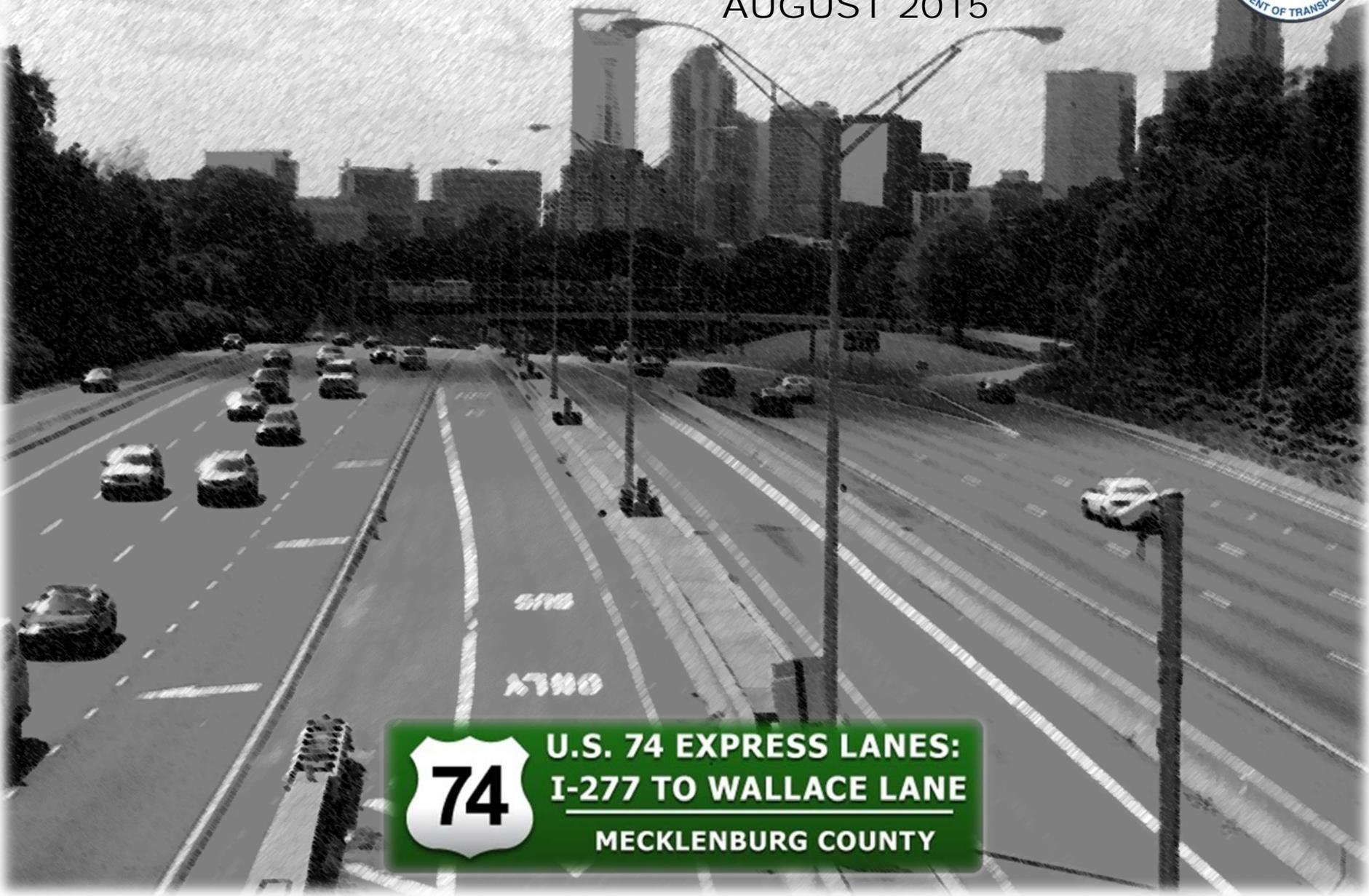


STIP Project No. U-5526A  
Categorical Exclusion  
AUGUST 2015



 **U.S. 74 EXPRESS LANES:  
I-277 TO WALLACE LANE  
MECKLENBURG COUNTY**

**US 74 (Independence Boulevard)  
From I-277 to Wallace Lane  
Charlotte, Mecklenburg County  
Federal-Aid Project No.: FSTRNHPP-0074(153)  
WBS # 50081.1.2  
STIP Project No. U-5526A**

**Administrative Action  
Categorical Exclusion**

**US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway  
Administration  
and  
N.C. Department of Transportation**

This highway project is proposed for funding under Title 23, United States Code (USC). This statement for the improvement has been developed in consultation with the Federal Highway Administration and is submitted pursuant to 42 USC-4332(2)(c).

*FOR*   
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Richard W. Hancock, PE, Unit Manager**  
Project Development and Environmental Analysis Unit  
N.C. Department of Transportation

*8/29/15*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

*for*   
\_\_\_\_\_  
**John F. Sullivan III, PE, Division Administrator**  
Federal Highway Administration

*8-21-15*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

**US 74 (Independence Boulevard)  
From I-277 to Wallace Lane  
Charlotte, Mecklenburg County  
Federal-Aid Project No.: FSTRNHPP-0074(153)  
WBS # 50081.1.2  
STIP Project No. U-5526A**

**Categorical Exclusion**

**AUGUST 2015**

Prepared for the N.C. Department of Transportation Project Development and Environmental Analysis Unit



*Stacy Oberhausen*

**Stacy Oberhausen, PE**  
Project Development Group Supervisor

*08.20.2015*

**Date**

*Wilson Stroud*

**Wilson Stroud**  
Project Development Engineer

*8-20-15*

**Date**

**Prepared by:**

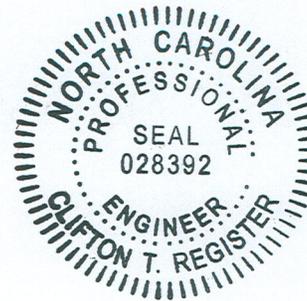


*Clifton T. Register*

**Clifton T. Register, PE**  
Project Manager  
TGS ENGINEERS

*8/18/2015*

**Date**



## What are the project commitments?

### 1. NCDOT Roadway Design Unit and NCDOT Division 10 Construction, Resident Engineer's Office

The Division Construction Engineer and Roadway Design Engineer will coordinate with Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) during the final design and construction phases with regards to required improvements to the Hawthorne Lane Bridge (Bridge No. 808) over U.S. 74 for the proposed CATS CityLYNX Gold Line Phase 2 streetcar project.

### 2. NCDOT Division 10 Construction, Resident Engineers Office

The Charlotte Transportation Department (704-336-4119) and the Mecklenburg EMS Agency (MEDIC) (704-943-6000) will be contacted at least one month prior to lane closures or traffic shifts.

### 3. NCDOT PDEA-Human Environment Section, Division 10 Office, and NCDOT Work Zone Traffic Control Unit

Based upon the presence of predominately Spanish-speaking Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations in the project area, the Project Development and Environmental Analysis Unit and the NCDOT Division 10 office will develop a plan for outreach to those populations. This outreach will be performed prior to and during project construction.

### 4. NCDOT Division 10 Office and NC Turnpike Authority

NCDOT will coordinate with local government stakeholders, Charlotte Department of Transportation (CDOT), Charlotte Area Transit (CATS), NC State Highway Patrol, and first responders to define roles and responsibilities related to the proposed Express Lanes.

### 5. NCDOT Roadway Design Unit, NCDOT Structures Management Unit, and NCDOT Rail Division

If modifications to Bridge No. 175 over CSX Railroad are required, consultation with CSX Railroad will be required.

### 6. NCDOT PDEA Natural Environment Section

The PDEA Natural Environment Section will conduct surveys for the Northern long-eared bat before construction authorization is requested.

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Public Meeting Announcement  
Agency Correspondence

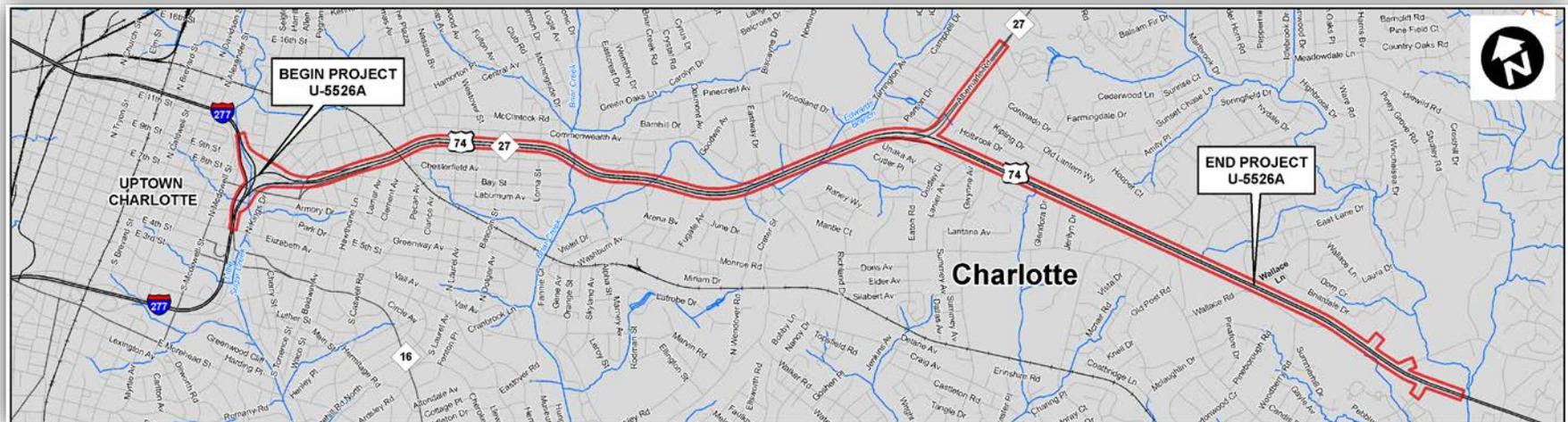
# 1. What are the highlights of this Categorical Exclusion (CE)?

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), proposes to construct express lanes on U.S. 74 in the city of Charlotte in Mecklenburg County. This project will henceforth be referred to as Project U-5526A.

Categorical Exclusion means a category of actions which do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment ... and ... for which, therefore, neither an environmental assessment nor an environmental impact statement is required.  
 -- 40 CFR 1508.4

Existing traffic congestion within the U.S. 74 corridor results in unpredictable delays and, at times, excessive travel times for commuters and other motorists. Predicted growth in the communities of southeastern Mecklenburg and northwestern Union Counties will continue to increase these delays and travel times. The purpose of this project is to provide travel time reliability. This document examines the recommended plan to implement express lanes on U.S. 74 (Independence Boulevard) from I-277 to Wallace Lane. The project study area is shown below in Exhibit No. 1. The project location is shown in Figure 1- Project Vicinity Map.

**Exhibit No. 1 - U-5526A Project Study Area**



This Categorical Exclusion (CE) identifies the potential human and natural environmental impacts of the proposed project, demonstrates consistency with current planning priorities of local government agencies, and considers current and future traffic needs, with the goal of providing reliable travel time for drivers through the project area. This CE considers two alternatives, Alternatives A and B. Alternative A, the recommended alternative, represents the build alternative, wherein the existing bus lanes and the bus lanes currently under construction as part of STIP Project U-209B would be converted to express lanes from I-277 to Wallace Lane. Alternative B is the “No Build” Alternative, which in this case represents the baseline condition for the CE and involves no improvements to U.S. 74.

**Table 1 – Summary of anticipated impacts (STIP Project U-5526A)**

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Discussion</b>
Archaeological and Architectural/ Historic Resources	No Impact	A Section 106 effects meeting with SHPO was held on June 2, 2015 to address the four identified historic properties. SHPO agreed the project will have no effect upon the four identified historic properties.
Threatened & Endangered Species	<b>Unresolved</b>	Construction authorization will not be requested until Endangered Species Act (ESA) compliance is satisfied. Surveys for the Northern long-eared bat are underway.
Streams and Wetlands	No Impact	No streams or wetlands will be affected.
Public Transportation	No Impact	CATS buses will be allowed to use the proposed express lanes for free.
Residences and Businesses	No Impact	No residences or businesses will be impacted.
Environmental Justice (EJ) Populations	No Impact	No disproportionately high and adverse impacts to low-income or minority populations will occur as a result of implementing this project.
Parks and Greenways	No Impact	No parks or greenways will be affected.
Pedestrian and Bike Access	No Impact	Pedestrian and bike access will not be affected by this project.
Traffic Noise Impacts	No Impact	As this project is classified as a Type III project by NCDOT and FHWA, no noise analysis is required.
Air Quality	No Impact	Project U-5526A is not anticipated to create any adverse effects on the air quality of the Mecklenburg County maintenance areas, thereby complying with the NAAQS. No mitigation measures are recommended for this project.

All anticipated impacts associated with this project are summarized within this document. Details of coordination with Federal, State, and local government agencies and public involvement activities are presented. A summary of the anticipated impacts is presented in Table 1.

Express lanes use two effective highway management tools, congestion pricing and lane management, to provide reliable travel time through a highway corridor. Congestion pricing allows drivers to avoid traffic congestion and delays by offering a choice—pay a fee and use the express lanes for more reliable travel times or continue using the general purpose lanes for free. Lane management involves restricting access to designated lanes based on occupancy or vehicle type. By limiting the number of vehicles in designated lanes, it is possible to maintain a reliable travel time.

The proposed express lanes will be located in the median of U.S. 74 and separated from the general purpose lanes by utilizing pavement striping or physical barriers. Entrance and exit points will be constructed along the express lanes to allow for ease of access. Motorists will have the option to enter and exit the express lanes near I-277, from Albemarle Road and at Wallace Lane (see Figure 2- Proposed Express Lane Access Points).

The proposed express lanes will use congestion pricing, an operational strategy to manage traffic flow in response to changing conditions and lane management, allowing access only to 2-axle vehicles, buses, motor cycles and emergency vehicles. An average speed of at least 45 miles per hour will be maintained by adjusting the fee for use in accordance with the amount of congestion in the express lanes and general purpose lanes.

In June 2015, funding for right of way acquisition and construction was programmed in the 2016-2025 STIP for the conversion of the existing and proposed bus lanes on U.S. 74 to reversible managed lanes, from I-277 to Wallace Lane (subject project, STIP Project U-5526A). STIP Project U-5526A is included in the 2016-2025 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Right of way acquisition, utility relocation, and construction are scheduled to begin in Fiscal Year 2017. The STIP includes a total funding of \$15.1 million for the project, including \$100,000 for right of way acquisition and \$15 million for construction. The total estimated project cost is approximately \$20 million.

The purpose of this project is to provide immediate travel time reliability.

## 2. How did we get here?

Completed in 1950 as a means of providing motorists with quick access to and from the eastern edge of Charlotte, Independence Boulevard (U.S. 74) was North Carolina's first urban expressway. In the 1980's, NCDOT and the City of Charlotte received federal funding to implement a reversible high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane along U.S. 74 (East Independence Boulevard) between I-277 and Albemarle Road, as part of an overall conversion of U.S. 74 from an urban arterial to a freeway/expressway. The HOV facility has been used exclusively by Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) buses since improvements to U.S. 74 were completed to Wendover Road/Eastway Drive in 1998. CATS bus service was extended to Albemarle Road in 2006, when improvements to U.S. 74 were completed to that point.

In 2007, the Charlotte Regional Fast Lane Study began. This study was a collaborative effort by the Charlotte Department of Transportation (CDOT), the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), the Mecklenburg-Union Metropolitan Planning Organization (MUMPO), the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), and other agencies in the Charlotte region to examine the existing and planned major highways throughout a 10-county area to identify where managed, or fast lanes – high-occupancy vehicle (HOV), high-occupancy toll (HOT), or truck-only toll facilities – could help manage congestion during peak travel periods. Freeways and other Strategic Highway Corridors were screened to identify the most promising corridors for fast lanes. Physical designs, operational requirements, revenues, and costs were evaluated.

The Phase I Fast Lanes Study, completed in 2008, recommended five corridors for detailed study, including U.S. 74 from I-277 to I-485. The Phase II Fast Lane study, completed in 2009, determined that the U.S. 74 east corridor (I-277 to I-485) has great potential for express lanes and recommended that an express lane project in the corridor be considered in updates to the Long Range Transportation Plan. The Phase III Fast Lanes Study, completed in 2013, recommended a phased approach to implementing express lanes along U.S. 74 between I-277 and I-485, as describe below:

- Under Phase I, the existing median bus lanes on U.S. 74 between I-277 and Albemarle Road would be converted to a reversible express lane and connected to the concurrent flow bus lanes (one in each direction) being built under Project U-209B. Also, under Phase I, the bus lanes being built would be converted to

express lanes. *(Please note that these improvements are proposed under the subject project, U-5526A).*

- Under Phase II, the reversible express lane between I-277 and Albemarle Road would be converted to two concurrent flow express lanes similar to the bus lanes being built under Project U-209B. Additional access points to the proposed express lanes between I-277 and Albemarle Road would also be considered under Phase II. *(Please note that this project is not currently included in the STIP.)*
- Phase II would also include conversion of the six-mile segment of U.S. 74 between Conference Drive and I-485 to either an expressway or a freeway, with express lanes in the median. *(Please note that these improvements are proposed under Project U-2509, which is included in the STIP. Further information about Project U-2509 is provided under Question #18 of this report.)*

In 2011, the Daniel Rose Fellowship Program of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) assisted the City of Charlotte in a study to ensure long-range development viability along Independence Boulevard. The ULI panel, which included representatives of the City of Charlotte and NCDOT, recommended that high-occupancy toll (HOT) lanes, which could also accommodate express buses, be constructed in the U.S. 74 median, instead of accommodating light rail transit (LRT) or bus rapid transit (BRT) in the median. Accommodations for either LRT or BRT were recommended in the 2006 CATS Transit System Plan.

In October 2011, the CATS Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC), based on the results of the ULI study, voted to endorse the use of the U.S. 74 median for HOT/HOV lanes rather than LRT or BRT.

In January 2012, in response to the MTC's decision, the City of Charlotte requested that NCDOT revise the design of STIP Project U-209B to remove accommodations for future LRT or BRT to better accommodate managed lanes (HOV/HOT). Those plans were subsequently revised, per the city's request, to provide one bus lane in each direction, separated by a single concrete barrier, from Albemarle Road to Wallace Lane.

In January 2013, the NCDOT State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) was amended to include a project which would convert the existing and proposed busway on U.S. 74 in Charlotte, from I-277 to Wallace Lane, to managed lanes and construct new managed lanes on U.S. 74 from Wallace Lane to I-485. That project, STIP Project U-5526, was programmed for planning and environmental study only.

In June 2015, funding for right of way acquisition and construction was programmed in the 2016-2025 STIP for the conversion of the existing and proposed bus lanes on U.S. 74 to reversible managed lanes, from I-277 to Wallace Lane (subject project, STIP Project U-5526A).

STIP Project U-5526A aligns with the recommendations of the Fast Lanes Study, the ULI study, the MTC’s endorsement of the ULI recommendations, and the City of Charlotte’s request for modifications to the U-209B design plans.

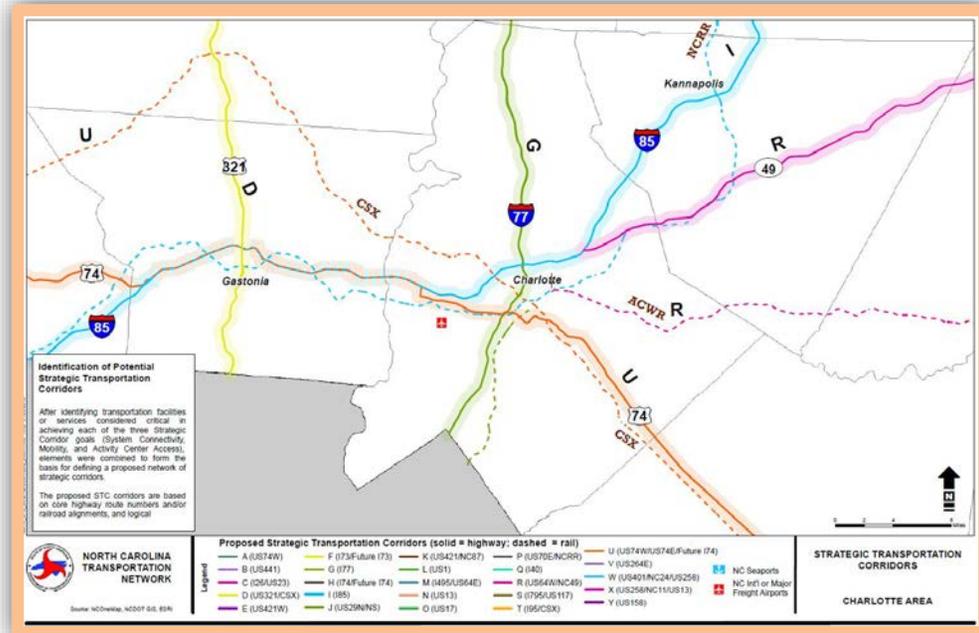
### 3. Why is this project needed?

The Charlotte region is growing. Its urban population has significantly increased in the past decades, and United States Census data ranks the Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia Metro Area as the 22<sup>nd</sup> largest in the nation. More people moving to the area means more cars on the road.

As North Carolina grows, transportation revenues are not keeping pace, presenting the state with a unique set of challenges. NCDOT is seeking innovative ways to improve our existing roadway network, grow the state’s economy, and enhance the quality of life for North Carolinians.

This segment of U.S. 74 (Independence Boulevard) is part of the NCDOT’s Proposed Strategic Transportation Corridors (STC) network (see Exhibit No. 2). U.S. 74 is a multilane, median-divided arterial route that serves as the main gateway to Uptown Charlotte from southeastern Mecklenburg

**Exhibit No. 2 Proposed Strategic Transportation Corridors**



County and northwestern Union County. U.S. 74 is a critical east-west transportation corridor for the Charlotte-metro region and beyond. Within the immediate study area for this project, U.S. 74 links the major employment center of downtown Charlotte with the rapidly growing residential communities of southeastern Mecklenburg and northwestern Union Counties. U.S. 74 serves traffic demands and travel patterns for commuters (single-occupant vehicles, carpools, and transit) and other travelers and is a vital route for regional commerce.

The segment of U.S. 74 (Independence Boulevard) from I-277 to Albemarle Road (3.8 miles) has previously been upgraded to a limited-access facility with interchanges at major intersecting roads. The segment from Albemarle Road to Wallace Lane (2.0 miles) is currently being widened to an eight-lane expressway with interchanges under STIP Project U-209B. All traffic signals on that segment of Independence Boulevard are being removed as part of U-209B, and one bus lane in each direction is being constructed in the median. U-209B is anticipated to be substantially completed in late 2016.

Project development studies are underway for improvements to Independence Boulevard east of STIP Project U-5526A, from Conference Drive in Charlotte to I-485 in Matthews, under STIP Project U-2509.

Heavy traffic occurs within the project limits, particularly during peak AM and PM periods, resulting in frequent delays. During peak periods, traffic speeds range from 15 to 20 mph. Currently, 48,000 to 104,000 vehicles use U.S. 74 each day. By the year 2040, it is anticipated 65,000 to 125,000 vehicles will use U.S. 74 each day if the subject project is not built. These traffic estimates are shown in Figure 3A-No Build Traffic Estimate.

In the year 2040, with the proposed project in place, approximately 3,100 to 7,800 vehicles per day are anticipated in the proposed express lanes. In that same year, approximately 64,200 to 120,000 vehicles are anticipated to use the U.S. 74 general purpose lanes. These traffic estimates are shown in Figure 3B-Build Traffic Estimate.

Within this segment of U.S. 74, 1,496 crashes were reported between April 1, 2012 and March 31, 2013, including 6 crashes that involved fatalities. The overall crash rate for this highway segment exceeds the statewide average crashes per 100 million vehicle miles throughout the project area.

Below is a breakdown of the crash rate in three sections along the project study area:

- U.S. 74 from I-277 to Rockway Drive (Full Control of Access)
  - Crash Rate: 124.91 crashes per 100 million vehicle miles.
  - Statewide average: 91.97 crashes per 100 million vehicle miles.
- U.S. 74 from Rockway Drive to Lanier Ave (Partial Control of Access)
  - Crash Rate: 239.15 crashes per 100 million vehicle miles.
  - Statewide average: 172.49 crashes per 100 million vehicle miles.
- U.S. 74 from Lanier Ave to Village Lake (No Control of Access )
  - Crash Rate: 442.89 crashes per 100 million vehicle miles.
  - Statewide average: 313.25 crashes per 100 million vehicle miles.

This project is needed due to current levels of traffic congestion in the morning and afternoon peak hours, as well as anticipated increases in traffic volumes that will lead to both an increase in congestion and an increase in traffic incidents, which will in turn result in increased trip delays and more unreliable travel times.

#### 4. What is the purpose of this project?

The purpose of the proposed action is to provide immediate travel time reliability along U.S. 74 from I-277 to Wallace Lane.

To address this purpose, NCDOT proposes to incorporate express lanes with variable pricing within the median of U.S. 74 from I-277 to Wallace Lane. Vehicles meeting High Occupancy Vehicles (HOV 3+) requirements (vehicles with three or more passengers, buses, and motorcycles) will be permitted to use the express lanes free of charge. Non-HOV vehicles choosing to use the lanes will be charged a variable fee depending on congestion levels. As more vehicles enter the express lanes and travel speeds in the express lanes and the general purpose lanes begin to slow, the fee will rise to ensure an average minimum speed of 45 miles per hour is maintained in the express lanes.

This approach addresses travel delays by providing a transportation option that results in more reliable local trip times and improves overall network efficiency.

## 5. What are the proposed improvements?

STIP Project U-5526A proposes to convert the existing bus lanes (currently used only by CATS express buses) in the median of U.S. 74 (Independence Boulevard) from I-277 to Albemarle Road (NC 27) (3.8 miles) and the bus lanes that are currently being constructed in the median of U.S. 74 under STIP Project U-209B from Albemarle Road to Wallace Lane (2.0 miles) to express lanes. The proposed express lanes will run between I-277 and Wallace Lane, with entry/exit points at either end of the project and at Albemarle Road.

### **Project Location**

- Segment 1: I-277 to Albemarle Road, 3.8 Miles
- Segment 2: Albemarle Road to Wallace Lane, 2.0 Miles

### **Express Lanes Access (Entrance / Exit) Locations**

- Near I-277
- Albemarle Road
- Wallace Lane

The project will consist of two distinct segments:

**Segment 1**, from I-277 to Albemarle Road (3.8 miles), will consist of one reversible express lane. The express lane will operate in the inbound/westbound direction (toward Uptown Charlotte) in the morning and in the outbound/eastbound direction (towards Matthews) in the afternoon. The express lane will be separated from the general purpose lanes by concrete barriers on either side (see Figure 4A- Proposed Typical Section 1).

**Segment 2**, from Albemarle Road to Wallace Lane (2.0 miles), will consist of one express lane in each direction. The express lanes will be separated from each other by concrete barriers and from the general purpose lanes by a four-foot buffer (see Figure 4B- Proposed Typical Section 2).

The project includes pavement resurfacing and restriping and the installation of signs, pavement markers, and electronic toll and traffic management equipment. To ensure proper operation of the westbound (in bound) express lane in the morning hours, the westbound U.S. 74 ramps leading to Charlottetowne Avenue and southbound I-277 will be modified. At the east end of the project, near Village Lake Drive, the existing eastbound U.S. 74 right-turn lane will be converted to a through lane, and exclusive eastbound right-turn lanes will be constructed on U.S. 74 at Village Lake Drive and at a shopping center entrance just east of Village Lake Drive to ensure proper operation of the eastbound (outbound) express lane in the afternoon hours. The locations of the proposed improvements are shown in Figure 5.

## 6. Will the proposed improvements affect traffic operations on U.S. 74?

A traffic simulation analysis was prepared for this project to determine how traffic would navigate and operate at the points where the proposed express lane will meet the general purpose lanes on U.S. 74 just east of the I-277 interchange and on U.S. 74 from just west of Wallace Lane to just east of the Village Lake Drive intersection.

Uncalibrated simulation models were developed at each of these locations to determine if the proposed design would allow traffic to weave and merge safely from the proposed express lanes back into the general purpose lanes.

### **Just East of I-277**

The following years and conditions were studied for the access point on U.S. 74 just east of I-277:

- 2015 Existing / No-Build Conditions, AM and PM peak periods;
- 2040 No-Build Conditions, AM and PM peak periods; and
- 2040 Build Conditions, AM and PM peak periods.

The following conditions were studied:

- All Pay, Full Access to I-277
- All Pay, No Northbound access at I-277
- **HOT 3+, Full Access to I-277 (Recommended)**
- HOT 3+, No Northbound access at I-277

Based on the uncalibrated traffic simulations of U.S. 74 eastbound traffic at I-277, the proposed design operated with no substantial issues in both peak periods (AM & PM). The HOT3+ alternatives provided the lowest travel times. For U.S. 74 westbound traffic at I-277, the designs that allow access from the proposed express lane to only southbound I-277 operated poorly in the AM peak period from a travel time standpoint, with the U.S. 74 general purpose lane traffic heading to southbound I-277 strongly impacted. For the designs that allowed full access to I-277 from the westbound express lane, the speed differential between adjacent weaving lanes was the

determining factor for safe operations. This measure was deemed acceptable if less than or equal to 7 mph; 10 mph was acceptable for certain locations. Based on these traffic simulations, the recommendation is to allow access to both northbound and southbound I-277 from the proposed westbound express lane.

#### **From West of Wallace Lane to East of Village Lake Drive**

The following years and conditions were studied for the access point on U.S. 74 from just west of Wallace Lane to just east of the Village Lake Drive intersection.

- 2015 Existing / No-Build Conditions, PM peak period;
- 2025 No-Build Conditions, PM peak period; and
- 2025 Build Conditions, PM peak period.

The traffic simulation analysis included a proposed right-turn bay at Village Lake Drive for the U.S. 74 eastbound traffic. This modification provides additional capacity and improved operations for eastbound traffic at this intersection.

Based on the uncalibrated traffic simulations of U.S. 74 traffic from Wallace Lane to Village Lake Drive, the recommendation is to provide the exit from the express lanes to the general purpose lanes west of Wallace Lane on U.S. 74 and construct a new right-turn bay at Village Lake Drive for the U.S. 74 eastbound traffic.

Please refer to the full technical report entitled *U.S. 74 Express Lanes Traffic Operations Analysis*, dated June 2015, for specific simulation analysis alternative details.

#### 7. Will additional right-of-way be required?

Because the proposed project will take place within the median and shoulders of U.S. 74 and within the existing right-of-way, no additional right of way will be anticipated for these improvements (see Figure 5 – Environmental Study Area and Proposed Improvements).

## 8. Is this project consistent with local planning efforts?

STIP Project U-5526A is part of a broad, long-range plan to improve travel and manage congestion in the Charlotte area. This segment of U.S. 74 was identified as an ideal location for express lanes in the Charlotte Regional Fast Lanes Study. The project is included in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) of the Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization (CRTPO).

U-5526A has been developed in consultation with the NCDOT Transportation Planning Branch, the Charlotte Department of Transportation, the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS), CRTPO, and the FHWA.

## 9. What are express lanes?

Express lanes are lanes that allow drivers to avoid traffic congestion and delay by offering a choice—pay a fee and ride the express lanes for more reliable travel times or continue using the general purpose lanes for free. Express lanes are separated from general purpose lanes to allow those using the lane to travel with less congestion and therefore move at a more continuous speed, avoiding the constant starting and stopping of congested traffic. Entrance and exit points are constructed along the express lanes to allow for ease of access. Motorists have the option to enter and exit the express lanes at Wallace Lane, Albemarle Road, and I-277.

## 10. How will the express lanes operate and where will the access points be?

### Morning Hours (AM):

In the morning hours, the proposed express lane will operate in the inbound (westbound) direction only. Motorists will be able to access the proposed express lanes on U.S. 74 at Wallace Lane and from Albemarle Road. To access the inbound express lane at Wallace Lane, U.S. 74 motorists will merge left to enter the express lane from the general purpose lanes. To access the inbound express lane from Albemarle Road, Albemarle Road motorists will merge left and then follow a dedicated ramp to reach the express lane. All traffic in the inbound express lane will be required to exit that lane and merge with the general purpose lanes prior to reaching the I-277 interchange.

### Afternoon Hours (PM):

In the afternoon hours, the proposed express lane will operate in the outbound (eastbound) direction only.

Motorists on U.S. 74 will be able to enter the proposed express lane at only one location, just east of I-277. To access the express lane, U.S. 74 motorists will merge left to enter the express lane from the general purpose lanes. Motorists will be able to exit the express lane at either Albemarle Road or Wallace Lane. To exit the express lane at Albemarle Road, motorists will exit right and follow a dedicated ramp to reach Albemarle Road. To exit the express lane at Wallace Lane, motorists will merge right to enter the general purpose lanes. All traffic in the eastbound express lane will be required to exit the express lane and merge with general purpose lanes just east of Wallace Lane. The proposed express lane access points are shown in Figure 2 and Figures 5A-J.

### 11. How will the express lane pricing process work?

Express lanes are different from general purpose lanes in that express lanes provide a choice for drivers to pay a fee to assure efficient traffic flow and travel time reliability. The general purpose lanes remain available for free use by all traffic. The goal is to provide an average minimum speed of 45 mph in the proposed express lane.

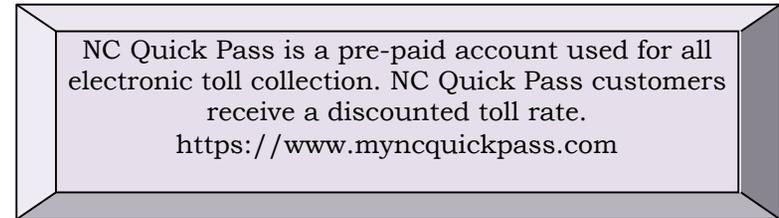
Congestion pricing will be utilized to maintain the average minimum speed of 45 mph in the express lane. The price to use that lane will increase when the lane is being used by many drivers and decrease when used by only a few. That way, free-flow traffic conditions can be maintained in the express lane, even during peak travel periods. Use of the express lane will be restricted to 2-axle vehicles, buses, motor cycles, and emergency vehicles. Use of the express lane will be free for all vehicles containing 3 or more people (HOV3+), along with CATS buses and motorcycles, while all other allowed vehicles can choose to use the lane by paying a fee.

The congestion pricing system will involve charging a variable fee that will be based upon the level of congestion in the express lanes and the general purpose lanes. This fluctuating fee will encourage or discourage motorists from using the express lane, assuring that the express lane offers reliable traffic flow at all times. The cost of the express lane will be changed dynamically, meaning rates for use will change in real time as often as every 5 minutes. Fees increase on the express lane when the lane is being used by enough vehicles to cause the average travel speed to drop below 45 mph, so as to discourage other vehicles from entering the lane. This will keep the lane from becoming congested. When the express lane is not congested, the access fee will remain low, so as to encourage use.

The pricing rate in the express lane will have a minimum toll per mile with no set maximum. Actual toll rates have not yet been decided. Pricing will be displayed for the public on dynamic electronic message signs. The price displayed when a vehicle enters the express lane will be the price the motorist pays; meaning the amount a motorist has to pay will not increase after he or she enters the express lane.

## 12. How will the express lane billing process work?

There are two methods by which fees will be collected, Bill by Mail and Electronic Toll Collection (ETC). In the Bill by Mail option, a vehicle's license plate will be photographed by cameras mounted along the express lane, and a bill will be mailed to the vehicle owner's address. In the ETC option, the motorist purchases a small electronic device called a transponder and attaches it to his or her car. The transponder is read by antennas mounted above the roadway and funds are then deducted from a pre-paid account called NC Quick Pass for payment. Transponders can be purchased and Quick Pass accounts can be set up and replenished with cash or credit cards. No bank account or credit card is required to purchase a transponder or replenish a Quick Pass account. There will be a discounted rate for motorists who use ETC. An NC Quick Pass account can be established and transponders can be purchased at [www.ncquickpass.com](http://www.ncquickpass.com).



STIP project U-5526A will utilize one gantry location, or fee collection station, located near the entry/exit point at Albemarle Road (see Figure 5E). This site will consist mainly of cameras to capture license plate images for Bill by Mail drivers and antennas to receive signals from transponders for those using NC Quick Pass. Motorists will not be required to stop at toll booths to pay a fee to use the express lanes.

### 13. What are the existing conditions?

U.S. 74 is classified in the Federal Functional Classification System as a Principal Arterial (Freeway/Expressway). The typical cross section along the U.S. 74 corridor from I-277 to Wallace Lane varies, as described below:

- I-277 to Rockway Drive: 6-lane divided freeway, dual bus lanes in median, barrier on either side of median (see Photo 1).
- I-277 from Rockway Drive to Albemarle Road (NC 27): 8-lane expressway including continuous right turn lane between interchanges, dual bus lanes in median, barrier on either side of median (see Photo 2).
- Albemarle Road (NC 27) to Wallace Lane (under construction, STIP Project U-209B): 8-lane expressway including continuous right turn lane between interchanges, one bus lane in each direction, barrier in center of median (see Photo 3).

The existing right-of-way width varies along the project. The posted speed limit varies from 45 to 55 mph (55 mph in the freeway segment, 50 mph in the expressway segment, and 45 mph in the U-209B segment).

The U.S. 74 corridor is highly developed. Adjacent land use is commercial and residential from I-277 to Briar Creek Road and predominately commercial from Briar Creek Road to Wallace Lane. Photos of existing conditions are shown to the right.

### 14. Will existing bridges and drainage structures be modified?

No modifications to existing bridges and drainage structures are anticipated.

Photo 1: West end of U-5526A on U.S. 74

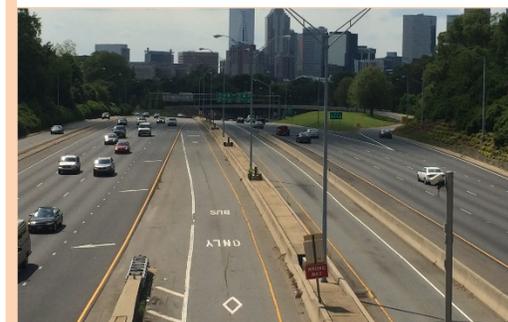


Photo 2: Existing Bus Lanes and East Bound U.S. 74



Photo 3: U-209B: U.S. 74



### 15. Will the project affect railroads?

CSX Railroad crosses U.S. 74 under Bridge No. 175 near Pecan Avenue. There are 8 to 12 freight trains operating along this section of CSX Railroad daily at a maximum speed of 25 mph. No passenger trains operate over this line at this time, and none are planned to do so in the foreseeable future. Presently, no modifications to the bridge are proposed as part of this project. If plans change and modification to the bridge are proposed, consultation with CSX Railroad will be performed with regard to future track requirements, the location of such tracks, horizontal and vertical clearance requirements, the necessity for maintenance roads, the presence/location of fiber optic cables, and flagging protection requirements.

### 16. Will the project affect parks and greenways?

There are four greenways within or near the study area: Briar Creek Greenway, Edward's Branch Greenway, Little Sugar Creek Greenway, and McMullen Creek Greenway. There are five parks near the study area: Independence Neighborhood Park, Chantilly Neighborhood Park, Veterans Neighborhood Park, Mason Wallace Park, and Evergreen Nature Preserve. These resources are shown in Figure 5.

STIP Project U-5526A is a conversion project that will be constructed in the median and shoulders and within the existing right-of-way of U.S. 74; therefore, there are no impacts to the nearby parks and greenways.

### 17. Will the project affect pedestrian and bike access?

Sidewalks exist in the project area along both sides of U.S. 74 starting near Briar Creek and continuing to Albemarle Road. Sidewalks are being constructed along both sides of U.S. 74 from Albemarle Road to Wallace Lane as part of STIP Project U-209B. Existing accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists at the grade-separated crossings along the project are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2 – Existing bicycle and pedestrian accommodations at grade-separated crossings**

<b>Intersecting Road</b>	<b>Sidewalk</b>	<b>Bicycle Lanes</b>
Hawthorne Lane	Yes	Yes
Pecan Avenue	Yes	Yes
Briar Creek Road	Yes	No
Wendover Road/ Eastway Drive	Yes	No
Pierson Drive	Yes	No
Sharon Amity Road*	Yes	Yes
Idlewild Road*	Yes	Yes
Conference Drive*	Yes	Yes

\* Denotes improvements under construction as part of STIP Project U-209B

No additional accommodations for bicyclists or pedestrians are proposed under U-5526A. The project will not affect the existing and under-construction pedestrian and bike accommodations described above.

### 18. What other highway and transit projects are in the vicinity?

This project is part of a larger effort to implement express lanes and toll roads in the Charlotte region. These projects are listed in Table 3 and shown in Exhibit 3- Charlotte-area express lane and toll road Projects Map.

**Table 3 – Charlotte-area express lane and toll road projects**

<b>STIP Project No.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Type of Project</b>
U-5526A	Subject Project	Express lane
U-2509	U.S. 74, from Conference Drive to I-485 in Charlotte and Matthews	Express lane
I-3311C, I-5405, and I-4750AA	I-77, from NC 150 (Exit 36) in Mooresville (Iredell County) to I-277 in Charlotte	HOT lane
I-5718	I-77, from I-485 to I-277 in Charlotte	Express lane
I-5507	I-485, from I-77 to U.S. 74 in Charlotte, Pineville, and Matthews	Express lane
R-3329/R-2559	U.S. 74, from I-485 in Matthews to U.S. 74 between Wingate and Marshville (Union County)	Toll road



along Bridge No. 808. CATS has determined that the bridge superstructure and center piers will need to be replaced to accommodate the extra weight of the streetcars. NCDOT has requested that the center pier be relocated a short distance north (within the U.S. 74 median) to accommodate a possible future project on U.S. 74 that would provide one express lane in each direction from I-277 to Albemarle Road. NCDOT will continue coordination with CATS with regard to STIP Project U-5526A and the CityLYNX Gold Line Phase 2 streetcar project.

## 19. What alternatives were considered?

The purpose of this project is to provide travel time reliability. Express lanes are the only reasonable and feasible method to provide reliable travel time when the adjacent general purpose lanes are heavily congested during peak periods and when funding for roadway expansion is limited. For these reasons, one “build” alternative (Alternative A, the recommended alternative, express lane conversion) and the “no-build” alternative (Alternative B) were considered.

**Alternative A (the recommended “Build” Alternative)** calls for converting the existing and under-construction bus lanes on U.S. 74 (Independence Boulevard) from I-277 to Wallace Lane to express lanes. These improvements will provide travel time reliability through the use of dynamic pricing, which will allow management of the number of vehicles entering the express lanes. Dynamic pricing of the express lanes will be used to maintain an average speed of at least 45 mph.

**Alternative B (No-Build Alternative)** is an alternative under which nothing would be done on U.S. 74 other than routine maintenance. Under this alternative, congestion would continue to worsen as traffic volumes increase, and travel time reliability would not be provided. The No-Build Alternative was eliminated from further study because it does not meet the purpose and need of the project.

## 20. How much will the project cost?

STIP Project U-5526A is included in the 2016-2025 NCDOT State Transportation Improvement Program. Right of way acquisition, utility relocation, and construction are scheduled to begin in Fiscal Year 2017. The STIP includes a total funding of \$15.1 million for the project, including \$100,000 for right of way acquisition and \$15 million for construction. The total estimated project cost is \$20.9 million (see Table 4).

**Table 4 – Project cost estimate**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Signing:	\$5,130,550
ITS Infrastructure and Technology:	\$1,030,700
Toll Site Infrastructure:	\$296,000
Roadside Tolling Technology:	\$1,836,250
Gate Control System	\$482,000
Back Office Tolling:	\$90,000
Roadway Construction	\$12,034,500
Right of Way	\$0
Utilities Relocation	\$0
<b>Grand Total:</b>	<b>\$20,900,000</b>

21. Will express lane revenues cover operating and maintenance costs?

NCDOT is currently conducting a financial analysis including revenue, cost to collect, and operations and maintenance costs.

22. Will permits be required for this project?

No special permits will be required for this project.

23. Will the project affect public transportation?

CATS operates express buses in the existing bus lanes within the median of U.S. 74 from I-277 to Albemarle Road. Currently there are 33 inbound (westbound) bus trips between 6:00 and 9:00 a.m. each weekday and 33 outbound (eastbound) bus trips between 4:00 and 7:00 p.m. each weekday.

CATS does not currently operate local bus service along this section of U.S. 74. CATS express buses will continue to operate in the median of U.S. 74 as long as construction of the subject project allows, and those buses will have

the option to use the general purpose lanes as construction progresses. CATS will determine how to continue bus service in the corridor during construction. After project construction is complete, CATS express buses will be allowed to operate in the express lanes at no charge. Bus fare will be established by CATS.

#### 24. Will the project affect natural resources?

The NCDOT Natural Environment Section prepared a Natural Resource Technical Report (NRTR) for the project in October 2014. Land use in the project vicinity consists primarily of developed commercial areas and high density residential housing, interspersed with fragmented pockets of forested areas. Most vegetation found in the study area is considered “maintained/disturbed,” meaning it consists of roadside shoulders, residential yards, commercial lots, and overhead utility corridors.

Terrestrial communities in the study area may be impacted by project construction as a result of grading and paving portions of the study area. However, any such impacts will be minor, as the project occurs almost entirely within the existing median and shoulders of U.S. 74 and requires no additional right of way.

One federally-listed animal species and three plant species were listed for Mecklenburg County as of 2013 (see Table 5). The Carolina heelsplitter is a protected freshwater mussel. Protected plant species include Michaux’s sumac, Schweinitz’s sunflower, and Smooth coneflower. A survey of the preliminary environmental study area for these four species was conducted on October 3, 2013. While habitats for these species are present at the project site, no impacts to these species are anticipated.

A fifth species, the Northern long-eared bat, was listed for Mecklenburg County as of April 2, 2015. Habitat for this species is present at the project site. As surveys for this species have not yet been conducted, the Biological Conclusion with respect to this species is unresolved. Construction authorization by FHWA will not be requested until Endangered Species Act (ESA) compliance is satisfied with respect to this species.

**Table 5 - Federally protected species for Mecklenburg County**

Scientific Name	Common Name	Federal Status	Habitat Present	Biological Conclusion
<i>Lasmigona decorata</i>	Carolina heelsplitter	Endangered	Yes	No Effect
<i>Rhus michauxii</i>	Michaux's sumac	Endangered	Yes	No Effect
<i>Helianthu schweinitzii</i>	Schweinitz sunflower	Endangered	Yes	No Effect
<i>Echinacea laevigata</i>	Smooth coneflower	Endangered	Yes	No Effect
<i>Myotis septentrionalis</i>	Northern long-eared bat	Threatened	Yes	<b>Unresolved</b>

## 25. Are there streams and wetlands in the project area?

Water resources in the project study area are part of the Catawba River basin. Three streams were identified in the study area: Little Sugar Creek, Briar Creek, and Edwards Branch. Little Sugar Creek is included in the North Carolina Department of Environmental and Natural Resources (NCDENR) 2012 Draft North Carolina 303(d) list of impaired waters for impaired aquatic life and fish consumption due to copper and water column mercury standard violations, respectively. These streams have North Carolina Division of Water Resources (NCDWR) best usage classifications of Class C. This classification denotes waters protected for uses such as secondary recreation, fishing, wildlife, fish consumption, aquatic life including propagation, survival and maintenance of biological integrity, and agriculture. Secondary recreation includes wading, boating, and other uses involving human body contact with water where such activities take place in an infrequent, unorganized, or incidental manner. Information about these streams is shown in Table 6.

**Table 6 - Streams in the project area**

Stream Name	MAP ID	NCDWR Index Number	Best Usage Classification	Impact Status
Little Sugar Creek	Little Sugar Creek	11-137-8	C	No Impact
Brier Creek	Briar Creek	11-137-8-2	C	No Impact
Edward's Branch	Edward's Branch	11-137-8-2-1	C	No Impact

There are no designated anadromous fish waters or Primary Nursery Areas (PNA) present in the study area. There are no designated High Quality Waters (HQW) or water supply watersheds (WS-I or WS-II) within 1.0 mile downstream of the study area.

No modifications to existing structures or widening near jurisdictional streams is anticipated to occur for this project; therefore, no impacts to the listed streams are anticipated.

No jurisdictional wetlands were identified within the study area. The project will not impact wetlands.

## 26. Are hazardous materials present in the study area?

The NCDOT Geotechnical Engineering Unit investigated the project to identify hazardous material sites and prepared a Geoenvironmental Report for Planning in December 2014. The following hazardous material sites were identified within the project limits:

- Underground storage tanks possibly containing petroleum – 63 sites
- Hazardous waste sites – none
- Landfills – none
- Drycleaners, Brownfields sites, and other sites of concern – 21 sites

No involvement with sites containing hazardous materials is anticipated. Should any impacts to such sites occur, proper procedures will be followed.

## 27. Will the project affect Section 4(f) resources?

Four greenways, five parks, and four historic architectural sites are present in the project area. The project will not affect any of these resources. No wildlife or waterfowl refuges are present in the project study area. The project is not anticipated to impact Section 4(f) resources.

Section 4(f) of the US Department of Transportation Act of 1966 provides special protection for publically owned parks and recreational lands, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and significant public or private historic properties.

## 28. Will the project affect historic or other culturally important properties?

NCDOT has consulted the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) with regard to the subject project. In their February 18, 2014 letter (included in the Appendix), SHPO indicated the area of potential effect (APE) has had adequate historic architectural surveys and advised that no further survey work is warranted.

Four historic properties were identified in the APE (see Figure 5):

- Bojangles Coliseum – eligible for National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) listing
- J.N. Pease Associates – eligible for NRHP listing
- South 21 Drive-In, No. 2 Restaurant – eligible for NRHP listing
- Elizabeth Historic District – listed on NRHP

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

A Section 106 effects meeting with SHPO was held on June 2, 2015 to address the four identified historic properties. SHPO has agreed that the project will have no effect upon the four identified historic properties. The SHPO's *Historic Architecture and Landscaping Assessment of Effects Form* is included in the Appendix.

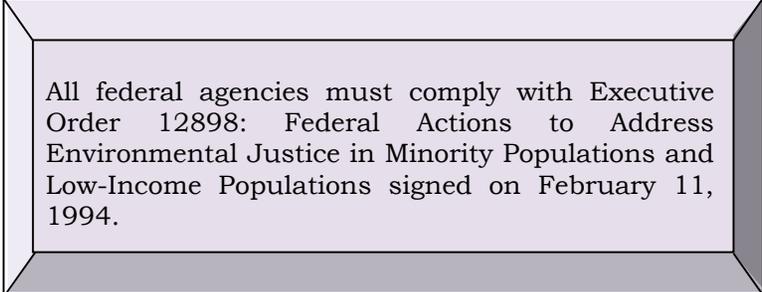
SHPO also indicated in their February 18, 2014 letter that there are no known archeological sites within the APE and that it is unlikely that any archeological resources that may be eligible for inclusion in the NRHP will be affected by this project (see Appendix). As SHPO recommended that no archeological investigation be conducted, none was performed. This project is not anticipated to impact National Register – listed or eligible archeological resources.

## 29. Will the project affect Environmental Justice (EJ) and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations?

The NCDOT Human Environment Section (Community Studies Group) prepared a Community Characteristics Report (CCR) and a Community Impact Assessment (CIA) for this project in February, 2014 and December, 2014, respectively.

### **Environmental Justice (EJ) Populations**

EJ populations were identified near the study area by census data (see Exhibits 4 and 5 below). An EJ population contains individuals who are at risk of having the impacts of a project disproportionately distributed to them. EJ populations generally include members of low-income and minority populations.



All federal agencies must comply with Executive Order 12898: Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations signed on February 11, 1994.

While minority and low income populations are present in the Direct Community Impact Area (DCIA), no notably adverse community impacts are anticipated with this project; thus, impacts to minority and low income populations do not appear to be disproportionately high and adverse. Benefits and burdens resulting from the project are anticipated to be equitably distributed throughout the community.

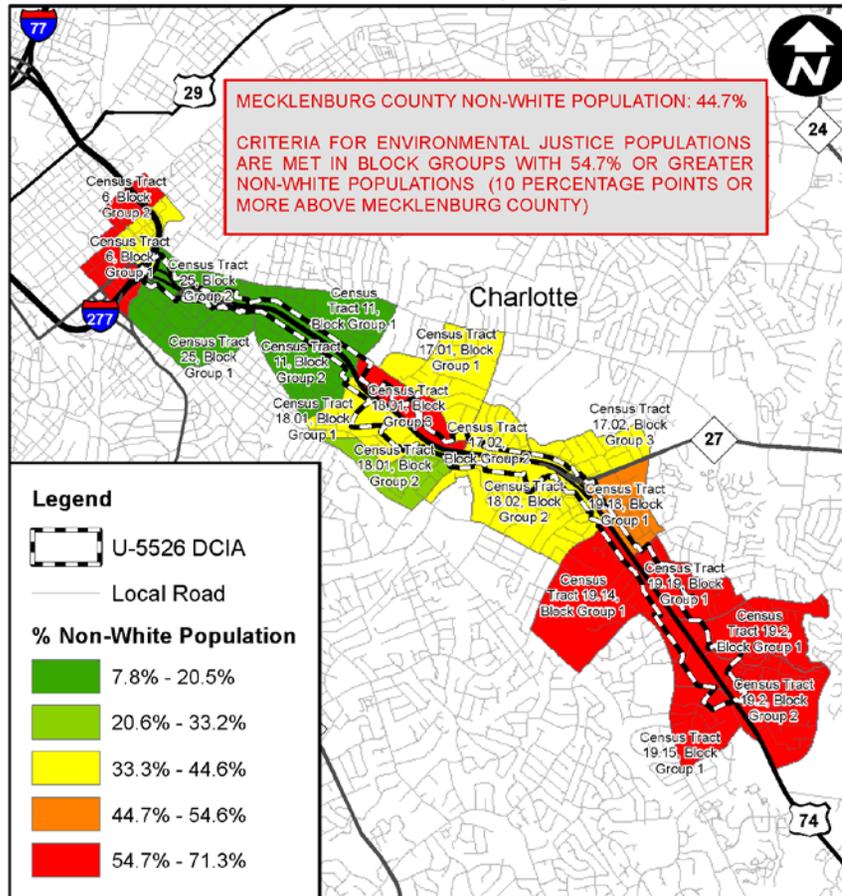
According to FHWA's *Environmental Justice Emerging Trends and Best Practices Guidebook* (November 2011), potential impacts to EJ populations from road pricing projects should be considered for three areas:

Income Equity: relates to the disproportionate impacts of road pricing on low-income populations.

Modal Equity: relates to disproportionate road pricing impacts based on travel modes.

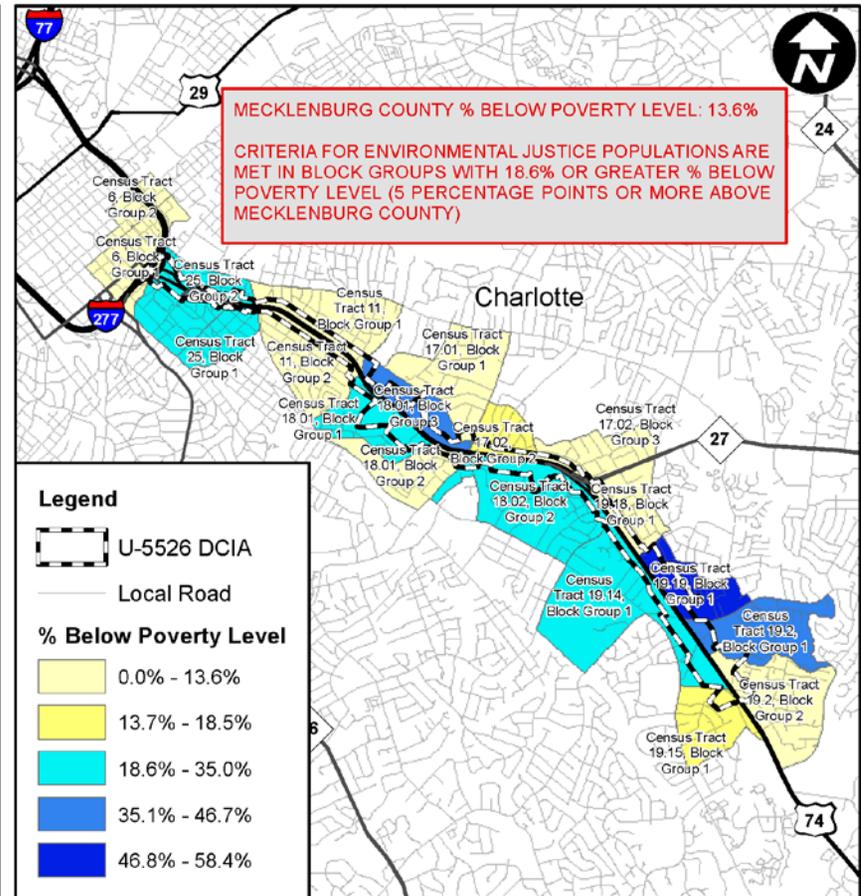
Equity in Participation: relates to the extent to which all groups can participate and have their interests considered in the planning and project implementation process.

**Exhibit No. 4 – U-5526A EJ Minority Populations**



Data Source: NCDOT CCR February 2014 (US Census Bureau, Census 2010 and ACS 5-yr Estimates (2007-2011) Data)

**Exhibit No. 5 – U-5526A EJ Low Income Populations**



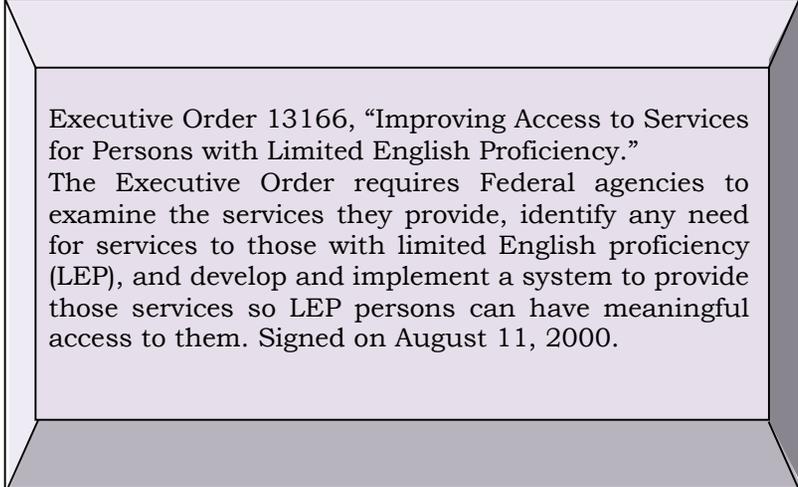
Based on a review of census data and project construction limits, no disproportionately high and adverse impacts to low-income and/or minority populations would occur as a result of implementing this project in regards to any of the three considerations listed above. No relocations will be required, since all construction will occur within the existing right of way. Direct impacts to EJ populations as a result of project construction are not anticipated. With regard to benefits and burdens, transit riders and carpoolers from minority and low-income communities in the study area should benefit from the improved travel time reliability, as transit and carpool (HOV+3) riders will have free access to the express lanes. All persons may choose to use the managed lanes or avoid paying fees by

using U.S. 74 general purpose lanes. Monroe Road provides an alternative free route on the south side of U.S. 74 through the project area. No general purpose lanes will be repurposed to become express lanes.

### **Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Populations**

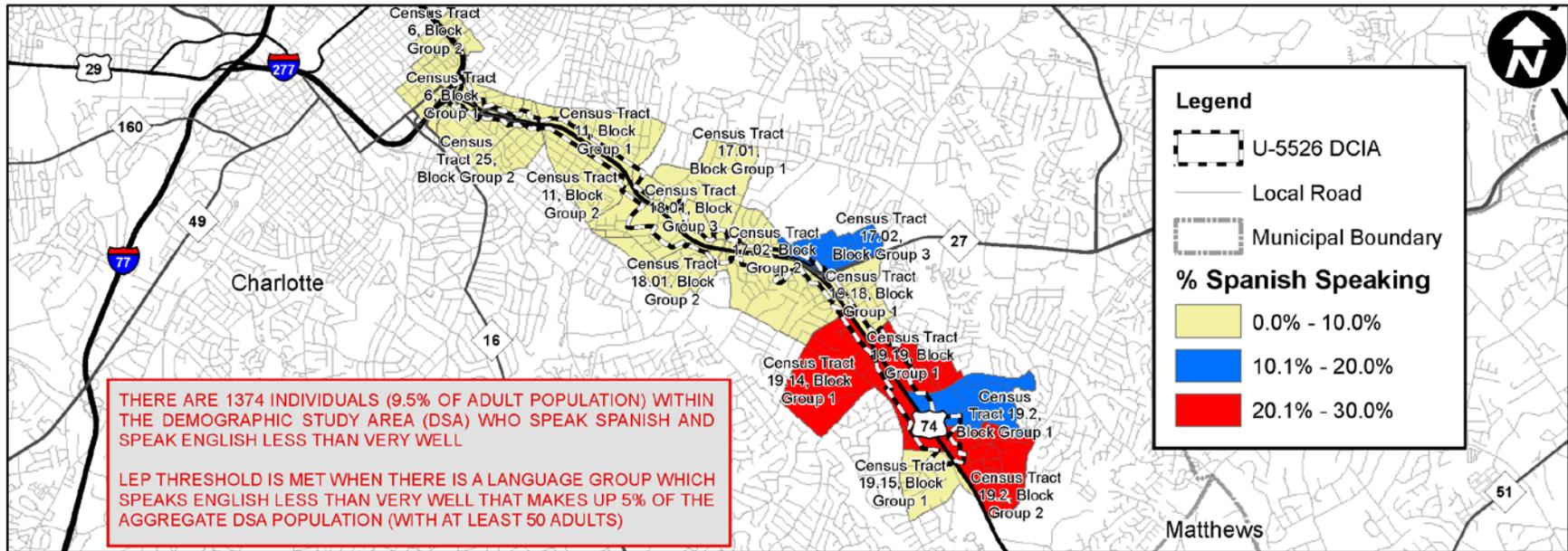
LEP Populations were identified near the study area by census data (See Exhibit No. 6). Members of LEP populations contain individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. One particularly large LEP population near the study area is predominately Spanish-speaking.

During this project's planning phase, all vital documents were made available in Spanish for the benefit of the large Spanish-speaking portion of the LEP population. Based upon the presence of LEP populations in the project area, NCDOT will develop a plan for outreach to the area's LEP populations.



Executive Order 13166, "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency."  
The Executive Order requires Federal agencies to examine the services they provide, identify any need for services to those with limited English proficiency (LEP), and develop and implement a system to provide those services so LEP persons can have meaningful access to them. Signed on August 11, 2000.

**Exhibit No. 6 – U-5526A LEP Populations (Spanish-Speaking)**



Data Source: NCDOT CCR February 2014 (US Census Bureau, ACS 5-yr Estimates (2007-2011) Data)

**30. Will the project affect noise levels?**

The subject project involves only the conversion of existing and under-construction bus lanes to express lanes, with relatively minor associated improvements to ensure proper operation and safety where the express lanes will merge with the general purpose lanes. No changes to the existing highway alignment are proposed. Based upon these proposed improvement, the subject project is not considered a Type I traffic noise project, as defined in the NCDOT Traffic Noise Abatement Policy, but rather, is a Type III noise project. As traffic noise analyses are not required for Type III projects, none were performed for this project.

**31. Will the project affect air quality or air quality conformity?**

The purpose of this project is to provide travel time reliability from I-277 to Wallace Lane by converting the existing bus lanes from I-277 to Albemarle Road and the proposed bus lanes under U-209B from Albemarle Road to Wallace Lane to express lanes. In addition, a right turn lane will be added at Village Lake Drive. This right turn lane is needed to improve traffic operation and safety. This project has been determined to generate minimal air quality impacts for Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA) criteria pollutants and has not been linked with any special

mobile source air toxics (MSAT) concerns. As such, this project will not result in changes in traffic volumes, vehicle mix, basic project location, or any other factor that would cause an increase in mobile source air toxics MSAT impacts of the project from that of the no-build alternative.

Moreover, EPA regulations for vehicle engines and fuels will cause overall MSAT emissions to decline significantly over the next several decades. Based on regulations now in effect, an analysis of national trends with EPA's Motor Vehicle Emission Simulator (MOVES) model forecasts a combined reduction of over 80 percent in the total annual emission rate for the priority MSAT from 2010 to 2050 while vehicle-miles of travel are projected to increase by over 100 percent. This will both reduce the background level of MSAT as well as the possibility of even minor MSAT emissions from this project.

### **Air Quality Analysis**

Project-level air quality analyses were prepared for the proposed right turn lane being added at Village Lake Drive for this project. A microscale CO analysis was performed, the proposed project has been found not to exceed the 1-hour or 8-hour standards for this pollutant. In addition, a qualitative MSAT analysis was performed. Project U-5526A is not anticipated to create any adverse effects on the air quality of these Mecklenburg County maintenance areas, thereby complying with the NAAQS. No mitigation measures are recommended for the implementation of this project.

A copy of the unabridged version of the full technical report entitled Air Quality Analysis (Microscale Carbon Monoxide and Mobile Source Air Toxics), dated June 2015, can be viewed at the Project Development and Environmental Analysis Unit, Century Center Building A, 1000 Birch Ridge Drive, Raleigh, North Carolina.

### **Air Quality Conformity**

The Clean Air Act (CAA) requires the Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization (CRTPO) to demonstrate that the projects in its Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and local Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) do not harm air quality. The process by which the CRTPO demonstrates that the MTP and TIP will not lead to the local region exceeding established ozone standards is referred to as "conformity."

The project is located in Mecklenburg County, which is within the Charlotte nonattainment area for the 2008 ozone (O<sub>3</sub>) standard and the Charlotte maintenance area for carbon monoxide (CO) as defined by the EPA. The Charlotte area was redesignated for CO on September 18, 1995 and due to improved monitoring data was placed under a limited maintenance plan (conformity is required without a regional emissions analysis) on July 22, 2013.

This area was also designated marginal nonattainment for O<sub>3</sub> under the 2008 eight-hour ozone standard on July 20, 2012. Section 176(c) of the CAAA requires that transportation plans, programs, and projects conform to the intent of the state air quality implementation plan (SIP). The current SIP does not contain any transportation control measures for Mecklenburg County.

The Charlotte Region Transportation Planning Organization (CRTPO) 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the local 2012-2018 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) conform to the intent of the SIP. The United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) made a conformity determination on the MTP and the local TIP on May 2, 2014. The current conformity determination is consistent with the final conformity rule found in 40 CFR Parts 51 and 93. There are no significant changes in the project's design concept or scope, as used in the conformity analyses.

U-5526A has been developed in consultation with the NCDOT Transportation Planning Branch, the Charlotte Department of Transportation, the Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization, and the FHWA. Based on that coordination, the project will have a consistent scope and design as the project analyzed through conformity and is in compliance with the MTP and the local TIP.

### 32. How was the public involved in the project?

Two public meetings were held on March 30 and 31, 2015 at Ovens Auditorium in Charlotte and at the Matthews Town Hall. The purpose of those meetings was to inform the public about STIP Project U-5526A and other express lane projects and to obtain public input. Information about the project and those meetings was distributed via newsletters mailed to nearby residents (see Appendix). The meetings were also announced on local television and radio stations, as well as in local newspapers. The announcement for those meetings is included in the Appendix.

Information for STIP Project U-5526A was also presented at two public meetings held for STIP Project I-5507 on April 15 and 16, 2015 at Pineville United Methodist Church in Pineville and Pleasant Plains Baptist Church in Matthews.

During the project planning phase, all vital documents were made available in Spanish because of the presence of predominately Spanish-speaking populations within the project area. In addition, announcements for the public meetings were sent to Spanish language media. Interpreters were present at each of the public meetings.

All information provided at these meetings is available on the project website:

<http://www.ncdot.gov/projects/U-5526/>

### 33. Will there be future opportunities for public review and comment?

A design public meeting will be scheduled after this Categorical Exclusion has been circulated to provide more detailed project information and to obtain additional input.

34. Were federal, state, and local agencies consulted during the project planning process?

The agencies listed below were contacted during project development studies. Agencies that provided written comments are denoted by asterisks (\*). All agency comments are included in the Appendix.

Federal:

Army Corps of Engineers  
Environmental Protection Agency  
Federal Highway Administration  
Federal Transit Administration  
United States Fish and Wildlife Service

Local:

Charlotte Area Transit System  
Charlotte Department of Transportation\*  
Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization  
Town of Matthews

State:

North Carolina Division of Water Resources  
North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office\*  
North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

35. Who should I contact for more information about the project?

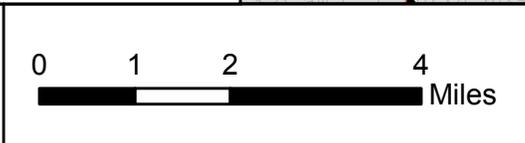
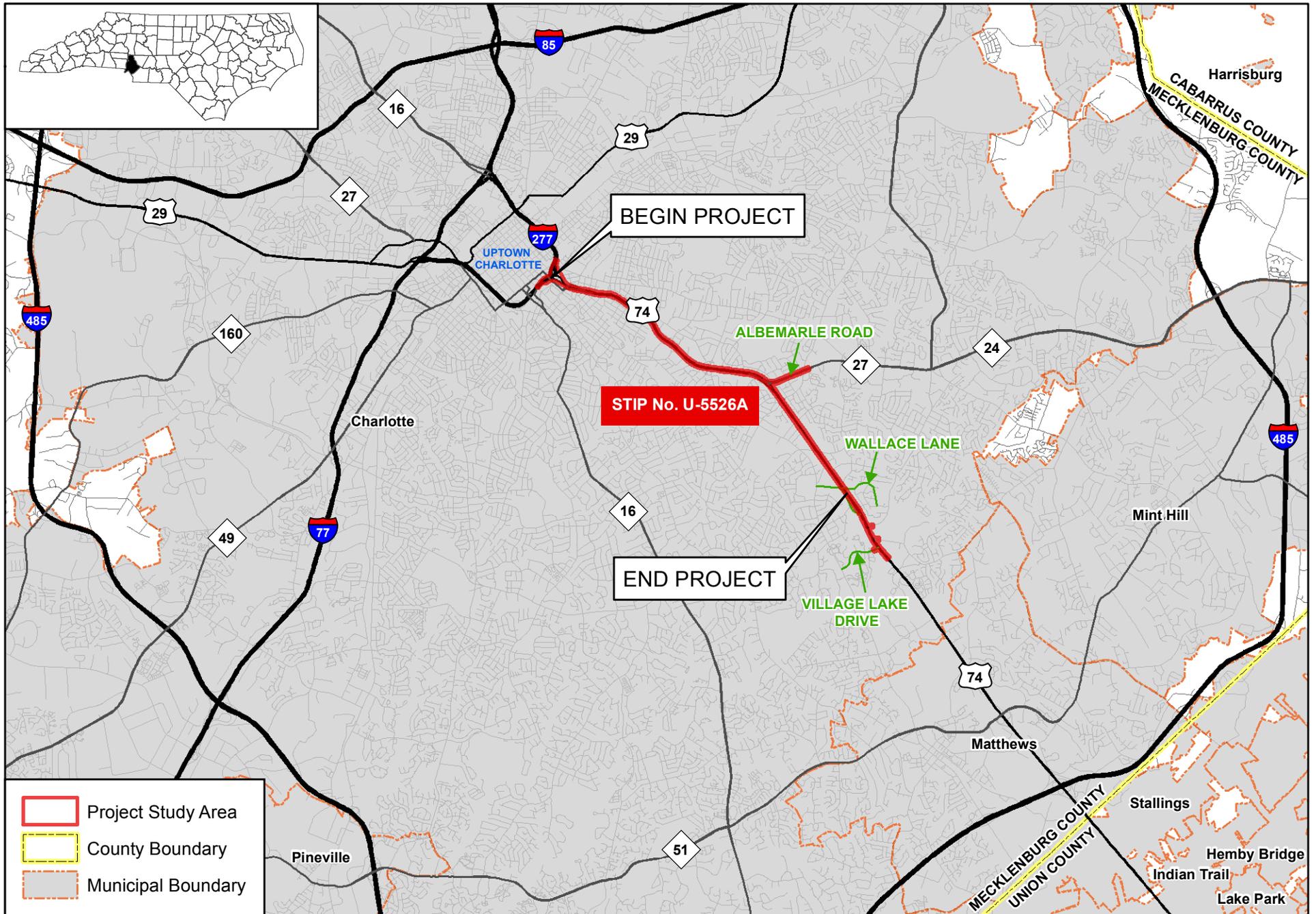
Mr. John Sullivan, III, PE  
Division Administrator  
Federal Highway Administration  
310 New Bern Avenue, Suite 410  
Raleigh, NC 27601  
(919) 856-4346

Eric Midkiff, PE  
Project Development Section Head-Central Region  
NC Department of Transportation  
Project Development and Environmental Analysis Unit  
1548 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-1548  
(919) 707-6000

### 36. Statute of Limitation

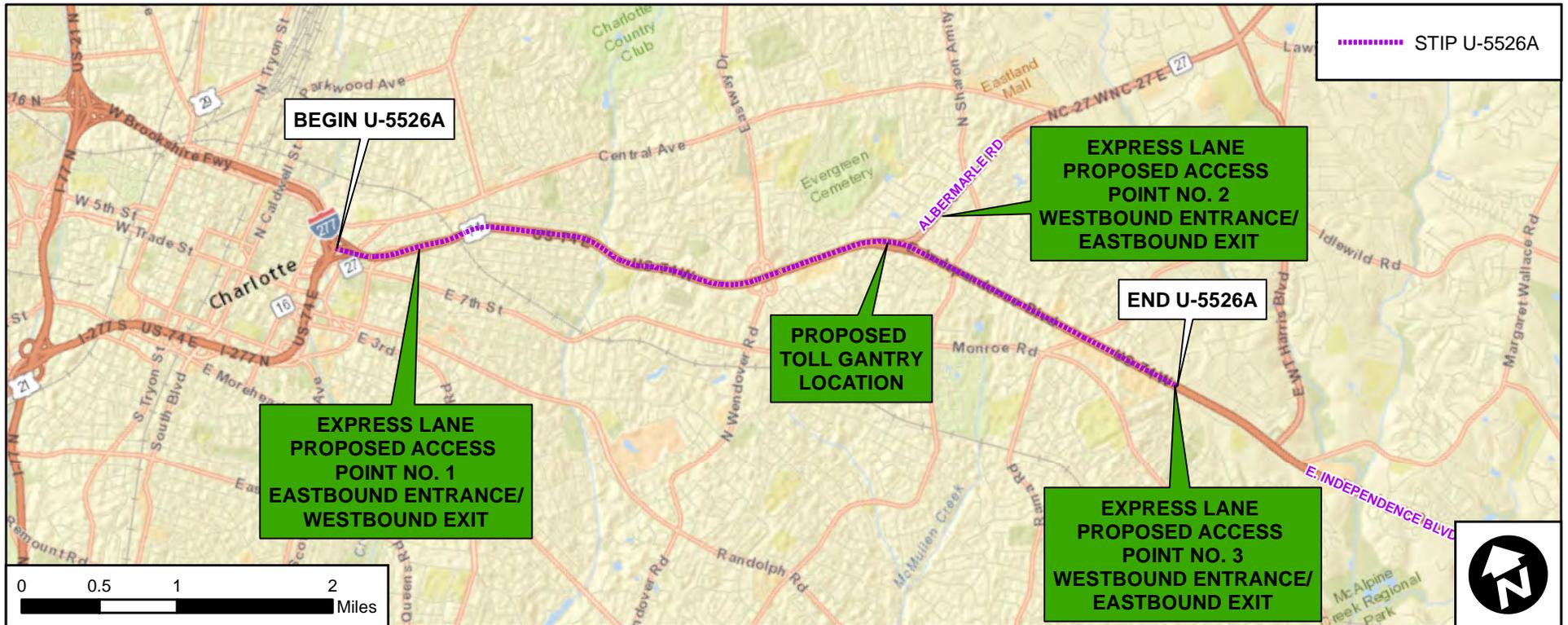
According to the provisions of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), the FHWA may publish a notice in the Federal Register, pursuant to 23 USC §139(l), indicating that one or more Federal agencies have taken final action on permits, licenses, or approvals for the subject transportation project. If such notice is published, claims seeking judicial review of those Federal agency actions will be barred unless such claims are filed within 150 days after the date of publication of the notice, or within such shorter time period as is specified in the Federal laws pursuant to which judicial review of the Federal agency action is allowed. If no notice is published, then the periods of time that otherwise are provided by the Federal laws governing such claims will apply. NCDOT and FHWA intend to publish a notice for STIP Project U-5526A pursuant to 23 USC §139(l).

# Figures



U.S. 74 (Independence Boulevard)  
 from I-277 to Wallace Lane  
 Charlotte, Mecklenburg County  
 STIP Project No. U-5526A

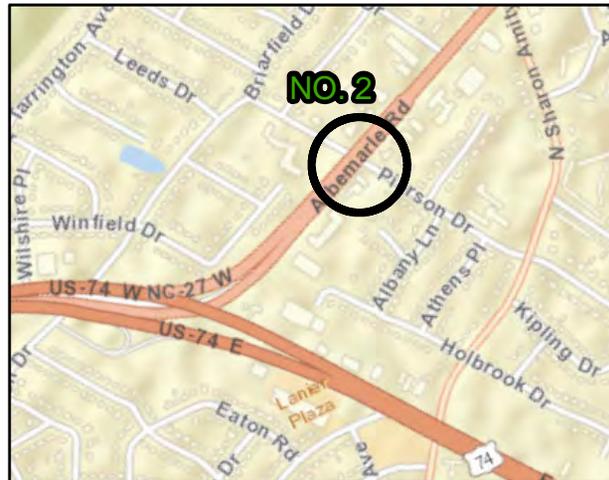
**PROJECT VICINITY MAP**  
**Figure 1**



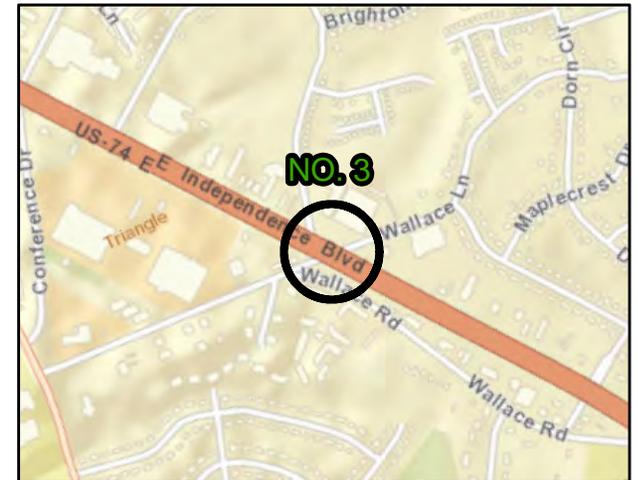
Basemap Source: ESRI World Street Map



**ACCESS NEAR I-277**



**ACCESS AT ALBERMARLE RD.**

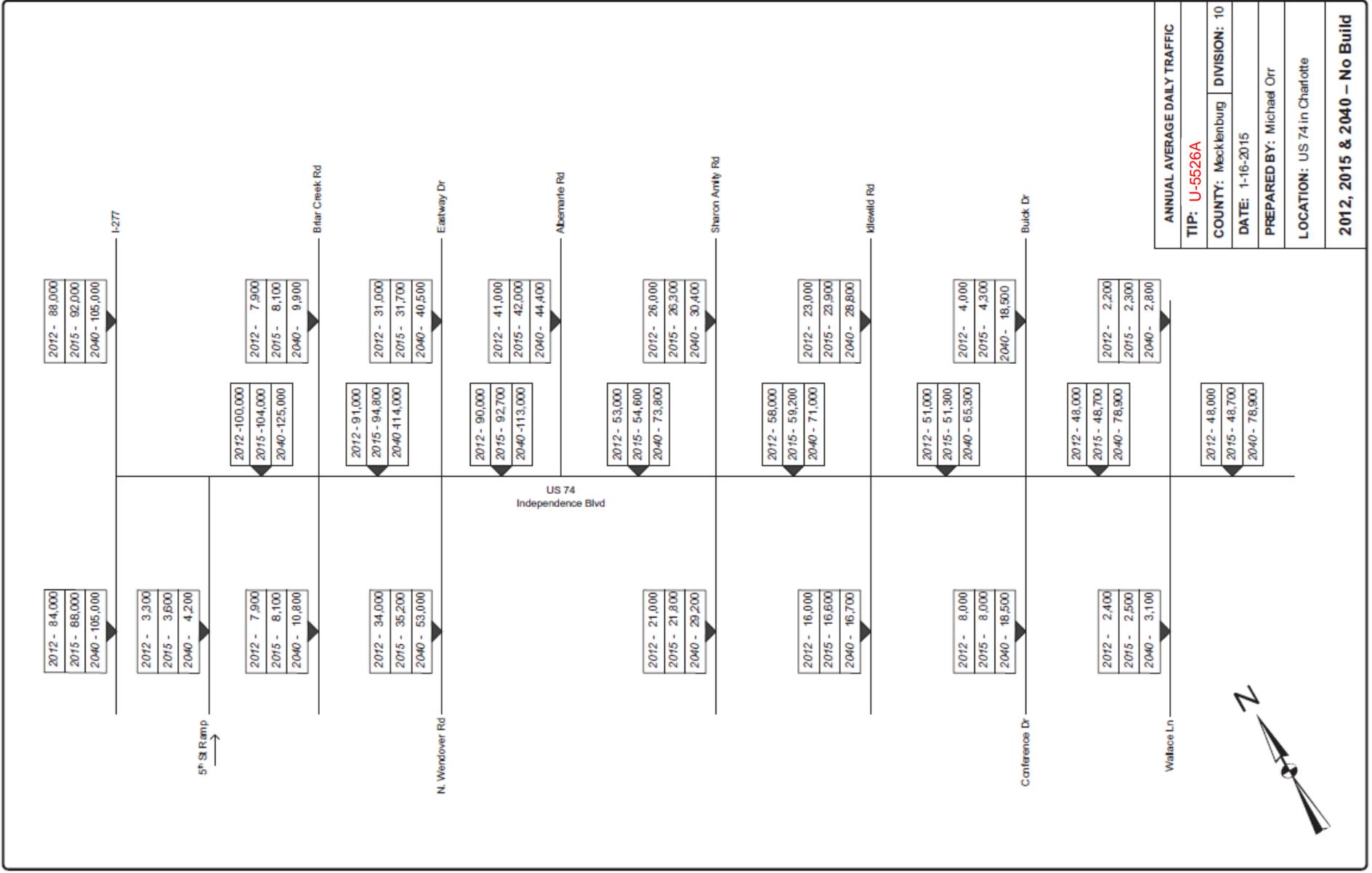


**ACCESS AT WALLACE LN.**



U.S. 74 (Independence Boulevard)  
 from I-277 to Wallace Lane  
 Charlotte, Mecklenburg County  
 STIP Project No. U-5526A

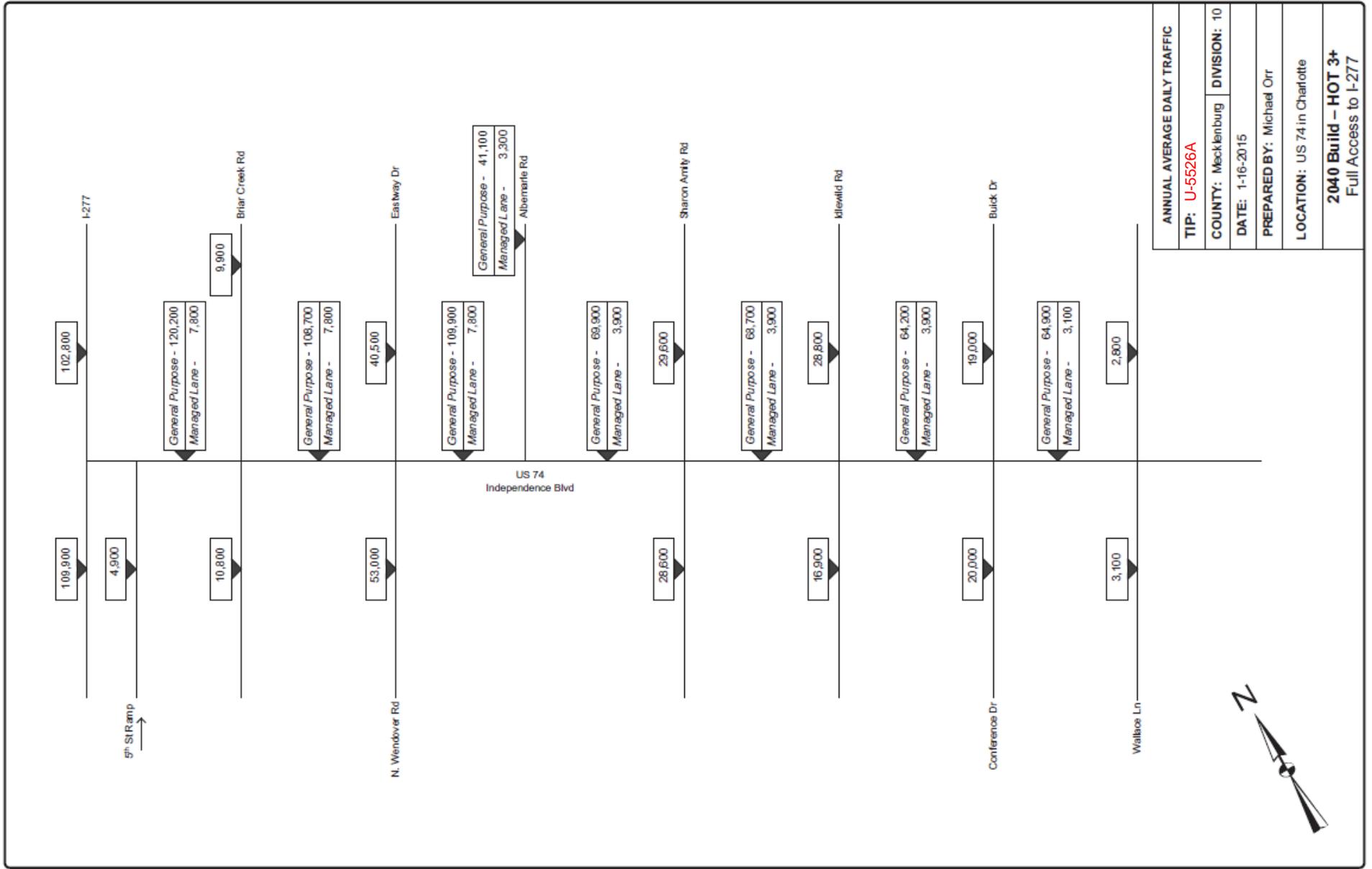
**PROPOSED EXPRESS LANE  
 ACCESS POINTS  
 Figure 2**



<b>ANNUAL AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC</b>	
<b>TIP:</b> U-5526A	
<b>COUNTY:</b> Mecklenburg	<b>DIVISION:</b> 10
<b>DATE:</b> 1-16-2015	
<b>PREPARED BY:</b> Michael Orr	
<b>LOCATION:</b> US 74 in Charlotte	
<b>2012, 2015 &amp; 2040 – No Build</b>	

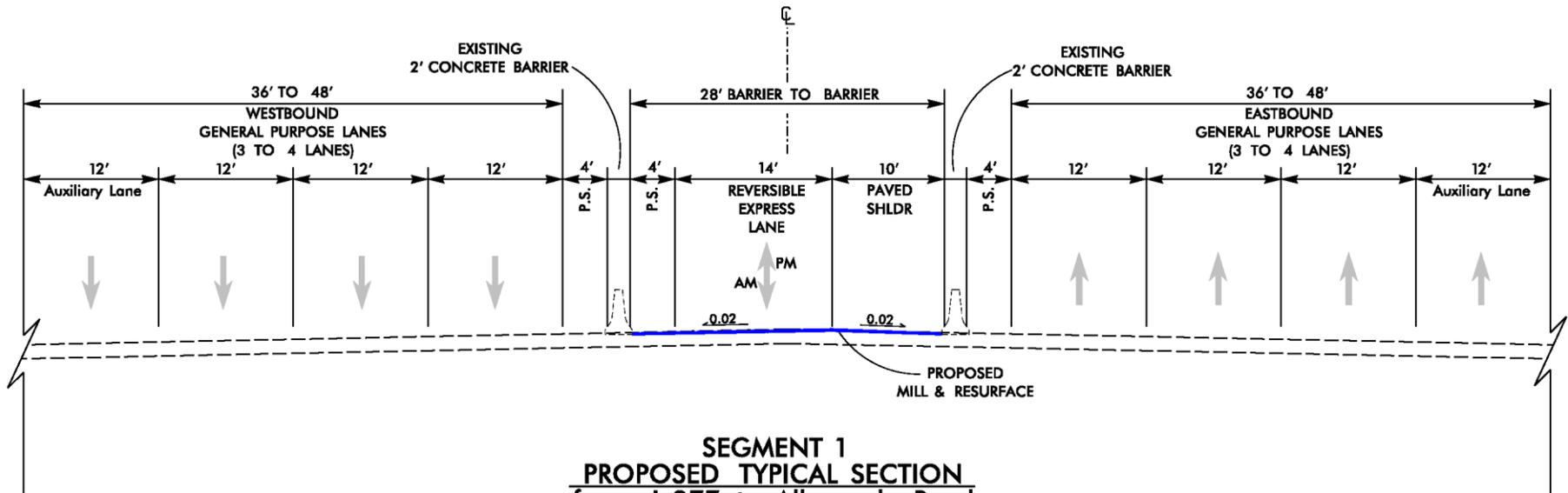


**Figure 3A  
No Build Traffic Estimate**



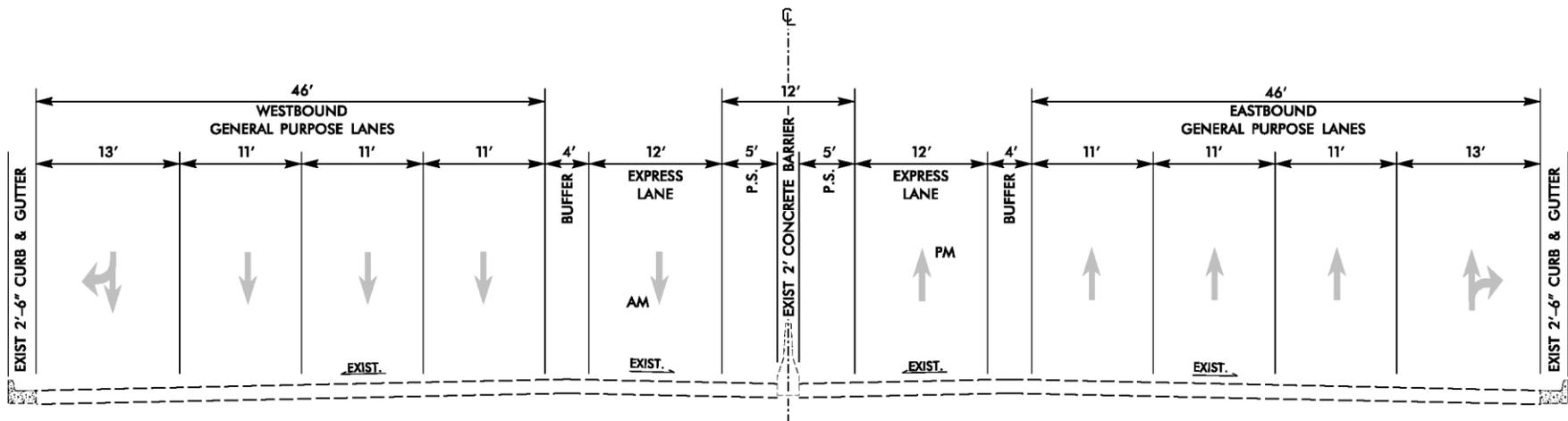
ANNUAL AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC	
TIP: U-5526A	DIVISION: 10
COUNTY: Mecklenburg	DATE: 1-16-2015
PREPARED BY: Michael Orr	
LOCATION: US 74 in Charlotte	
2040 Build – HOT 3+ Full Access to I-277	

**Figure 3B**  
**Build Traffic Estimate**



U.S. 74 (Independence Boulevard)  
 from I-277 to Wallace Lane  
 Charlotte, Mecklenburg County  
 STIP Project No. U-5526A

**SEGMENT 1**  
**PROPOSED TYPICAL SECTION**  
**Figure 4A**

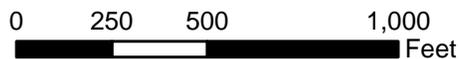
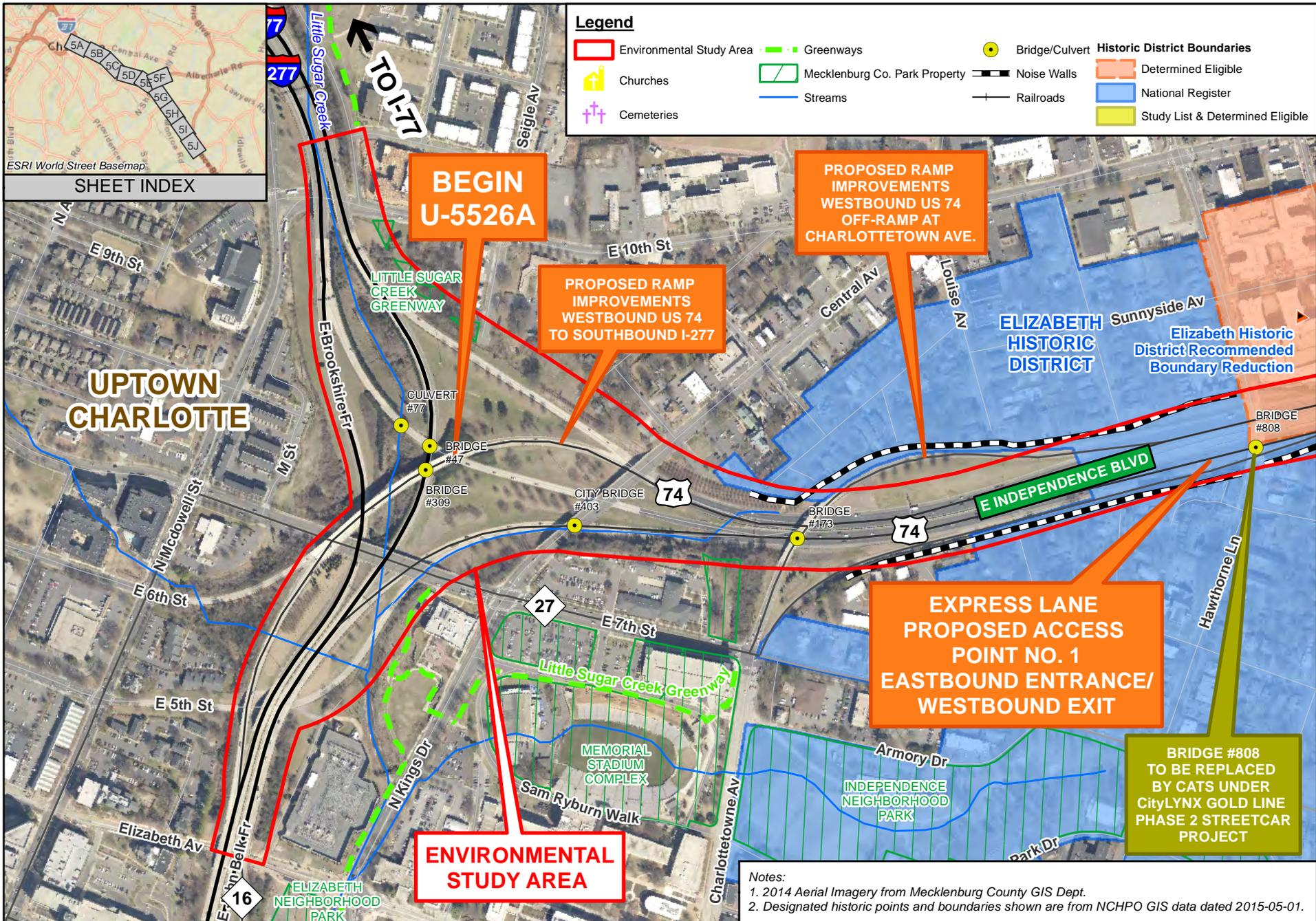


**SEGMENT 2**  
**PROPOSED TYPICAL SECTION**  
 From Albemarle road to Wallace Lane  
 (SINGLE BARRIER SECTION)  
 U-209B SECTION — MODIFIED FOR U-5526



U.S. 74 (Independence Boulevard)  
 from I-277 to Wallace Lane  
 Charlotte, Mecklenburg County  
 STIP Project No. U-5526A

**SEGMENT 2**  
**PROPOSED TYPICAL SECTION**  
**Figure 4B**



U.S. 74 (Independence Boulevard)  
 from I-277 to Wallace Lane  
 Charlotte, Mecklenburg County  
 STIP Project No. U-5526A

**ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY AREA  
 AND PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS**  
 Figure 5A



**Legend**

- Environmental Study Area
- Greenways
- Mecklenburg Co. Park Property
- Streams
- Churches
- + Cemeteries
- Noise Walls
- Railroads
- Historic District Boundaries
- National Register
- Study List & Determined Eligible
- Bridge/Culvert

**PROPOSED  
REVERSIBLE  
EXPRESS LANE**

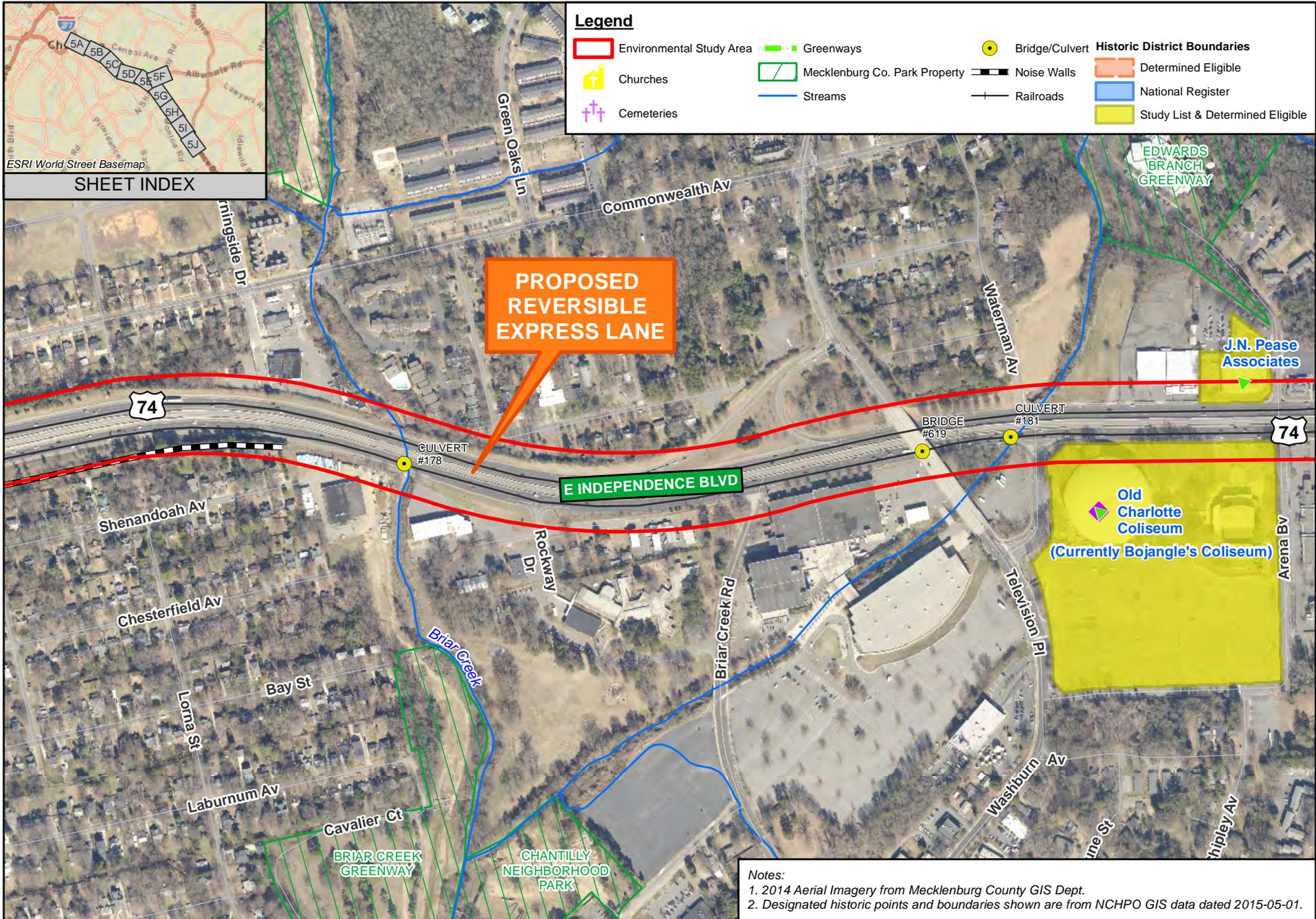
*Notes:*  
 1. 2014 Aerial Imagery from Mecklenburg County GIS Dept.  
 2. Designated historic points and boundaries shown are from NCHPO GIS data dated 2015-05-01.



**U.S. 74 (Independence Boulevard)**  
 from I-277 to Wallace Lane  
 Charlotte, Mecklenburg County  
 STIP Project No. U-5526A

**ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY AREA  
 AND PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS**

**Figure 5B**



0 250 500 1,000 Feet

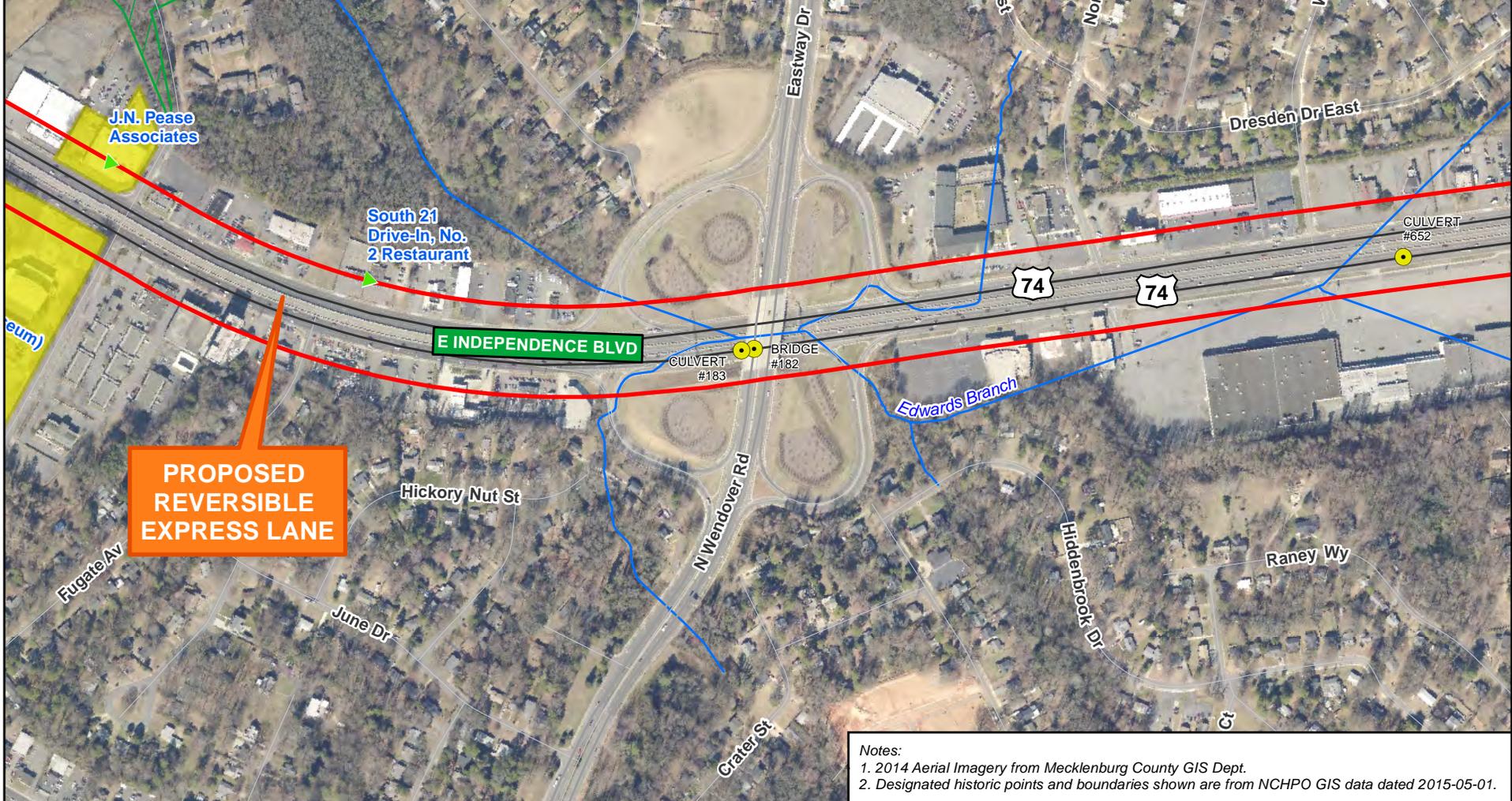


U.S. 74 (Independence Boulevard)  
 from I-277 to Wallace Lane  
 Charlotte, Mecklenburg County  
 STIP Project No. U-5526A

**ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY AREA  
 AND PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS**  
 Figure 5C



SHEET INDEX



**Legend**

- Environmental Study Area
- Greenways
- Mecklenburg Co. Park Property
- Streams
- Churches
- Mecklenburg Co. Park Property
- Streams
- + Cemeteries
- Noise Walls
- Railroads
- Bridge/Culvert
- Historic District Boundaries
- Determined Eligible
- National Register
- Study List & Determined Eligible

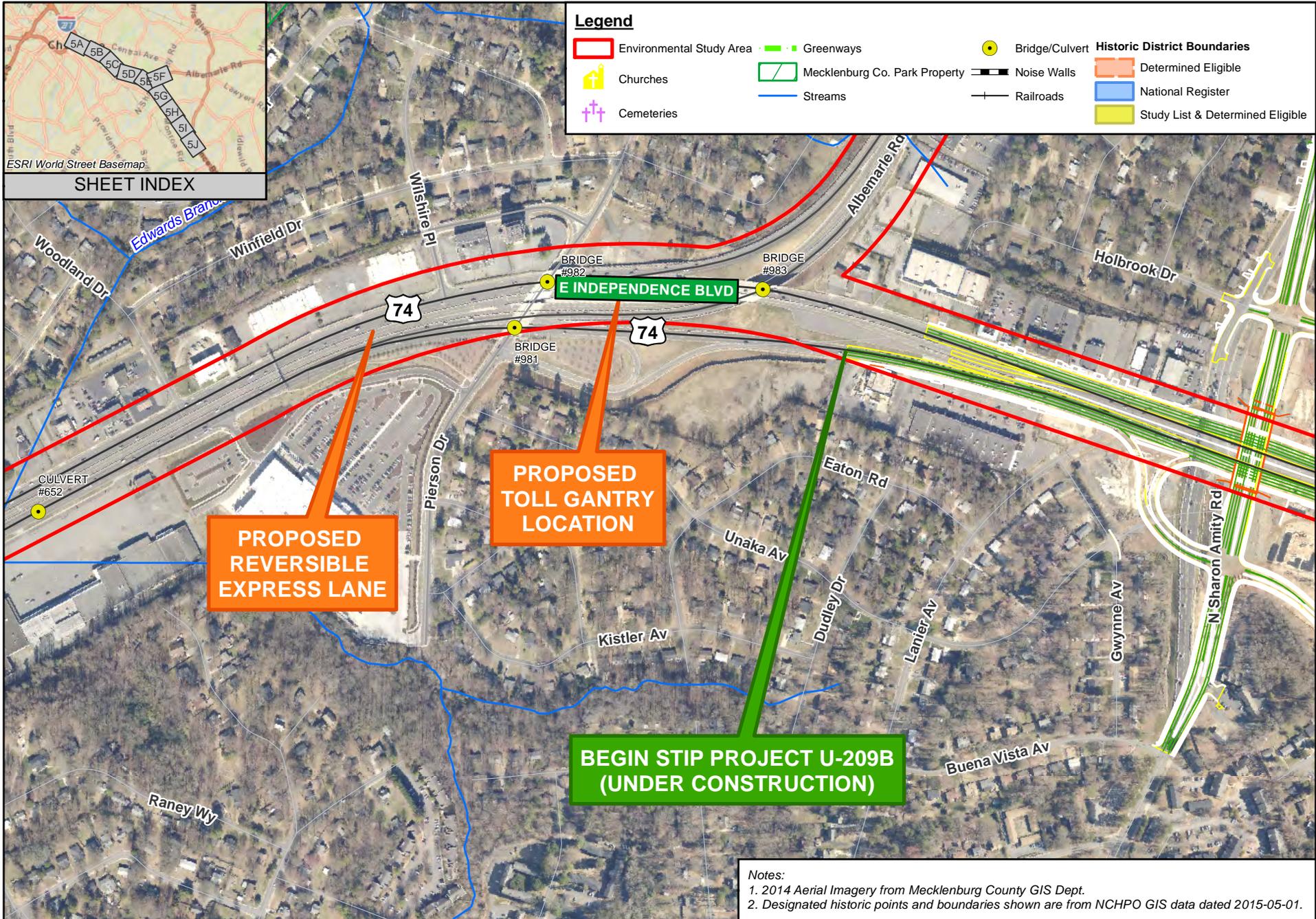
**PROPOSED REVERSIBLE EXPRESS LANE**

Notes:  
 1. 2014 Aerial Imagery from Mecklenburg County GIS Dept.  
 2. Designated historic points and boundaries shown are from NCHPO GIS data dated 2015-05-01.



U.S. 74 (Independence Boulevard)  
 from I-277 to Wallace Lane  
 Charlotte, Mecklenburg County  
 STIP Project No. U-5526A

**ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY AREA  
 AND PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS**  
 Figure 5D



Notes:  
 1. 2014 Aerial Imagery from Mecklenburg County GIS Dept.  
 2. Designated historic points and boundaries shown are from NCHPO GIS data dated 2015-05-01.



U.S. 74 (Independence Boulevard)  
 from I-277 to Wallace Lane  
 Charlotte, Mecklenburg County  
 STIP Project No. U-5526A

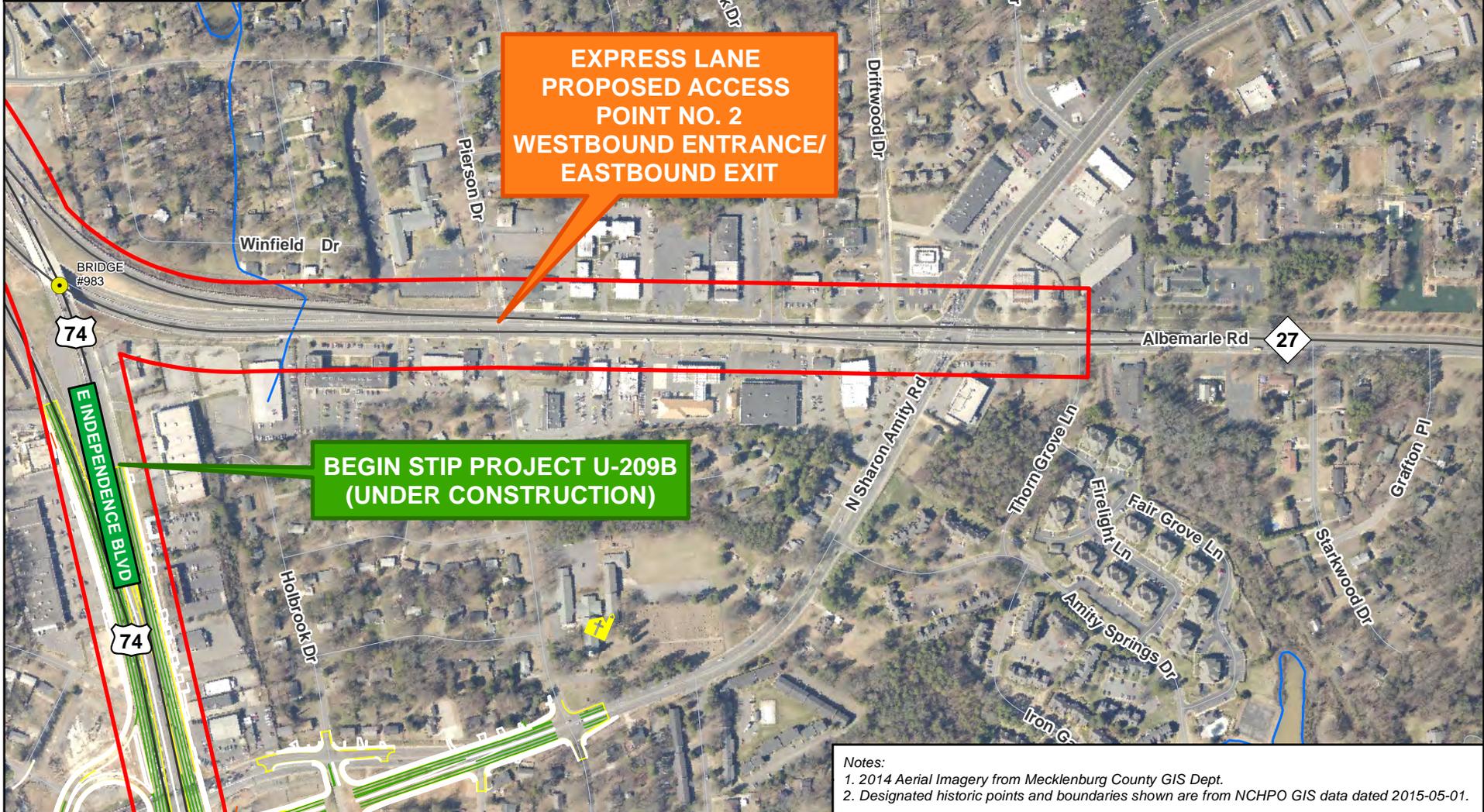
**ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY AREA  
 AND PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS**

**Figure 5E**

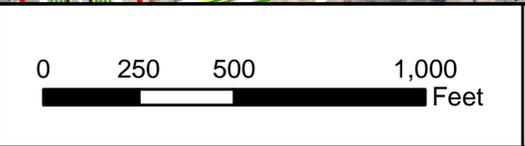


**Legend**

- Environmental Study Area
- Greenways
- Mecklenburg Co. Park Property
- Streams
- Bridge/Culvert
- Noise Walls
- Railroads
- Historic District Boundaries
- Determined Eligible
- National Register
- Study List & Determined Eligible

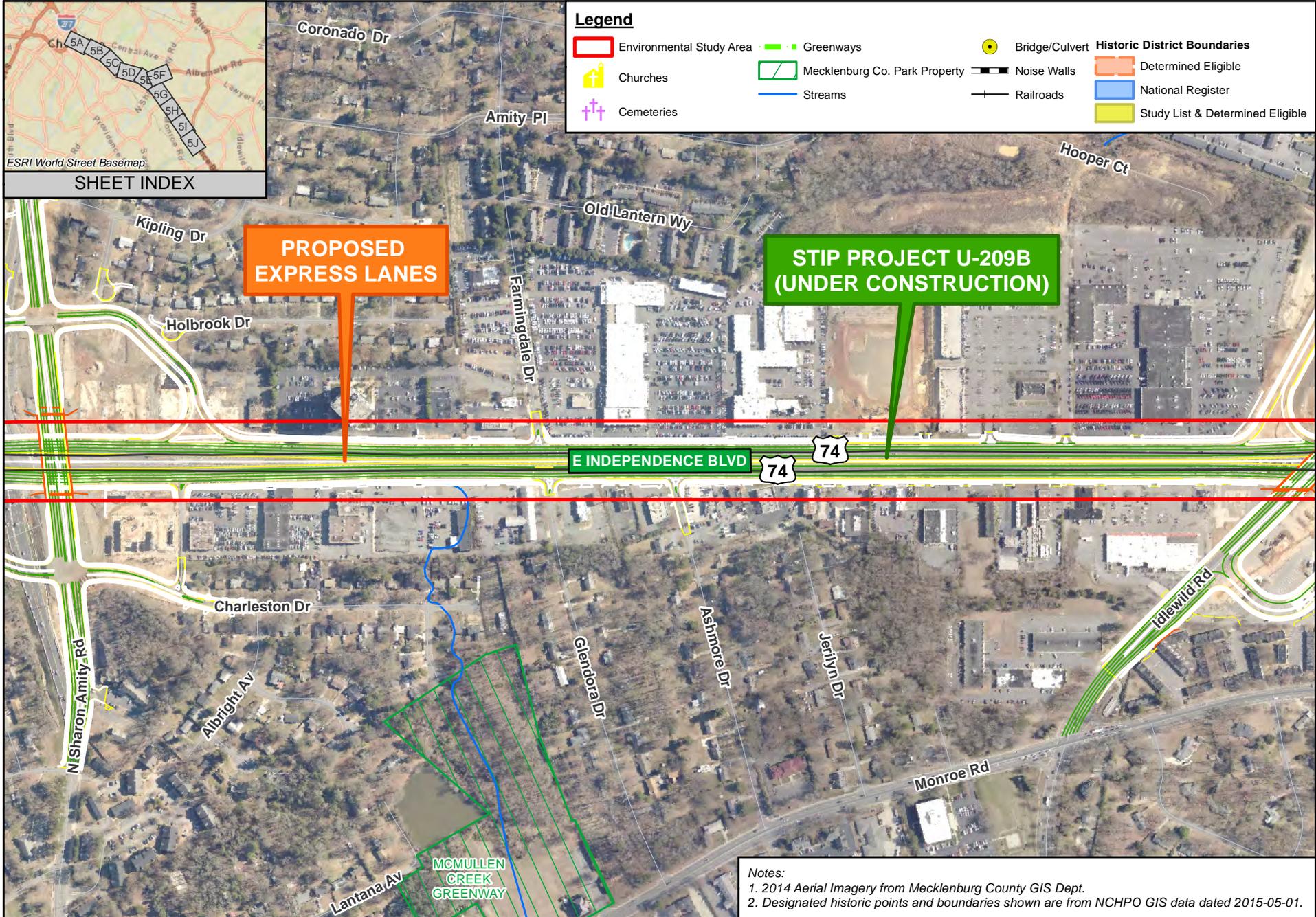


Notes:  
 1. 2014 Aerial Imagery from Mecklenburg County GIS Dept.  
 2. Designated historic points and boundaries shown are from NCHPO GIS data dated 2015-05-01.



U.S. 74 (Independence Boulevard)  
 from I-277 to Wallace Lane  
 Charlotte, Mecklenburg County  
 STIP Project No. U-5526A

**ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY AREA  
 AND PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS**  
 Figure 5F



Legend							
	Environmental Study Area		Greenways		Bridge/Culvert		Historic District Boundaries
	Churches		Mecklenburg Co. Park Property		Noise Walls		Determined Eligible
	Cemeteries		Streams		Railroads		National Register
							Study List & Determined Eligible

**PROPOSED EXPRESS LANES**

**STIP PROJECT U-209B (UNDER CONSTRUCTION)**

**E INDEPENDENCE BLVD**



Notes:  
 1. 2014 Aerial Imagery from Mecklenburg County GIS Dept.  
 2. Designated historic points and boundaries shown are from NCHPO GIS data dated 2015-05-01.



U.S. 74 (Independence Boulevard)  
 from I-277 to Wallace Lane  
 Charlotte, Mecklenburg County  
 STIP Project No. U-5526A

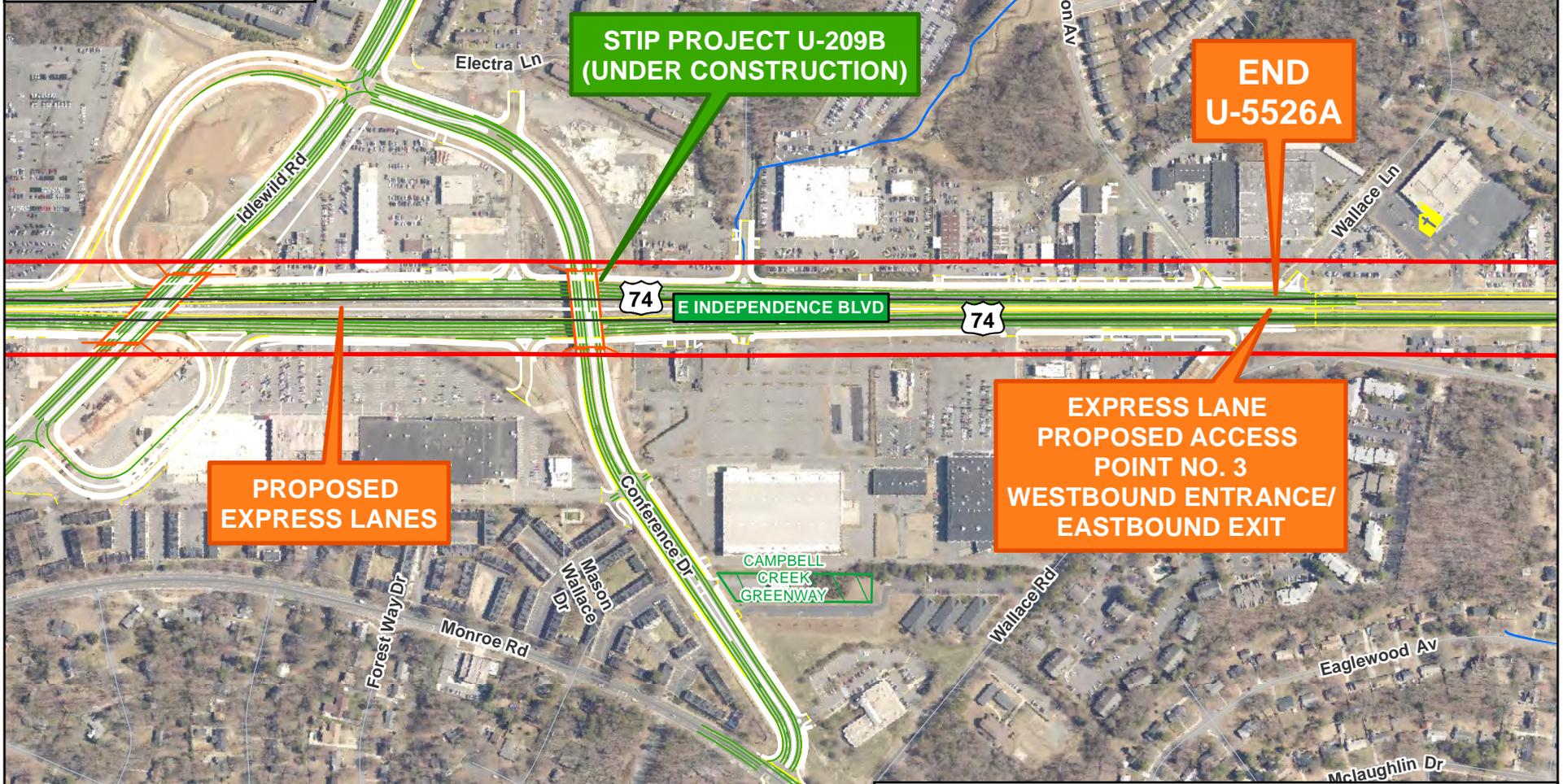
**ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY AREA AND PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS**

**Figure 5G**

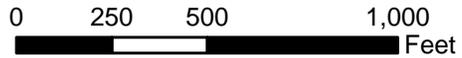


**Legend**

- Environmental Study Area
- Greenways
- Churches
- Mecklenburg Co. Park Property
- ✠ Cemeteries
- Noise Walls
- Streams
- Railroads
- Historic District Boundaries
- National Register
- Study List & Determined Eligible
- Bridge/Culvert

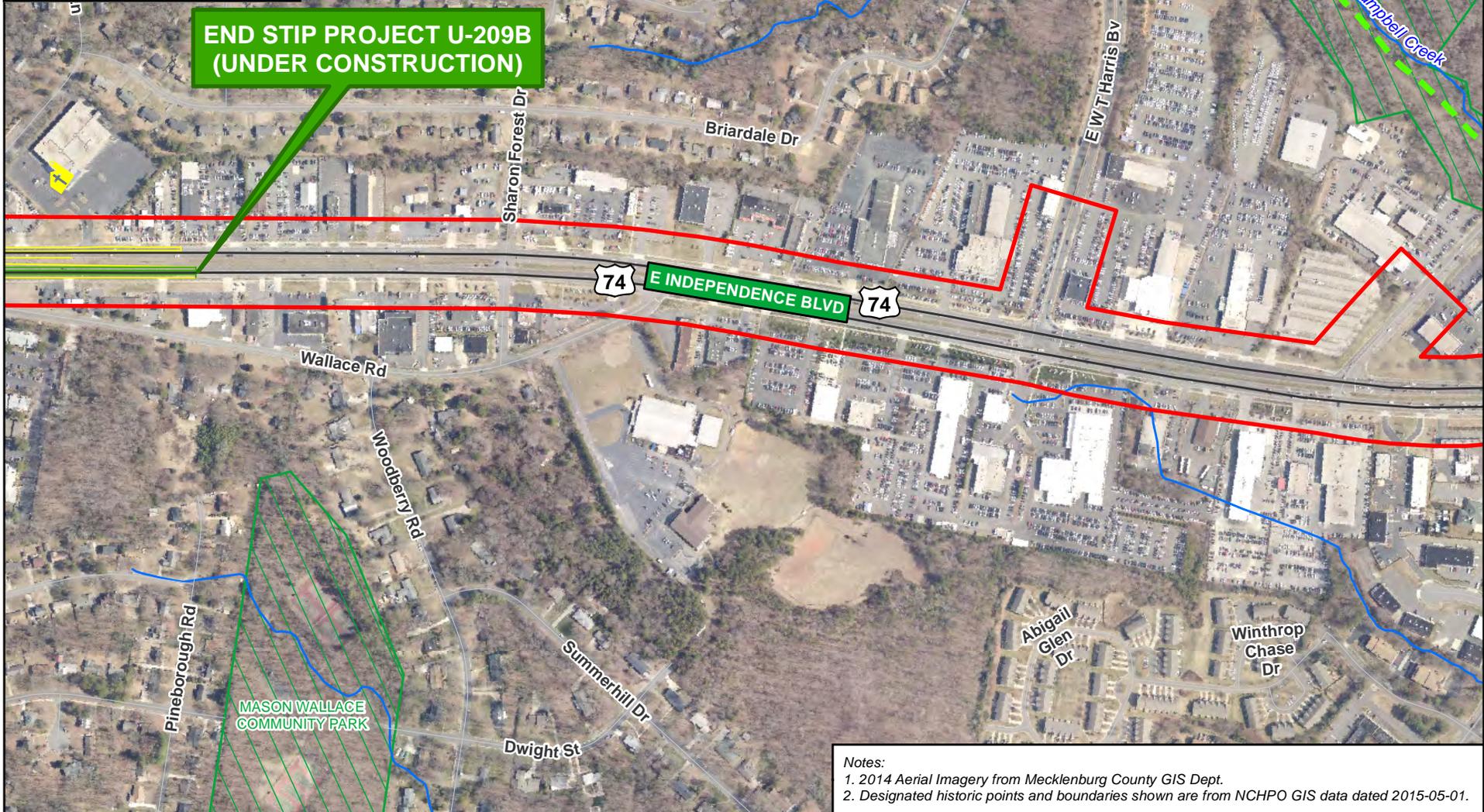


Notes:  
 1. 2014 Aerial Imagery from Mecklenburg County GIS Dept.  
 2. Designated historic points and boundaries shown are from NCHPO GIS data dated 2015-05-01.



U.S. 74 (Independence Boulevard)  
 from I-277 to Wallace Lane  
 Charlotte, Mecklenburg County  
 STIP Project No. U-5526A

**ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY AREA  
 AND PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS**  
**Figure 5H**



Legend		Historic District Boundaries	
Environmental Study Area	Greenways	Bridge/Culvert	Determined Eligible
Churches	Mecklenburg Co. Park Property	Noise Walls	National Register
Cemeteries	Streams	Railroads	Study List & Determined Eligible

Notes:  
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U.S. 74 (Independence Boulevard)  
 from I-277 to Wallace Lane  
 Charlotte, Mecklenburg County  
 STIP Project No. U-5526A

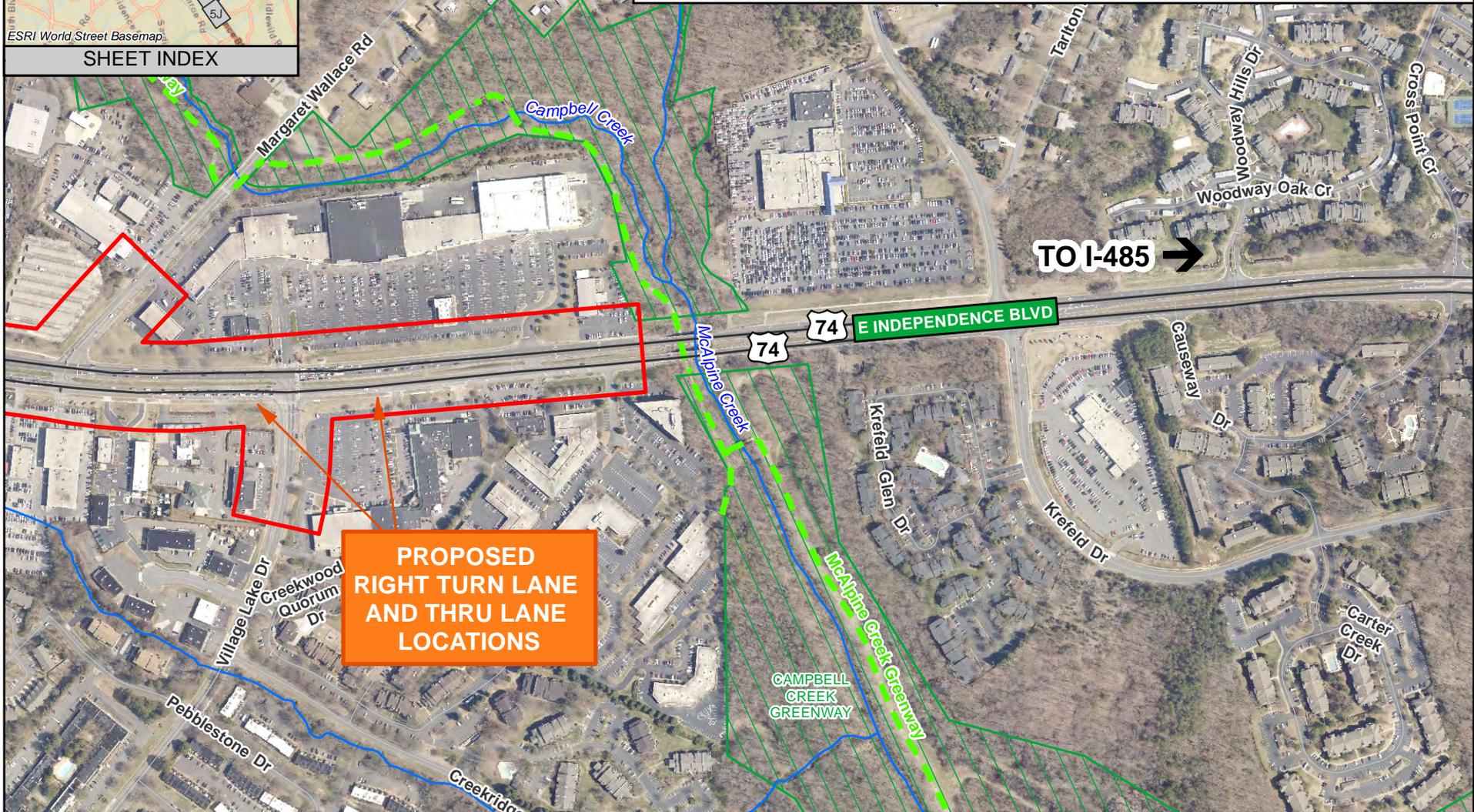
**ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY AREA  
 AND PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS**

**Figure 5I**

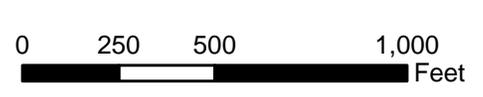


**Legend**

Environmental Study Area	Greenways	Bridge/Culvert	Historic District Boundaries
Churches	Mecklenburg Co. Park Property	Noise Walls	National Register
Cemeteries	Streams	Railroads	Study List & Determined Eligible



Notes:  
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U.S. 74 (Independence Boulevard)  
 from I-277 to Wallace Lane  
 Charlotte, Mecklenburg County  
 STIP Project No. U-5526A

**ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY AREA  
 AND PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS**

**Figure 5J**

# Appendix

**List of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

- AECOM – Engineering Consulting Firm
- BRT- Bus Rapid Transit
- CAA- Clean Air Act
- CATS- Charlotte Area Transit System
- CDOT- Charlotte Department of Transportation
- CE- Categorical Exclusion
- CRTPO- Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization
- EJ- Environmental Justice
- ETC – Electronic Toll Collection
- FHWA – Federal Highway Administration
- GP – General Purpose Lanes
- HOT Lane – High Occupancy Toll Lane
- HOV- High Occupancy Vehicle
- HQW – High Quality Waters
- LEP – Limited English Proficiency
- MTP- Metropolitan Transportation Program
- MUMPO- Mecklenburg-Union Metropolitan Planning Organization
- NAAQS- National Ambient Air Quality Standards
- NCDENR – North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources
- NCDOT – North Carolina Department of Transportation
- NEPA- National Environmental Policy Act
- NRTR – Natural Resources Technical Report
- NWI – National Wetlands Inventory
- PNA – Primary Nursery Areas
- SCDOT – South Carolina Department of Transportation
- SHPO- State Historic Preservation Office
- STIP- State Transportation Improvement Program
- TIP- Transportation Improvement Plan
- ULI- Urban Land Institute
- VPD- Vehicles per Day
- WS-I/ WS-II- Water Supply Watersheds

## References

Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization, *Charlotte Region Fast Lanes Study- Final Corridor Screening Report*, February 15, 2008, [http://ww.charmeck.org/fastlanes/PDFs/Ph\\_1\\_ScreeningReport.pdf](http://ww.charmeck.org/fastlanes/PDFs/Ph_1_ScreeningReport.pdf)

Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization, *Charlotte Region Fast Lanes Study-Phase II Final Report*, July 2009, [http://ww.charmeck.org/fastlanes/PDFs/FinalReport\(2009\\_July\).pdf](http://ww.charmeck.org/fastlanes/PDFs/FinalReport(2009_July).pdf)

Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization, *Charlotte Region Fast Lanes Study- Phase III Results Summary*, [http://www.crtpo.org/PDFs/FastLanes/PDFs/FastLanesPh\\_III\\_Results\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.crtpo.org/PDFs/FastLanes/PDFs/FastLanesPh_III_Results_Summary.pdf)

Urban Land Institute Daniel Rose Center for Public Leadership in Land Use, *Charlotte, North Carolina: Reenergizing, Repositioning and Ensuring the Long-Term Viability of Independence Boulevard*, January 2011.

AECOM, *US 74 Express Lanes Traffic Operations Analysis Documentation of Spot Study A*, June 2015.

NCDOT Human Environment Section (Community Studies Group), *Community Impact Assessment (CIA)*, December 2014.

NCDOT Natural Environment Section, *Natural Resources Technical Report (NRTR)*, October 2014.

NCDOT Geotechnical Engineering Unit, *GeoEnvironmental Report for Planning*, December 2014.

SHPO, *Historic Architecture and Landscapes Assessment of Effects Form*, June 2, 2015.

NCDOT Human Environment Section (Community Studies Group), *Community Characteristics Report (CCR)*, February 2014.

FHWA-HED-11-024, *Environmental Justice Emerging Trends and Best Practices Guidebook*, November 1, 2011.

NCDOT, *Traffic Noise Abatement Policy*, July 2011

Kimley-Horne and Associates, *Air Quality Analysis*, June 2015.



## U.S. 74 Express Lane Projects (STIP No. U-5526 and STIP No. U-2509)

North Carolina Department of Transportation  
Project Development and Environmental Analysis Unit  
Attn: Wilson Stroud  
1548 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1548



# U.S. 74 Express Lane Projects

STIP Project Nos. U-5526 and U-2509  
Mecklenburg County



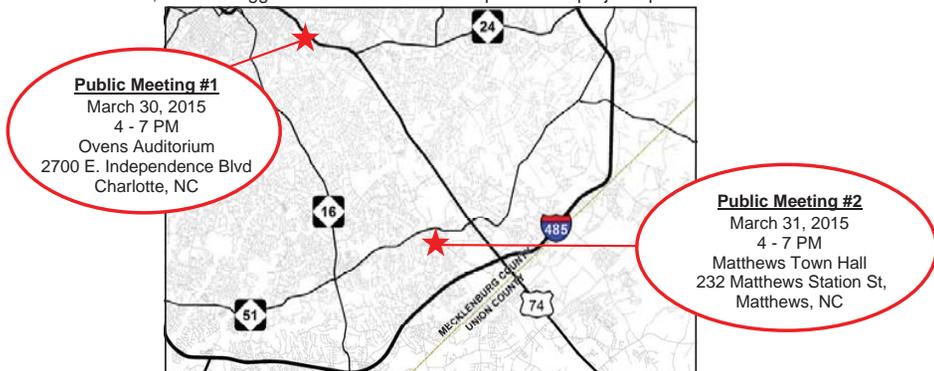
Issue 1 \ \ March 2015

U.S. 74 Express Lane Projects (STIP Nos. U-5526, U-2509)

## Public Meeting Location

**NCDOT Wants Your Input!** Public involvement is an important part of the planning process. NCDOT encourages citizen involvement on transportation projects and will consider your suggestions and address your concerns.

**Public Meeting Location** NCDOT will hold two public meetings within the study area for these projects. Interested citizens may attend either meeting at any time during the below mentioned hours to ask questions, collect information, or offer suggestions on either of the express lane projects presented.



### Public Meeting #1

March 30, 2015  
4 - 7 PM  
Ovens Auditorium  
2700 E. Independence Blvd  
Charlotte, NC

### Public Meeting #2

March 31, 2015  
4 - 7 PM  
Matthews Town Hall  
232 Matthews Station St,  
Matthews, NC

NCDOT will provide auxiliary aids and services under the Americans with Disabilities Act for disabled persons who wish to participate in this meeting. Anyone requiring special services should contact Wilson Stroud at (919) 707-6045 as early as possible so that arrangements can be made.

Para Asistencia en Español favor de Contactar: 1-800-481-6494

## Public Meeting Notice

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) will hold two public meetings for the projects on U.S. 74 in southeast Charlotte. The purpose of these meetings is to present the latest information and answer questions regarding the proposed projects. The opportunity to submit written comments and/or questions will be provided. You are invited to drop in anytime between 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. to ask questions and talk to the project teams.

## Overview of Projects

NCDOT is in the process of performing roadway improvements to increase traffic capacity and implementing a network of express lanes on U.S. 74 in southeastern Charlotte that will provide drivers with reliable travel times on this critical travel corridor. Drivers on this section of U.S. 74, from I-277 to I-485, currently experience congestion on a regular basis. These improvements to U.S. 74 will be accomplished under two projects, STIP No. U-5526 (I-277 to Wallace Lane) and STIP No. U-2509 (Conference Drive to I-485). While these projects are in different stages of development, they are closely related, and the success of the system as a whole relies on the success of each project. This system includes these two projects and also express lanes proposed on I-485 under STIP No. I-5507 and the toll road proposed under the Monroe Bypass project (STIP No. R-3329/R-2559).

## What are Express Lanes?

Express lanes are lanes that allow drivers to choose to pay a fee for a more reliable, quicker trip along a corridor. The management of the lanes can vary from vehicle occupancy criteria to a set price to a payment that varies based on the travel demand at any given time.

## Why Do We Need Express Lanes?

With the growing population, North Carolina faces increasing demand to improve the state's infrastructure. Limited funding, right-of-way restrictions and environmental concerns make adding more lanes an increasingly complex challenge. Recently express lanes have emerged as the most practical solution for providing a reliable travel option and improving mobility in urban, highly congested corridors. They also provide a longer-term management solution than more traditional improvements.

Aquellas personas que hablan español y no hablan inglés, o tienen limitaciones para leer, hablar o entender inglés, podrían recibir servicios de interpretación si los solicitan antes de la reunión llamando al **1-800-481-6494**.

## How Do Express Lanes Work?

Express lanes operate using an electronic tolling system with transponders mounted on the vehicles to collect tolls. Video cameras capture license plates of users without transponders, who are billed by mail and pay a slightly higher rate to cover the cost of collection. There would be no toll plazas and no stopping to pay tolls. Motorists will see signs noting the toll rate, and they will have the option to move into the express lanes or remain in the free general purpose lanes.

### Public Meeting Schedule

#### Public Meeting #1

March 30, 2015

4 - 7 PM

Ovens Auditorium

2700 E. Independence Blvd,  
Charlotte, NC

#### Public Meeting #2

March 31, 2015

4 - 7 PM

Matthews Town Hall

232 Matthews Station St.,  
Matthews, NC

Connecting people and places in North Carolina — safely and efficiently, with accountability and environmental sensitivity to enhance the economy, health and well being of North Carolina.

**STIP NO. U-5526 (U.S. 74: I-277 TO WALLACE LN)**

**Project Description**

U-5526 is the U.S. 74 improvement project from I-277 to Wallace Lane in Charlotte and is a 5.8-mile project that is being proposed for conversion of the existing and under-construction bus lanes along U.S. 74 (Independence Boulevard) to express lanes. The repurposing of the existing lanes will take advantage of the underutilized lanes to provide travel time reliability between I-277 and Wallace Lane. Buses will be allowed to use the new express lanes. The corridor currently operates as an eight-lane freeway/expressway, but experiences periods of high congestion during the morning and afternoon rush hours. One reversible express lane is proposed from I-277 to Albemarle Road (N.C. 27), and two express lanes (one in each direction) are proposed from Albemarle Road to Wallace Lane.

For more information, please visit the project website at: [www.ncdot.gov/projects/U-5526](http://www.ncdot.gov/projects/U-5526)

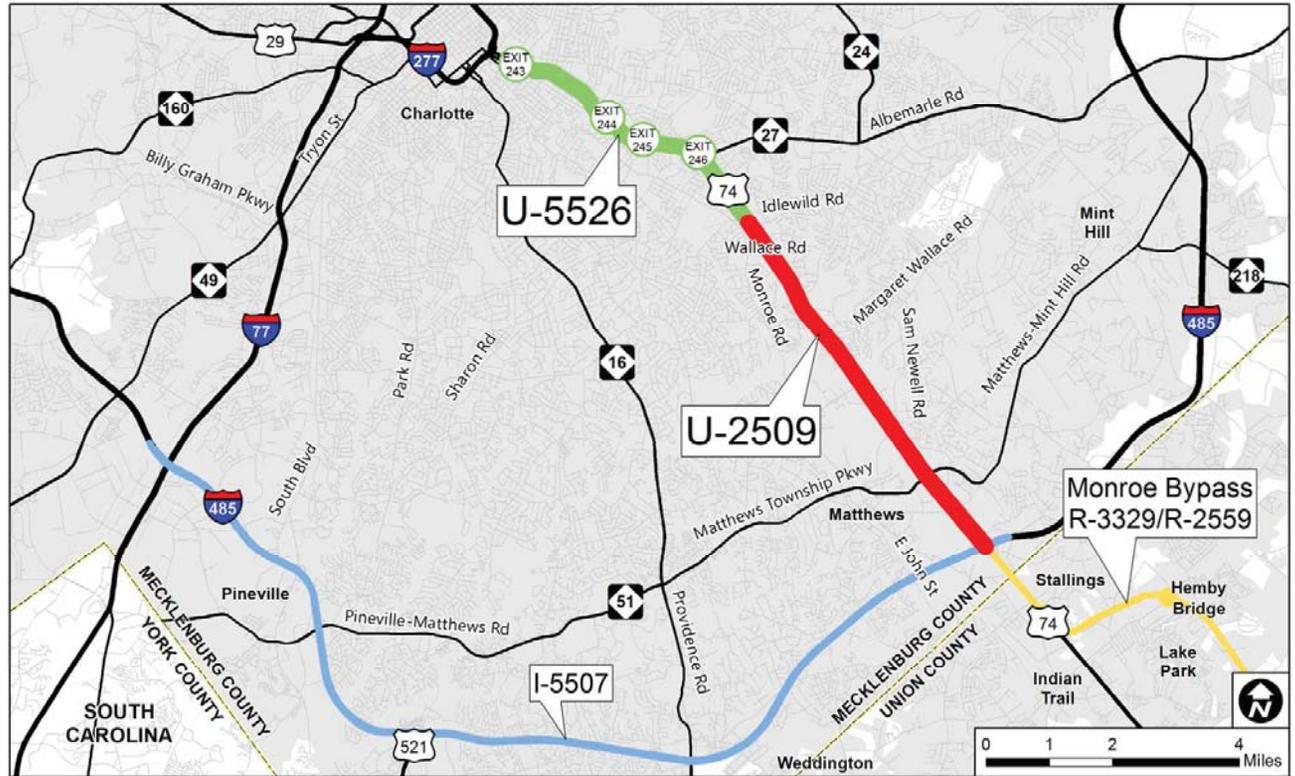
**STIP NO. U-2509 (U.S. 74: CONFERENCE DR TO I-485)**

**Project Description**

U-2509 is the 6.3-mile U.S. 74 improvement project from Conference Drive in Charlotte to I-485 in Matthews that is proposed for widening and the addition of express lanes. The corridor currently operates as a four- to six-lane roadway, but is frequently clogged with heavy congestion. The purpose of this project is to provide a reliable travel time and improve mobility along the corridor, provide system sustainability and maintain and improve community connectivity.

This project will include widening and the addition of express lanes in the median of U.S. 74. Because access along U.S. 74 would be altered and all traffic signals would be removed, the project would include interchanges and grade separated crossings at major cross streets as well as connecting parallel routes to ensure community connectivity.

For more information, please visit the project website at: [www.ncdot.gov/projects/U-2509](http://www.ncdot.gov/projects/U-2509)



**BENEFITS OF EXPRESS LANES**

Travel Options • Travel Time Reliability • Efficient use of highway capacity

**PROJECT SCHEDULES**

	Public Meetings	Public Involvement	Environmental Documents	Right of Way Authorization*	Estimated Construction*
U-5526	March 2015	Continual throughout project process	June 2015	2017	2017
U-2509			First - June 2017 Final - June 2018	2020	2022

\*Subject to Funding



**NCDOT WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU!**

**INFORMATION AND COMMENTS**



For more information about these projects or to express any comments or concerns, contact any of the project managers below. Please refer to the appropriate project number if you know it (U-5526 or U-2509) or to U-5226/U-2509 if you are not sure when writing about the proposed project. All comments and questions will be addressed as soon as possible.

**Mr. Wilson Stroud**  
**U-5526 and U-2509**  
 NC Department of Transportation  
 Project Development and  
 Environmental Analysis Unit  
 1548 Mail Service Center  
 Raleigh, NC 27699  
 (919) 707-6045  
[wstroud@ncdot.gov](mailto:wstroud@ncdot.gov)

**Mr. Tommy Register**  
**U-5526**  
 TGS Engineers  
 706 Hillsborough St.  
 Suite 200  
 Raleigh, NC 27603  
 (919) 773-8887  
[register@tgsengineers.com](mailto:register@tgsengineers.com)

**Mr. Keith Lewis**  
**U-2509**  
 VHB Engineering NC, P.C.  
 4000 WestChase Blvd.  
 Suite 530  
 Raleigh, NC 27607  
 (919) 334-5619  
[kdlewis@vhb.com](mailto:kdlewis@vhb.com)



CHARLOTTE

December 16, 2013

Mr. Richard Hancock, PE  
North Carolina Dept. of Transportation  
Project Development and Environmental Analysis  
1548 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-1548

Subject: State TIP Project # U-5526 – Improvements to Independence Blvd. (US 74)

Dear Richard:

The purpose of this letter is to request that NCDOT consider and evaluate the construction of direct connectors in the environmental screening that NCDOT will be preparing for the U-5526 project.

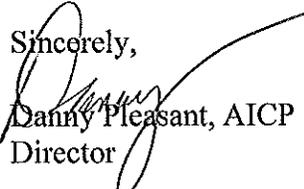
Last month, staff from NCDOT, CDOT and the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) met to discuss this topic. At that meeting, we identified the purpose and benefits of building ramps from the managed lanes in the median of US 74 both east and west of Conference Drive as part of U-5526. Attached is a rendering of what those “T-ramps” could potentially look like.

Also during last month’s meeting, it was agreed that constructing the T-ramps as part of STIP Project U-209 B (which is already under construction) would not be pursued. We made this decision because of a possible delay to the U-209B project and due to the proposed Park and Ride lot in roughly bounded by US 74, Idlewild Road and Conference Drive not being slated for construction in the next 3-5 years.

We also believe that construction of the T-ramps can be accommodated within the overall cost of the U-5526 project and are open to discussing joint funding opportunities. We anticipate that this item will be on the agenda for the scoping meeting when it is scheduled early next year.

We look forward to collaborating with NCDOT to make this project (U-5526) a reality before 2025. If you have questions, etc. about this letter, please contact Tim Gibbs of my staff at 704.336.3917 or [tgibbs@charlottenc.gov](mailto:tgibbs@charlottenc.gov).

Sincerely,

  
Danny Pleasant, AICP  
Director

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

600 East Fourth Street  
Charlotte, NC 28202-2858  
PH: 704/336-4119  
FAX: 704/336-4400

Attachment

c: Norm Steinman, AICP, CDOT  
Tim Gibbs, AICP, CDOT  
Robert Cook, AICP, CRTPO  
Stuart Basham, CRTPO  
David McDonald, CATS  
Stacy Oberhausen, NCDOT-PDEA  
Wilson Stroud, NCDOT-PDEA  
Greg Brew, PE, NCDOT-Roadway Design Unit



North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources  
State Historic Preservation Office

Ramona M. Bartos, Administrator

Governor Pat McCrory  
Secretary Susan Kluttz

Office of Archives and History  
Deputy Secretary Kevin Cherry

February 18, 2014

MEMORANDUM

TO: Wilson Stroud  
NCDOT/PDEA

FROM: Ramona M. Bartos *RMB for Ramona M. Bartos*

SUBJECT External Scoping – Managed Lanes Project, Independence Boulevard (US 74) in Charlotte from Brookshire Freeway (I-277) to Wallace Lane, U-5526, Mecklenburg County, ER 14-0228

Given the nature of the proposed undertaking, we believe the APE has had adequate historic architectural surveys and no further survey work is warranted. Effects upon the historic properties in the APE will need to be addressed.

There are no known archaeological sites within the proposed project area. Based on our knowledge of the area, it is unlikely that any archaeological resources that may be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places will be affected by the project. We, therefore, recommend that no archaeological investigation be conducted in connection with this project.

The above comments are made pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's Regulations for Compliance with Section 106 codified at 36 CFR Part 800.

Thank you for your cooperation and consideration. If you have questions concerning the above comment, contact Renee Gledhill-Earley, environmental review coordinator, at 919-807-6579 or [renee.gledhill-earley@ncdcr.gov](mailto:renee.gledhill-earley@ncdcr.gov). In all future communication concerning this project, please cite the above referenced tracking number.

cc: Mary Pope Furr, NCDOT  
Matt Wilkerson, NCDOT

14-08-0010



**HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE AND LANDSCAPES**  
**\*\*EFFECTS ASSESSMENT REQUIRED FORM\*\***

This form only pertains to Historic Architecture and Landscapes for this project. It is not valid for Archaeological Resources. You must consult separately with the Archaeology Group.

**PROJECT INFORMATION**

<b>Project No:</b>	U-5526	<b>County:</b>	Mecklenburg
<b>WBS No.:</b>	50081.1.2	<b>Document Type:</b>	CE
<b>Fed. Aid No:</b>	NHPP-0074(153)	<b>Funding:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> State <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Federal
<b>Federal Permit(s):</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<b>Permit Type(s):</b>	n/a
<b><u>Project Description:</u></b> Convert bus lanes to managed toll lanes on US 74 (Independence Blvd) from I-277 to Wallace Lane in Charlotte.			

**SUMMARY OF HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE AND LANDSCAPES REVIEW**

**Description of review activities, results, and conclusions:**

In a letter dated February 18, 2014, SHPO states that no field survey will be required for this project. The letter further states that effects for the historic properties within the Area of Potential Effect (APE) will need to be addressed. A review of the HPOweb GIS site indicates that project intersects with Elizabeth Historic District (MK 866) and the Old Charlotte Coliseum (MK 1779). There are other National Register eligible properties adjacent to US 74. Depending on the locations of tolling stations and the placement of ITS and signage that may be visible from the historic properties, these may need to be included in the effects discussion.

**SUPPORT DOCUMENTATION**

Map(s)     Previous Survey Info.     Photos     Correspondence     Design Plans

**FINDING BY NCDOT ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN**

Historic Architecture and Landscapes -- **\*\*EFFECTS ASSESSMENT REQUIRED\*\***

*Shelby Reap*

NCDOT Architectural Historian

*Aug 25, 2014*

Date

14-08-0010



## HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE AND LANDSCAPES ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS FORM

This form only pertains to Historic Architecture and Landscapes for this project. It is not valid for Archaeological Resources. You must consult separately with the Archaeology Group.

### PROJECT INFORMATION

<b>Project No.:</b>	U-5526	<b>County:</b>	Mecklenburg
<b>WBS No.:</b>	50081.1.2	<b>Document Type:</b>	CE
<b>Fed. Aid No.:</b>	NHPP-0074(153)	<b>Funding:</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Federal
<b>Federal Permit(s):</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<b>Permit Type(s):</b>	
<b><u>Project Description:</u></b> Convert bus lanes to managed toll lanes on US-74 (Independence Blvd) between I-277 and Wallace Lane in Charlotte			

### SUMMARY OF HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE AND LANDSCAPES REVIEW

<b><u>Description of review activities, results, and conclusions:</u></b> On February 18, 2014 NC HPO issues a letter to NCDOT stating that the APE of this project had been adequately surveyed for historic properties and no other survey work was warranted. A discussion of effects to known historic properties within the APE need to be addressed. On June 2, 2015 NCDOT presented the design plans to NC HPO and FHWA and the following effects determinations were made.
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### ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS

<b>Property Name:</b>	Elizabeth Historic District	<b>Status:</b>	NR
<b>Survey Site No.:</b>	MK0866	<b>PIN:</b>	
<b>Effects</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Effect <input type="checkbox"/> No Adverse Effect <input type="checkbox"/> Adverse Effect			
<b><u>Explanation of Effects Determination:</u></b> all signs within NCDOT ROW - inside lanes only to be resurfaced			

List of Environmental Commitments:

<b>Property Name:</b>	Old Charlotte Coliseum	<b>Status:</b>	SLDOE
<b>Survey Site No.:</b>	MK1779	<b>PIN:</b>	

**Effects**  
 No Effect                       No Adverse Effect                       Adverse Effect

Explanation of Effects Determination:  
all signs within NCDOT ROW - inside lanes only to be resurfaced

List of Environmental Commitments:

<b>Property Name:</b>	J.N. Pease Associates	<b>Status:</b>	SLDOE
<b>Survey Site No.:</b>	MK2188	<b>PIN:</b>	

**Effects**  
 No Effect                       No Adverse Effect                       Adverse Effect

Explanation of Effects Determination:  
all signs within NCDOT ROW - inside lanes only to be resurfaced.

List of Environmental Commitments:

<b>Property Name:</b>	South 21 Drive-In, No. 2 Restaurant	<b>Status:</b>	SLDOE
<b>Survey Site No.:</b>	MK1781	<b>PIN:</b>	
<b>Effects</b>			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Effect <input type="checkbox"/> No Adverse Effect <input type="checkbox"/> Adverse Effect			
<b><u>Explanation of Effects Determination:</u></b>			
all signs within NCDOT ROW - inside lanes only to be resurfaced			
<b><u>List of Environmental Commitments:</u></b>			

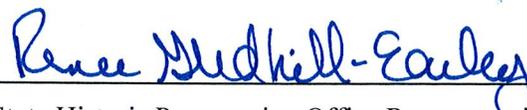
**SUPPORT DOCUMENTATION**

Map(s)    
  Previous Survey Info.    
  Photos    
  Correspondence    
  Design Plans

**FINDING BY NCDOT AND STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE**

Historic Architecture and Landscapes – ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS


6/2/2015  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 NCDOT Architectural Historian Date


6.2.15  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 State Historic Preservation Office Representative Date


6/2/15  
 \_\_\_\_\_