 County, 5,000, but how many total of us, 2,500? And you want to spend \$1,000,000,000
686 on a road when the majority of us are farmers, retirees, school teachers teaching at the
687 local schools. Many people, nurses driving into Union Memorial are farmers, people
688 working at the poultry plant in Marshville, why do you need a road to get people from
689 Wingate and Marshville into Charlotte? It doesn't make sense.

690

691 Audience Member: Think about the construction and vehicle traffic of trucks
692 going to the coast to get to the western side of the (*inaudible*).

693

694 Karen Thomas: Has the state...I think somebody else is going to bring that
695 up, but how many trucks are actually going through Union County that are not local? No,
696 I'm asking that come through. The drive out this morning, my daughter just had a baby. I
697 drove in from Southern Pines just this very morning. I drove in took US 1 down to
698 Rockingham and took US 74 in to Wingate. Most of the time looking in my rear view
699 mirror and ahead of me, I could see no more than 4 or 5 vehicles. If there's that much
700 traffic...if there's that much traffic out there, where is it?

701

702 Now, if you're talking about from Monroe into Charlotte, it's a totally different issue.
703 There's real traffic there. There are serious problems. North Carolina DOT has paid for
704 studies. Stantec is one of them that have given recommendations that would be \$50M,
705 \$20M, certainly less than \$100M to improve the traffic.

706

707 Audience Member: 3 minutes gone.

708

709 Karen Thomas: It's crazy. It's just crazy. It bothers me.

710

711 Moderator: Thank you Mss. Thomas. Next we have Cary Thomas.

712

713 Cary Thomas: Hello, my name is Cary Thomas. I live just outside of Wingate.
714 One of the things that struck me during the presentation, when we were going through
715 everything, is talking to some people in the other room over here, they're talking about
716 the need for the bypass. There is very little traffic on the eastern end. Most of the traffic is
717 in Monroe just like all of the development that Union County has seen is been primarily
718 from Monroe towards Charlotte because of the access that people want to drive to
719 Charlotte have to the western side of Union County.

720

721 It strikes me that the bypass is not a true bypass because there's not a lot of traffic going
722 out on the eastern side. Its primary focus...its primary purpose is going to be to further
723 increase development, primarily residential development.

724

725 Union County Schools just sued the Union County Government for \$91M. They won the
726 settlement. More residential growth that this is going to open up in eastern and northern
727 sides of the county to allow people to come out and live there and get into Charlotte very
728 quickly. And that's basically the purpose of it.

729

730 Tax rates, residential tax rates in the county are already going to go up because of the
731 school settlement and more development is going to drive up the tax rates further and
732 further. You know if you don't believe that there's development getting ready to happen,
733 just go try to find a chunk of land like we have, where we've got to move now and try to
734 get some land for some horses we have.

735

736 Most of the undeveloped land in the county on the northern and eastern sides now there's
737 been purchased by developers; waiting for this road to be put in place so they can make a
738 killing building housing developments just like they have for years on the western side of
739 the county, closer to Charlotte. So, the road is going to be great for development. It's
740 going to increase everybody's property taxes. We're going to need more water, more
741 sewer, and more schools.

742

743 And that appears to me since we don't need it as a bypass to get people around the area,
744 it's going to be a great development tool and increase everybody's taxes. Thank you.

745

746 Moderator: Thank you sir. Next we have Ms. Kym Hunter.

747

748 Kym Hunter: Good evening. I'm Kym Hunter with the Southern Environmental
749 Law Center. I represent Clean Air Carolina, the Yadkin Riverkeeper, and the North
750 Carolina Wildlife Federation and my address is 601 Rosemary Street.

751

752 I want to also talk about the purpose of the road. I'm happy that it's up here. It's really
753 quite convoluted to read this project's purpose.

754

755 Jumetta Posey: Can you speak directly into the mic?

756

757 Kym Hunter: Yes. And I think that in my experience there's been some
758 confusion as to what the purpose of this road is. Certainly in the flyer that was put out for
759 the barbeque next door by the contractor for the bypass, there was a lot of talk about
760 reducing congestion; we need this bypass to reduce congestion on US 74.

761

762 We have asked and would love to see a project purpose, which was about reducing
763 congestion on US 74. The DOT has been quite clear that that is not the purpose of this
764 bypass and that we will not evaluate alternatives that reduce congestion on US 74.

765

766 And so what we would really like to see is that project purpose be changed. I have had
767 the pleasure of reading this new Environmental Impact Statement and much like the one
768 before it; it anticipates that congestion on US 74 is not going to decrease if the bypass is
769 built. In fact, the rates of congestion you see currently on US 74 are anticipated to get
770 increasingly worse. And in fact, they have to get worse because currently the EIS says
771 that in opening year travelers taking the bypass from end to end will save a maximum of
772 maybe 13 minutes.

773

774 And so to really get people to pay those tolls, the only way that people are going to pay
775 those tolls is if congestion on US 74 gets worse. So, we'd really like to see a change in

776 the project purpose and look at several alternatives that would actually reduce congestion
777 on US 74 for our local commuters and for local traffic.

778

779 And happily DOT has started to implement some of those changes and that's why we've
780 seen some improvement in speeds on US 74. And there's going to be even more
781 improvements going into US 74 in the future, which unfortunately has stopped and it's
782 not evaluated. But we would like to see even more. We think that's what's really going to
783 benefit Union County traffic. Those types of improvements can be incredibly low cost
784 compared to an \$800 - \$900M bypass.

785

786 They may not be as beneficial for *Boggs* Paving. They may not be as beneficial for land
787 developers, but it would be beneficial to local traffic and local commuters. So, we say
788 let's start with the project purpose and let's really be honest about what we're doing here.
789 Thank you.

790

791 Moderator: Thank you Ms. Hunter. Next we have Mr. Lance Dunn.

792

793 Lance Dunn: My name is Lance Dunn. I live in Monroe and I passed out cards
794 to everybody here, most of the points are self-explanatory. And basically the bypass
795 doesn't address the problems. In fact, it creates a lot more problems than what we have
796 right now. All we have to do is look at US 601 South and see a really nice road that flows
797 at high speed and that's what could be put on US 74, if that's what the direction is to be.

798

799 I agree completely with the Town of Monroe and most of the developers that 1% is
800 nowhere near the kind of growth we're going to see. I've heard estimates up as high as
801 20% out in these areas. We've looked at these bar graphs showing the growth out there in
802 urban sprawl and there are no percentages on there. This growth can be almost unlimited
803 and will tax the system and will tax all of us. We'll see these taxes going up quite a bit.

804

805 And my other concern is the watershed. One-third of this road goes through the Lake
806 Twitty Watershed. The Lake Twitty Watershed, the drinking water for the Town of
807 Monroe and a lot of outside Monroe is already impaired in four different ways. And this
808 road will make it worse, not better. We don't have brake linings. We don't have high
809 speed traffic. We don't an increase in traffic driving through your drinking water supply
810 and expect it to get better.

811

812 I'll leave the rest of my comments, except for one and that is the timeline when this
813 started was after the year 2000. Most of you know that this bypass has been planned for
814 at least 20 years. I've heard even longer in some cases. The DOT does not appear to be
815 aware of that, which is very puzzling to me. It was originally initiated as a connector for
816 the landowners from US 601 towards Wingate and it has grown from that. It has not
817 really grown out of any real traffic concerns.

818

819 The DOT has also indicated to me that they're not aware of proposals for the bypass to
820 cross over US 74 and go south and towards US 601 and maybe towards NC 200. I gave
821 blood right before I came here and I saw the card sticking out of my pocket and said to

822 me 20 years ago, I bought land over there because I was told that this is where the bypass
823 is going and this is what the purpose of it. I never met this man before. His name is
824 Bobby Simpson. I have his phone number for anybody that wants to call and talk to him.

825

826 And at the last meeting, which was just yesterday, DOT has no idea about this. This road
827 has to be completely revamped. It's an anachronism from when developers ruled. You
828 could have a bridge built out to your island on the Outer Banks because you were a
829 politician. These days are gone. We need to totally revamp this road and make it do what
830 it's supposed to do.

831

832 Even the beginning of it, there's 12 lanes of traffic coming into Union County and then
833 takes a dangerously left turn and another right turn. What kind of bypass is this? I mean it
834 needs to be totally revamped if it's going to be a bypass. And I mentioned yesterday the
835 Highway 74 Corridor that's the road the trucks are going to follow. They're going to
836 come down 40. They're going to zip down and go out to the corridor. It's not going to be
837 through Union County. And that's not what this bypass is intended to do; besides it's not
838 hooking up with US 601 properly. Thank you.

839

840 Moderator: Thank you sir. Next we have Ms. Lynda Paxton.

841

842 Lynda Paxton: Thank you. My name is Lynda Paxton. I've been the Mayor of
843 Stallings for the last 4 years up until about 8:00 last night. I chose not to run for re-
844 election, so we swore in a new council, Mayor, last evening. In that capacity, I've served
845 on the MUMPO Board, the MPO that they've referred to here tonight. I was Vice
846 Chairman of that board for 2 years in 2011 and 2012. So, I've been involved in a lot of
847 discussions about the Monroe Bypass. It's pretty much dominated everything with regard
848 to transportation for the last 8 years of my life.

849

850 And I've reviewed the new EIS in fair depth considering the limited time we had before
851 these hearings. But I'm very disappointed that many of the deficiencies from the original
852 EIS that prompted the court to rule against DOT in 2012 have not been addressed in the
853 new EIS.

854

855 One of the more obvious questions for a project of this scale would be who will use it.
856 That would call for a hard look at who's traveling in the corridor now. Where did they
857 come from and where are they going? But the new report does not include an origin of
858 destination study.

859

860 Staff reports from 2011 acknowledge that trucking companies are split as to whether or
861 not they will use the bypass. Yet, the EIS makes no attempt to evaluate that even further.
862 The general public has been told by the promoters of the bypass that it will take the truck
863 traffic off of US 74 and give it back to the locals. But there's no data to validate that
864 assumption.

865

866 There is data to show that truck traffic within Stallings around I-485 would more than
867 double compared to the no-build alternative with increases of 11% after the bypass is

868 built. I asked Ms. Harris some questions about truck traffic back in 2012 and she sent me
869 information which predicted an increase in truck traffic in all segments of the corridor,
870 except for 3 in the far eastern part of the county.

871
872 What's most disappointing in this study is that it continues to focus on singular options as
873 an "either or" choice rather than evaluating the potential benefit of combining multiple
874 strategies and improvements on several parallel roads at once. We've recently seen minor
875 improvements on US 74 have demonstrated significant gains in travel speed and travel
876 time savings. Yet, other recommendations such as super street designs have been
877 dismissed as inadequate.

878
879 This new EIS notes that excessive access points and the number of intersections on the
880 US 74 decrease travel speeds, but there was no evaluation of bridges to eliminate
881 crossover traffic at key intersections or the creation of service roads to consolidate
882 driveways. When the definition of purpose establishes a target speed of 65 mph and a
883 minimum of 50 mph as the essential criteria that basically insures that all other options
884 considered would fail. Few, if any of the major highways in our region operate at that
885 level during peak travel times, though they do have acceptable speeds during non-peak
886 times.

887
888 The study did not include any comparative data with for example, I-77, I-485, I-85, or
889 any of those other major corridors in the region. Thus it appears that once again this
890 NEPA Process that derailed this project initially has been breached again because the EIS
891 Process started with a desired outcome and structured the measurements of the analyses
892 to support and justify that predetermined conclusion, while omitting data that might
893 frustrate that goal. And this is perhaps more clearly evident in the fact that DOT has
894 repeatedly said at open meetings that they're committed to building this project, which
895 essentially says the evaluation is irrelevant.

896
897 Finally, the current data reveals a diminishing return on our investment. The cost of this
898 project has escalated the benefits in terms of time savings have dropped. The original
899 estimates back in 2009, I believe it was, predicted travel time savings of 20 to 30 minutes
900 and now we're hearing maybe 8 to 12 or 13 if you're traveling the whole route. That is a
901 cost of \$100M per minute saved.

902
903 It's no wonder that there is waning support within the county for this project. Four towns
904 have adopted resolutions supporting alternatives to the bypass through unanimous votes
905 of their board. These boards understand serious restraints of transportation funding that
906 we have and they've issued a call for more responsible prioritization and spending. It's
907 time to cut our losses and take this road off of the TIP.

908
909 Moderator: Thank you Ms. Paxton. Next we have Loretta Melancon.

910
911 Loretta Melancon: My name is Loretta Melancon from south Louisiana,
912 moved here 2 years ago. The one and only grandchild was born in south Charlotte 5 years
913 ago. And when that happened, our whole retirement life changed. We knew that we had

914 to move closer. However, we did not want to live in Charlotte or Mecklenburg County.
915 We wanted more of a country atmosphere. An environment in which to live was very
916 important to us as important as being close to this grandchild.

917
918 So, when we began to search for property, this area Monroe, Union County it felt really
919 right. What felt terrible was traveling on US 74 with all of those trucks. And you know,
920 I'm not talking about time savings because I am retired and so, you know, I can relax and
921 take my time to get to where I want to go, but I am not at all relaxed when I travel on US
922 74. I do everything to avoid traveling on US 74 because it wracks my nerves and it's just
923 not enjoyable.

924
925 I think I would use the businesses along US 74 more often if I didn't have to get out on
926 that road with all those trucks. So, after what I'm hearing here tonight, I'm not sure that
927 the bypass is going to solve this problem for me. I wonder if there is a way to legally, can
928 the Department of Transportation legally tell truckers where they have to route their
929 trucks, you know, or they can just be wherever they want. That's something I want to
930 investigate.

931
932 But I have to say that there was an article in the Enquirer Journal that's really made me
933 think about this. You know, this is going to be a process that when we moved here the
934 bypass was supposed to happen. This was 2011, 2 years ago, and that was part of what
935 we factored in. You know, we're not going to have to deal with US 74 for too much
936 longer and now that's not the case. And so, I've been asking myself, is the bypass really
937 worth it?

938
939 And I want you to know that I am an active member of the North Carolina Native Plant
940 Society. I know we can do plant rescues if there are any of the endangered species in this
941 right-of-way. And, you know, I am if you want to call me a tree hugger, I'm a tree
942 hugger, but there's got to be a balance. Also, the balance between now and the future,
943 Jamille talked about that how important balance is. And we do have to consider the
944 quality of our lives now and the quality of our lives into the future. You know, what are
945 we going to sacrifice? What are we going to gain? It's just not an easy game to play.

946
947 So, I'm still not really sure in my heart of hearts how I feel about this. I know there are so
948 many people and just the quality of live for everybody concerned is going to be impacted
949 no matter what we do. So, you know, I'm still searching my heart and I do wish there
950 were another way to accomplish getting those trucks. That's my problem...those trucks,
951 getting them onto another roadway so that we can have the quality for our own travel
952 locally and into the Charlotte area. Thank you.

953
954 Moderator: Thank you. Next we have Ms. Kandy Pierce.

955
956 Kandy Pierce: Hi, I'm Kandy Pierce and I live out on Morgan Mill Road in
957 Monroe.

958
959 Jumetta Posey: Can you speak into the mic please?

960
961 Kandy Pierce: Yes, sorry. I just want to say I'm for the bypass because it has
962 affected our land. In 1999, it took my brother's home place. And I was raised in Union
963 County here and this is all family land that's been affected with this bypass. You know, it
964 caused him to move and then 5 years later we lost him to cancer. So, that was 5 years I
965 lost of my brother's life.
966
967 You know, and it's taken 6 acres of our land across the road there from Lee Park Baptist
968 Church. And you know it's going to take more of my land with this bypass. But my
969 children, one lives in Anson County now. One lives up on Indian land in South Carolina.
970 My kids can't do anything with this land. They don't want to build on it because if the
971 bypass does go through, they'll have to move.
972
973 You know, and my mother lives right beside where this thing is going. She is 88 years
974 old. We take care of her at home. So, I hope it does go through. I know there are a lot of
975 people don't want it. But it has affected our land and everything. It has ruined the
976 farmland that we have. I mean, it's ruined what's left.
977
978 I just retired from the post office and I can tell you I had almost 30 years in. The post
979 office, we have grown 42 routes since I started. That's 42 routes in Monroe. That's rural
980 routes. That's not city. We have 13 city routes. But we now have 56 rural routes in
981 Monroe. And it's growing. And this bypass is going to put more people in and around
982 this thing. It's going to put businesses around. It's going open up jobs for some of the
983 people that are unemployed.
984
985 I'm all for it. I mean, I know that there are a lot of people that's not. But you know you're
986 not affected until it takes your land and you don't have a choice in it. Once they come in
987 and say that this road is going through it, you can't fight them. They will take your land.
988 You know, I hope they do come on and just take some more of my land. I'll still have
989 some left. And I hope because it was my grandmother's land...I hold what's left because
990 it's sentimental value, but I'm for the bypass and I hope it does go through. I know, I've
991 heard this about 25, 26 years so, I hope for this time it's for real and everything will go
992 through on it. Thank you.
993
994 Moderator: Thank you Ms. Pierce. I do want to address one thing. We don't
995 take your land. We acquire it.
996
997 Kandy Pierce: You acquire it, but if we don't give it to you, then it will be
998 condemned.
999
1000 Moderator: Well, we would offer you an amicable solution through (*inaudible*)
1001 bank purchase. Next we have Mr. Brian Rogers.
1002
1003 Brian Rogers: Thank you. I'm Brian Rogers and I live in Bonterra in Indian Trail
1004 right off of Secret Shortcut Road. Unlike a lot, I actually come this way and work here in
1005 Wingate. And I will tell you that growth is already here. It's not stopping. Indian Trail

1006 uses its municipalities. Everybody thinks the county controls growth. It's the
1007 municipalities are the ones that control the growth. Indian Trail has grown to over 30,000
1008 people.

1009
1010 Where I live you have 3 new developments and one has just been approved a few weeks
1011 ago. Homes are being built. Okay, no one is going to stop growth. My neighborhood is
1012 affected. But I can tell you unequivocally that I am for this bypass. I'm not for a toll road
1013 as a whole. But I've listened to both sides and the reality of it is there is no other way
1014 build a road. We are the only county around this whole area and one of the few
1015 throughout the entire state that doesn't have one four lane road without one stoplight.
1016 Think about that.

1017
1018 And you know why that's important? I travel across this great country and I see
1019 metropolitan areas and we are a metropolitan area. I wish we were rural. I grew up in a
1020 rural area. But the reality, we're outside of Charlotte, which is creating jobs. They want
1021 to come here because they love the land here and they love the people of Union County
1022 here as well. I know I do and that's why I moved here.

1023
1024 But when I was a student at Wingate, 89,000 people lived in here in 1989. Now, we have
1025 over 210,000 people and still growing. I know this little town, Wingate craves some
1026 growth. And I will tell you people love their freedom. They love their automobile. There
1027 is no solution. Trains, really trains, billion dollar trains...people love their automobile
1028 and will always continue to love their automobile.

1029
1030 Safety matters to me. That's why I want the bypass. I hear this lady talk about trucks.
1031 Well, I've been rear ended by one. Maybe you have too on US 74. I have to get to some
1032 areas in the western part of the county for my daughter and son for soccer. It takes me 35
1033 minutes, okay, time. You can't put a price tag on safety and time.

1034
1035 This environmental group that keeps holding up people's land and delaying things, they
1036 don't give a flip about you and I. All they care about is their own pocketbooks. So, I
1037 would just, you know, encourage everybody that loves freedom...and I'm thankful we
1038 have representatives, especially state representatives that kept this on the books. And I
1039 hope to God NCDOT gets their act in gear and get this thing approved so people can
1040 move on with their lives.

1041
1042 I know too many people that have been affected that their own private property they can't
1043 do anything with. The Southern Environmental Law Center is not going to compensate
1044 you for their lawsuits and their loss time, okay .

1045
1046 Kym Hunter: You are not...

1047
1048 Brian Rogers: They're not going to do that and so I just encourage that you let
1049 this thing be built. I'm pretty passionate about it and I look forward to the day that I can
1050 travel from Bonterra to here, my choice, maybe some days I go down Secret Shortcut, my
1051 choice, in a matter of about 10 minutes compared to having stop and go and waste more

1052 gas, wear out more brakes, Okay. And so, I just appreciate the opportunity to support it
1053 this evening. Thank you.

1054

1055 Moderator: Next we have Mr. Larry Helms.

1056

1057 Audience Member: Oh God.

1058

1059 Moderator: Come on. Again, let's remember the "golden rule". We ask that
1060 you show respect if you got up to speak.

1061

1062 Larry Helms: Hi, I'm Larry Helms, 3216 McLendon Road and I'm a Union
1063 County native, always been. Cindy, I understand that your concern is there and bless your
1064 heart that you lost your brother. That's always a tough, tough time.

1065

1066 Now, I reflect back on US 601 South, where we're losing about 5 citizens a year to a road
1067 that's a 2 lane road. Can you hear okay?

1068

1069 Audience Member: No.

1070

1071 Larry Helms: How's that? Is that better?

1072

1073 Audience Members: Yes.

1074

1075 Larry Helms: I'm sorry. It is a 2 lane road. But I bring that to a point just because
1076 if you talk to some of the firemen that service the area on NC 218. What's happening is
1077 that's becoming the truck bypass and the numerous, numerous trucks go out. It's been
1078 paved, but it's not been paved with wide shoulders so it's still a very, very dangerous
1079 road. Over half of their calls, maybe two-thirds of their calls are getting people out of
1080 accidents.

1081

1082 And what's the resolution for that? The resolution for that is to get a bypass that we can
1083 route the trucks on. And I go back just a bit, I was driving down here. My wife let me
1084 drive her new car. One of the first times ever and I thought my lord there's 2 trucks in
1085 front of me and 2 behind me and what am I going to do. So, if I could have had an
1086 accident, and then I thought about what if I had the grandkids and how bad that would be.
1087 It really is dangerous on US 74 because of the number of trucks. I want that lady to tell
1088 me where to go, but anyway that's important.

1089

1090 I want to talk about growth just a minute. Those 57 routes you got, half of them came
1091 from Indian Trail. We'll take them back up to Indian Trail, so that may help you a lot.
1092 But really and truly I'm very concerned about what's happening on NC 218. The truck
1093 traffic there is just unreal. It's 31-mile traffic on a 31-mile road that is being used.

1094

1095 Frank, your boss, here in the county drives that all the time. We have the Southern
1096 Environmental Law Firm folks back here; raise your hand so they'll know who opposes
1097 the road.

1098
1099 Kym Hunter: Here I am right here.
1100
1101 Larry Helms: These are the guys that take us to court over the road and you need
1102 to tell them that you want the road built. That's important. We have urged them to back
1103 off. We know that the last time a lawsuit was filed it was because of some technicality.
1104 But we're still getting people killed. We're still getting people killed. Frank says no, but
1105 he doesn't live here. He didn't go with the firemen to take people out of trucks.
1106
1107 So, I hope this is a point that really will be considered so that we can get something done
1108 to make our community safer. Thank you.
1109
1110 Moderator: Thank you Mr. Helms. One point I do want to make is that I've
1111 heard it a few times tonight; we do know that with this bypass traffic volume on US 74
1112 existing will be lower in the future or whenever the bypass is built. Traffic volumes will
1113 be lower on US 74 as compared to not having the bypass. I've heard that several times
1114 tonight and I just wanted to quickly address that.
1115
1116 Is there anyone else that would like to speak? Please come up. Again, please state your
1117 name and address.
1118
1119 Ronnie Moore: My name is Ronnie Moore and I live in Marshville. I'd like
1120 to address some of the things I've heard...
1121
1122 Jumetta Posey: Can you speak directly into the mic please?
1123
1124 Ronnie Moore: and try to clear up a few things. I live in Marshville and I
1125 work in Indian Trail and I'm a truck driver. And I'd like to give some of you all some
1126 insight on being a truck driver that has to drive on Highway 74. And for the lady that
1127 didn't see no traffic behind you that day, the reason you didn't see nobody is because
1128 everybody was stopped at the red light behind you. There are 21 red lights I have to travel
1129 just to get to Indian Trail.
1130
1131 Now, all day I drive a truck, a big truck. I haul equipment. I have to go to Rockingham,
1132 Hamlet, all down the eastern side of the state. When I'm not driving the truck, there are
1133 other trucks that have haul equipment also because there are things that are being built. I
1134 have seen people in body bags; motorcycle drivers that have gotten run over.
1135
1136 Now, who do you blame for some of this? I've seen people rear ended in trucks. I've seen
1137 white sheets over people. 14 years, I've seen nothing but wrecks and destruction on
1138 Highway 74. Now, I don't want my children...this is the road to the future. Now, if I look
1139 out across this room in the next 20 years a lot of us ain't going to be here.
1140
1141 Well, let's build this road for the future of our children and our grandchildren so they
1142 won't ever have to have a problem being rear ended by some big truck that can't stop.

1143 Now, I'm passionate about my children and my grandchildren. And we all need to take
1144 into consideration the future of Union County.
1145
1146 Not only the future of Union County, but this road is not just for people that live here.
1147 There's people that come from Charlotte all day long, all the way down US 74. The reason
1148 some of you don't think there's much traffic is because you leave your home and go to
1149 work and 8 hours later you come back through there. I would like to see you drive 1 hour
1150 one time every day from Charlotte to Marshville back and forth. You see how many
1151 trucks are on the highway then. It is bumper to bumper.
1152
1153 I takes my company...you know, time is money. We deliver rental equipment. And we
1154 don't get paid until that equipment gets on that job site. My company would love for that
1155 bypass to be there because it would be quicker for us to get equipment there. So, it would
1156 be an economic impact for us. We'd make money. I would make money and we all would
1157 make money.
1158
1159 I would like to encourage the environmental group that always has the lawsuit out here
1160 and stopping this road, just to ride up and down that highway a few times and do a study
1161 on how many people has been killed because of rear end collisions of big trucks. We
1162 cannot stop those big trucks.
1163
1164 I'd like to hold you all accountable for the next death that comes through because of a big
1165 truck. God bless you.
1166
1167 Moderator: Thank you sir.
1168
1169 Kym Hunter: Oh sir...
1170
1171 Moderator: No, you can provide comments. We're not going to get into a one
1172 on one back and forth.
1173
1174 Kym Hunter: Okay.
1175
1176 Moderator: You can talk to him afterwards.
1177
1178 Ronnie Moore: I'm a tree hugger too.
1179
1180 Moderator: Sir.
1181
1182 Craig Helms: If I'd known it was this many people up here, I wouldn't have
1183 volunteered to speak tonight.
1184
1185 Jumetta Posey: You need to speak into the mic.
1186
1187 Craig Helms: My name is Craig Helms. I run a business in Marshville. My
1188 business does involve trucking, not as much as some in here. I've been passionate about

1189 this thing. But this is the first meeting that I have come to. But I've seen a lot of my
1190 friends have to sell their places years and years ago and have to move. And they were in
1191 their 70s and that's pathetic.

1192

1193 It is pathetic that this operation has gone on and no more, not one shovel full of dirt has
1194 been moved in the last 25 or whatever years they've been talking about it. We need to
1195 stop wasting taxpayer's money. That is the first thing we need to do.

1196

1197 We need to get this project going if the people want it to go. If they don't, then stop it.
1198 Cut your losses and stop it. If you want to get this project going, I think we can help. If
1199 everybody that has to drive to Charlotte every day of the week or once in a while, let's set
1200 a time 7:00 on Tuesday morning, get your newspaper, get your coffee, and at the
1201 appropriate time stop where you are on US 74.

1202

1203 Don't move for an hour except to let emergency vehicles pass. Get all the national media
1204 that you can to back you up, you'll put a stop to some of these judges, some of the
1205 environmentalists that want to stop it from going for no good reason. If you want it stop,
1206 then let's stop. But if you want it built, let's get it built and quite wasting taxpayer's
1207 money on things like this over, over, and over again. Thank you for your time.

1208

1209 Moderator: Thank you sir for your comments. Anyone else? Keep in mind
1210 written comments carry the same weight as verbal.

1211

1212 Dennis Clary: Alright, my name is Dennis Clary. I reside at 1108 (*inaudible*)
1213 Street here in Monroe. I was born and raised in Anson County. I'm for US 74 Bypass. It's
1214 not going to do anything to benefit the people in Anson County. It's going to cut down
1215 the driving time. And as a taxpayer all the money that's already been spent on the right-
1216 of-way, the design, the project needs to move forward.

1217

1218 The Southern Environmental Law Firm, you all live in Chapel Hill. Come live down here
1219 in Union County and find out a little bit about what goes on down here too. But anyway,
1220 (*inaudible*), this is the first meeting that I've been to and I think the project needs to move
1221 forward...Anson County.

1222

1223 Moderator: Thank you sir.

1224

1225 Frank Holleman: My name is Frank Holleman. I'm also with the Southern
1226 Environmental Law Center. My name is Frank Holleman. My office is at 601 W.
1227 Rosemary Street in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

1228

1229 I wanted to correct a couple of points. First of all, it should be clear that what the
1230 Highway Department's official document says not what's been said here tonight, but
1231 what its official document says is that building the bypass will not improve current
1232 congestion on Highway 74. That is what the document says. You can read it yourself. Go
1233 online and read it. That needs to be clear.

1234

1235 As Kym Hunter said earlier, it was never the purpose of this road bypass to improve
1236 congestion on Highway 74. The purpose of this road has been as it says to improve
1237 mobility between Charlotte and the end. It's not to improve congestion on Highway 74
1238 within Union County.

1239
1240 That's been true from the beginning and it is still true in the document. The Department
1241 did do studies on what could be done to improve congestion on Highway 74. And there is
1242 a study, a Stantec study that you can read, but that is not building the bypass.

1243
1244 Second point, we agree entirely the truck issue is important. People are concerned about
1245 it. It's a relevant point. However, this is the point we've been trying to make. The
1246 Highway Department has done no studies to determine whether this bypass will or will
1247 not improve truck traffic on Highway 74. And I'm a taxpayer too.

1248
1249 The proposal here is to spend almost \$1,000,000,000. For as the speaker said according to
1250 the Highway Department's own report, no more than 8 or 10 minutes of improvement in
1251 travel time, not on US 74, if you pay the toll, \$1,000,000,000.

1252
1253 The truck drivers, you should know, that they use this toll road and get off Highway 74
1254 will have to pay \$10 toll. There's no study done by the Highway Department that will tell
1255 us is it worth...are we going to get \$1,000,000,000 worth of improvement on which truck
1256 drivers will leave when.

1257
1258 Our basic point is we're all taxpayers. We're going to spend \$1,000,000,000. How can
1259 we best spend that money to improve the congestion, the lives, the traffic, the businesses,
1260 and the truck driver's safety in this community? Building a \$1,000,000,000 toll highway
1261 designed to bring people from Charlotte to the beach or is it better to spend, study,
1262 economical improvements to US 74 to prevent the deaths and improve traffic and to deal
1263 with the trucks? I don't know what you all say to that.

1264
1265 What we say is know what you're doing before you spend \$1,000,000,000.

1266
1267 Moderator: Thank you sir.

1268
1269 Bob Helms: I'm Bob Helms. I keep hearing them say if we build the road,
1270 there'll be no improvement in traffic. Is not anybody going to use that road? If they are,
1271 there'll be less traffic on US 74.

1272
1273 Now, they talk about environment. You know a trailer truck running 70 mph and not
1274 stopping every 5-miles, 2-miles in life will be less pollution. It makes sense doesn't it? I
1275 keep hearing I agree with if we're going to do it, let's do it or quit talking about it. It cost
1276 us money to talk. It cost us money for time.

1277
1278 But I cannot see what they're saying that there'll be no impact on traffic. Now, if you're
1279 going through Monroe, a big truck was breathing down your throat, do you stop and

1280 spend money? No. You get out of their way. Get the trucks out of the way. There is such
1281 a thing as a truck bypass. You can make it mandatory for them to get there.

1282

1283 Now, as far as traffic on US 74 and trucks...I've been to Apex for about 10 trips. There's
1284 something about 18 wheelers to have them go by me, a bunch of them. I don't know
1285 where this traffic was the other day, but it was behind me, in front of me, and beside me.

1286 Thank you.

1287

1288 Moderator: Thank you sir.

1289

1290 Jim McCollum: My name is Jim McCollum. I live at 2715 Olive Branch
1291 Road. It amazes me that this project has brought so much talk and concern about how
1292 much tax money is being spent when it's evident that nobody gives a damn how much tax
1293 money is spent in the western end of the county.

1294

1295 Moderator: Thank you sir. Anyone else?

1296

1297 John Swindell: You tell me if you can hear me or not. My name is John Swindell.
1298 I live in Hemby Bridge, Indian Trail, the western side of Union County. I drive US 74
1299 every day because I work for myself. I'm being relocated from this highway. So, I'll tell
1300 you up front. I hate it flat out because I don't want to move.

1301

1302 I moved here for the same reason you did. We got brought to Charlotte, didn't know
1303 where to go. We looked at probably 80 homes until we found one that was in this nice
1304 little country setting. We loved it. We moved down here. We've been here 26 years, 27
1305 years. Heard about the highway 2 years after we moved here so, this been a long time
1306 coming, long time coming.

1307

1308 I understand what the truck driver is saying. I hate it for you because I think most of it is
1309 the ones driving the automobiles, not the truck drivers. You can't pull over in front of a
1310 truck, stop at a red light, and expect them to do the same thing. They're not going to do it
1311 and it's not the trucker's fault.

1312

1313 On the other hand, the bypass is too close to Highway 74. I don't see how you're going to
1314 say it's going to help the county grow that much when you're sitting here saying you
1315 have an issue right now on US 74 from growth. It's not even 2 damn miles off the side of
1316 US 74 where I live and it runs parallel to it all the way through. If you guys really wanted
1317 to do this and make it work, why didn't you move...I'm not saying go to NC 218. That's
1318 ridiculous. We don't need to go all the way to the northern end of the county. But we
1319 could have move north of Lake Twitty and not messed with the watershed.

1320

1321 You say you want it to run into I-85. It runs into US 74. It doesn't run into I-85. It could
1322 be farther north, make the road spread out a little farther, give them an alternative. US 74
1323 has to be fixed anyway. You have to put some overpasses on it, plain and simple. When
1324 you put those overpasses on US 74, it's not going to be any different than you see
1325 Atlanta, where I'm from in Florida. They did it on US 19 and they run 6 lanes both sides

1326 non-stop. And then you don't have the problems with the truck drivers again, because
1327 you don't have a red light sitting in front of you 1,000-yards away.

1328

1329 You've got to put overpasses on it. You've got to fix some of the secondary roads around
1330 US 74 from all the growth, whether that's roundy rounds or whatever. But you really
1331 need to take a serious look. I know we're all complaining. We're all mad. This is
1332 \$1,000,000,000 that's killing us, but we really need to have a serious talk way before we
1333 got to this point. I've tried it several times and nobody listened to me. And now here we
1334 are saying that this thing is going to go on through anyway and I just feel that it is too
1335 close to US 74. You're going to cause a parallel nightmare in 20 years.

1336

1337 Moderator: Thank you sir. Anyone else?

1338

1339 Brian Schrader: Brian Schrader. I just moved from one part of Union
1340 County to another part of Union County and I drive quite a bit for my job, a lot on US 74
1341 and a lot on all the other routes around US 74. I agree with just about everything that
1342 everybody has said on both sides.

1343

1344 So, I can't say that I'm for or against, but just looking at the plan and being an engineer
1345 myself, I don't think this is the answer. I think a bypass is the answer, but I don't think
1346 this route makes a whole lot of sense. As the last gentleman here, it makes perfect sense
1347 to me that it needs to move further away from US 74. Otherwise, all of the development
1348 that will happen around this bypass is going to choke the system down again. And 10 or
1349 20 years from now, we're going to be sitting here doing the same thing all over again.

1350

1351 So, I'm for a bypass. I just don't think this is the answer.

1352

1353 Moderator: Thank you sir. Anyone else? Alright, I want to thank you all for
1354 coming out tonight. We do have another public hearing tomorrow night. It is an informal
1355 session, so there will be no presentation, but I do urge you to urge your neighbors or
1356 friends that did not make it out tonight to come out tomorrow night. Thank you and have
1357 a good night.

1358

1359 Hearing Adjourned.

1360

1361 Jamille Robbins, Moderator
1362 Public Involvement Unit
1363 December 10, 2013

1364

1365 Typed by Johnetta Perry