

MERGER CONCURRENCE POINT NUMBER 1
PURPOSE AND NEED AND STUDY AREA DEFINED

Upgrade US 74 to Interstate Standards
from US 74 Business east of Hamlet to US 74 Business west of Laurinburg
Richmond and Scotland Counties
STIP Project I-6055

North Carolina Department of Transportation
Division 8



MERGER CONCURRENCE POINT NUMBER 1

June 17, 2026
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

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1 Introduction

The lead federal agency for the proposed project is the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Other primary points of contact for the subject project are included in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Project Contact List

Agency	Name	Email
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)	Seth Wilcher	seth.wilcher@dot.gov
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)	Steve Brumagin	stephen.a.brumagin@usace.army.mil
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)	Gary Jordan	Gary_jordan@fws.gov
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	Amanetta Somerville	somerville.amanetta@epa.gov
North Carolina Division of Water Resources (NCDWR)	Ryan Conchilla Parisa Sarzaeim	ryan.conchilla@deq.nc.gov parisa.sarzaeim@deq.nc.gov
North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC)	Travis Wilson	travis.wilson@ncwildlife.org
State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)	Renee Gledhill-Earley	renee.gledhill-early@ncdcr.gov
Lumber River Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO)	Janet Robertson	jfr@lrcog.org
North Carolina Department of Transportation	Jeff Stroder	jstroder@ncdot.gov
Mott MacDonald	Aileen Mayhew	aileen.mayhew@mottmac.com

The purpose of this meeting is to reach concurrence on CP 1, Purpose and Need and Study Area defined.

1.1 Project Description

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration, is proposing to upgrade US 74 to interstate standards from US 74 Business east of Hamlet to US 74 Business west of Laurinburg in Richmond and Scotland Counties, North Carolina. The ten-mile project is identified in the current 2026-2035 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) as Project No. I-6055 and includes upgrading the US 74/Future I-74 corridor to interstate standards. The project location is shown in **Figure 1**.

1.2 Project History and Merger Plan

The proposed action is included in the [Scotland County Comprehensive Transportation Plan \(CTP\)](#), [Scotland County Comprehensive Plan](#), [Richmond County CTP](#), [Richmond County Strategic Land Use Plan](#), [NC Strategic Transportation Corridors Vision Plan-Corridor U](#), and the [2026-2035 current STIP](#).

- [Scotland County CTP \(2016\)](#)
 - The CTP recommends upgrading this section of US 74 to interstate standards with an interchange at SR 1319 (Old Wire Road) and grade separations at SR 1148 (St. Johns Church Road) and Laurel Hill Church Road/SR 1321 (Elmore Road).
 - The CTP identifies US 74 as needing improvement and noted that US 74 within Scotland County does not meet the future mobility needs and vision for the I-74 corridor.

- The CTP identifies the US 74 corridor as a Strategic Transportation Corridor (STC), serving as a major freight corridor within the North Carolina Transportation Network (NCTN).
- Scotland County Comprehensive Plan (March 10, 2025)
 - The Plan notes that the upgrade of US 74 to I-74 is the number one transportation project priority for Scotland County along with completion of all the I-74 corridor within the Lumber River Rural Transportation Planning Organization (LRRPO) region.
 - The Plan notes a goal to promote intergovernmental collaboration which includes continuing to “participate in the LRRPO to better plan for highway and other transportation development within Scotland and neighboring counties including the continued development of the US 74 interstate corridor.”
- Richmond County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) (March 7, 2016)
 - The highway map identifies US 74 as a recommended freeway.
- Richmond County Strategic Land Use Plan (Adopted 2022)
 - The Plan includes strategies with objectives to support the goals of the Plan.
 - One such strategy is to “support NCDOT efforts to complete, upgrade, or widen roads such as Interstate 73/74 and/or state roads within the county.”
- NC Strategic Transportation Corridors: Vision Plan-Corridor U: U.S. 74/I-85/I-485 (December 7, 2020)
 - The proposed project is a portion of Corridor U, which has a long-term vision of a freeway cross-section with a minimum of four lanes, a median, and interchange-only access.
 - The Plan notes that the portion of US 74 within the proposed study area is identified as “Freeway Needs Improvement.”

The 2026-2035 current STIP presents a total estimated project cost of \$275,600,000.

Table 2: 2026-2035 Draft STIP I-6055 Cost Estimate

Phase	Estimated Costs*
Right-of-Way	\$ 43,000,000
Utilities	\$ 8,500,000
Construction	\$ 224,100,000
Total	\$ 275,600,000

Note: * denotes the STIP project costs are draft and subject to change

A Merger Screening for the project was held on April 9, 2025. It was determined the project should follow the Merger Process due to the potential for substantial impacts to resources and a large number of relocations due to major changes in access along the corridor. At this time, there are numerous unknowns regarding the proposed project, including resources that need to be further evaluated or analyzed to understand if there are conflicts among resources.

Based on the proposed [I-6055 Merger Plan](#), NCDOT proposes the following schedule for future Merger Meetings. The proposed draft schedule is included in **Table 3** and is subject to change. The proposed project is funded through preliminary engineering only; therefore, there are currently no anticipated dates for right-of-way acquisition or construction.

Table 3: I-6055 Project Schedule

Milestone	Format	Anticipated Date
CP 1 - Purpose and Need; Study Area Defined	In-Person	June 17, 2026
CP2 - Detailed Study Alternatives Carried Forward	In-Person	Fall 2026
Public Meeting	In-Person	TBD
CP 2A - Bridging Decisions and Alignment Review	In-Person	TBD
CP 3 - LEDPA / Preferred Alternative Selection	In-Person	TBD
CP 4A - Avoidance & Minimization	Email Correspondence	TBD
CP 4B - Hydraulic Design Review	Virtual Meeting	TBD
CP 4C - Permit Drawings Review	Virtual Meeting	TBD

1.3 Other STIP Projects

The 2026-2035 current STIP lists several projects in the area of STIP I-6055 that are shown on **Figure 2** and included in **Table 4**.

Table 4: Nearby 2026-2035 Draft STIP Projects

STIP No.	Route	Location/Description	Funding Schedule
HO-0002B	US 74	Install broadband and ITS components including connections to signal systems, DMS, and CCTV from the eastern end of the Monroe Bypass to I-95 in Lumberton	Under Construction
HO-0002D	US 74	Vulnerability assessments, installation of flood gauges, and flood monitoring from the eastern end of the Monroe Bypass to I-140 in Wilmington	In Progress
HS-2008E	US 74	Convert US 74 at NC 144 (Morgan Street)/SR 1148 (St. Johns Church Road) to a signalized Reduced Conflict Intersection (RCI)	Under construction

2 Existing Conditions

2.1 Transportation Features

Within the project limits, US 74 is a four-lane, median divided facility with full-movement median openings at most crossing roads, except for several intersections near the Laurel Hill community where directional crossovers, some with U-turn bulbs, accommodate turning movements. There are 13 at-grade intersections along the corridor, in addition to numerous driveways and minor streets that intersect US 74. The posted speed limit of 70 miles per hour (mph) at the western project limit decreases to 55 mph within the project limits and reduces to 45 mph through Laurel Hill, increasing to 55 mph after Ida Mill Road and again to 70 mph at the eastern project termini.

Existing US 74 is classified as a Primary Arterial-Freeway/Expressway in the NCDOT Functional Classification system. In NCDOT's functional classification system, "Primary Arterial-Freeway/Expressway" are roadways that serve major centers of activity, carry high traffic volumes, and facilitate long trips.

As a primary arterial, US 74 does not provide bicycle or pedestrian accommodations along the corridor and there are no pedestrian crosswalks located within the project area.

The existing roadways in the project study area are shown on the Environmental Features Maps (Figures 3A-3D) and are described below beginning at the western terminus near Hamlet heading east toward Laurinburg.

Table 5: Existing Roadways in the Project Study Area

Roadway	Type of Intersection at US 74	Typical Section	Speed Limit (mph)	Functional Classification
SR 1846: Question Road	At-grade median crossover	2-lane, grass shoulders	Not posted	Local
SR 1156: Joes Creek Road	At-grade median crossover	2-lane, grass shoulders	55	Local
SR 1155: Guinns Mill Road	At-grade median crossover	2-lane, grass shoulders	55	Local
Seven Springs Road (private)	At-grade median crossover	2-lane, grass shoulders	Not posted	Local
SR 1347: McEachin Road	At-grade median crossover	2-lane, grass shoulders	Statutory 55	Local
SR 1145: Corbitt Road	At-grade median crossover	2-lane, grass shoulders	Statutory 55	Local
SR 1348: Old Hundred Road	At-grade median crossover	Unmarked paved roadway, no shoulders	Not posted	Local
Pate Road (private)	At-grade median crossover	Unpaved one-lane road	Not posted	Local
SR 1153: Butler Road	At-grade median crossover	2-lane, grass shoulders	55	Local
SR 1363: Fred Carter Road	At-grade median crossover	2-lane, grass shoulders	55	Local
Whispering Pines Rd (private)	At-grade median crossover	Unpaved one-lane road	Not posted	Local
SR 1152: Old Wire Road (S of US 74)	RCI	2-lane, grass shoulders	55	Minor Collector
SR 1319: Old Wire Road (N of US 74)	RCI	2-lane, grass shoulders	35	Major Collector
SR 1148: St Johns Church Road	Signalized	2-lane, grass shoulders	35	Local
NC 144: Morgan Street	Signalized	2-lane, curb & gutter	20	Local
SR 1251: Murdock Street	RCI	2-lane, grass shoulders	Statutory 55	Local
SR 1312: Church Street	RCI	2-lane, grass shoulders	35	Local
SR 1208: Shannon Drive	Right-in/right-out	Unmarked paved roadway; curb & gutter	Not posted	Local
SR 1125: Springs Mill Road	Right-in/right-out	2-lane, grass shoulders	45	Minor Collector
SR 1305: Ida Mill Road	Right-in/right-out	2-lane, grass shoulders	55	Local
SR 1304: Armstrong Road	At-grade median crossover	2-lane, grass shoulders	Statutory 55	Local
SR 1321: Elmore Road	RCI	2-lane, grass shoulders	55	Local

2.2 Environmental Features

Environmental resources and notable features in the project area are shown on the Environmental Features Maps (**Figures 3A-3D**). The project is located between the City of Hamlet and the City of Laurinburg. Land use surrounding US 74 in this area is mostly wooded undeveloped or agricultural with some industrial facilities, churches, small businesses, and single-family residential properties along the corridor. Development through the area is predominantly concentrated at intersections.

2.2.1 Natural Environment

The proposed project is in the Lumber River basin (U.S. Geological Survey [USGS] Hydraulic Unit [HUC] 0304020401). There are no water supply watersheds (WS-I or WS-II) within 1.0 mile downstream of the study area. There are no primary nursery areas (PNA) or anadromous fish within the study area. Additionally, there are no North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC)-designated trout waters within 1.0 mile of the study area. The North Carolina 2024 Draft 303(d) list of impaired waters identified no waters within 1.0 mile downstream of the study area as impaired. There are no Wild and Scenic Rivers within one mile of the study area.

Based on available GIS data, the following streams are present within the project study area: Joes Creek, UT to Joes Creek, Gum Swamp Creek, UT to Gum Swamp Creek, and Lower Beaverdam Creek. In addition, there are freshwater forested/shrub wetlands located in the study area based on GIS data. Portions of the project study area are located within the 100-year floodplain.

2.2.2 Cultural Resources

According to HPO's website, there are two resources located near the study area that were determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places during a 2001 historic architecture survey.

- Francis Marion Gibson House (SC0081) - 17141 Springs Mill Road
- Hector McLean House (SC0282) - 15842 Elmore Road

Additional cultural resource reviews will be conducted within the project study area.

2.2.3 GeoEnvironmental

Based on GIS data, there are several active geoenvironmental sites within the study area. In addition, there are heavy utility conflicts along the US 74 corridor, including transmission towers that run parallel to the US 74 corridor and cross the US 74 corridor twice near Hamlet and south of Laurel Hill.

3 Project Purpose and Need

3.1 Identified Needs

Future Interstate 74 (I-74) is planned to extend from Davenport, Iowa to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Within North Carolina, I-74 will extend from the Virginia State Line in Surry County to the South Carolina State Line in Brunswick County. This proposed corridor will provide connections between major cities, other interstates, rail facilities, seaports, airports, and will improve rural economies through improved access to urban and national markets.

The approximately ten-mile section of US 74 between Hamlet and Laurinburg is the only non-freeway segment of the proposed I-74 corridor between I-40 south of Winston-Salem and I-95 south of Lumberton, a distance of approximately 151 miles.

As a North Carolina Strategic Transportation Corridor, the US 74/Future I-74 corridor is part of a core network that moves large volumes of people and freight across the state and to key markets outside the state. The US 74/Future I-74 corridor is also part of the Nation's Strategic Highway Network (STRAHNET) which is critical to the Department of Defense's domestic operations and provides a system of roads deemed necessary for emergency mobilization and peacetime movement of commodities to support U.S. military operations.

Within the project limits, US 74 includes frequent driveways and at-grade intersections which allow turning movements that hinder traffic flow and impede traffic operations and mobility. In addition to prohibiting signing this portion of the proposed I-74 corridor as interstate, the at-grade intersections and driveways along US 74 between Hamlet and Laurinburg are less desirable from a traffic safety and efficiency perspective than a facility meeting interstate standards.

A total of 350 crashes occurred within the project study area within a 5-year period (2019-2024), including seven crashes where a fatality occurred. Five of the seven fatal crashes occurred between Ida Mill Road and Elmore Road, one fatal crash occurred near the western project limit, and one fatal crash occurred east of McEachin Road.

The most common crash patterns along the corridor were rear end, slow, or stop, totaling 96 (27.4%) of the 350 crashes. Fifty-nine crashes occurred at or within 0.10 mile of the US 74/St. Johns Church Road/Morgan Street intersection. Nearly 50% of those crashes were rear end, slow, or stop crashes. Thirteen crashes occurred at the US 74/Old Wire Road intersection, all of which were rear end, slow, or stop crashes. Within the project limits, the US 74 corridor does not exceed the critical crash rate for Rural US Routes for any of the crash types compared.

Crashes are often the visible result of deficiencies in the capacity and safety characteristics of a transportation facility. Moreover, they contribute to delays, congestion, and driver frustration.

3.2 Proposed Purpose

The purpose of the proposed action is to improve regional and statewide mobility in the I-74 corridor between Hamlet and Laurinburg by implementing improvements that are consistent with current interstate standards.

The project will provide the following benefits:

- Improve traffic operations along the corridor
- Enhance the ability of the corridor to serve the regional transportation function in accordance with the North Carolina Strategic Transportation Corridors Plan, specifically the goals pertaining to system connectivity, mobility, and economic prosperity
- Provide interstate connection for the project area to other major interstates, rail facilities, and ports

Other desirable outcomes of the project are a reduced potential for crashes due to the elimination of driveways and intersections and thus, reducing/eliminating exposure to conflicting movements and fulfilling the Strategic Transportation Corridor vision.

3.3 Purpose and Need Statement

The purpose of the proposed project is to improve regional and statewide mobility in the I-74 corridor between Hamlet and Laurinburg by implementing improvements that are consistent with current interstate standards. Supporting the NCDOT STC plan to upgrade the US 74 corridor through southwest North Carolina, from I-26 in Polk County to US 117 in Wilmington, to interstate standards will provide connectivity and promote the economic vitality of the corridor. This project is also needed to comply with the Congress approved Future I-74 designation of this route from the Virginia State Line in Surry County to the South Carolina State Line in Brunswick County. The US 74 corridor is key in the regional economic development strategy, providing connections between major cities, other interstates, rail facilities, seaports, airports, and improving rural economies through improved access to urban and national markets.

4 Traffic Operations and Analysis

4.1 Traffic Forecast

The Traffic Forecast Report (November 2024) notes traffic along the US 74 corridor ranges from 23,300 vehicles per day (vpd) to 25,300 vpd in the base year (2024) and 33,700 vpd to 36,600 vpd in the future year (2050), an increase of about 45%. The no-build traffic volumes are shown in **Figure 4**.

4.2 Existing and Future No-Build Analysis

The effectiveness of a roadway in serving the travel demand is measured in terms of level of service (LOS). The LOS is defined with letter designations from A through F. LOS A represents no congestion and LOS F represents more traffic demand than road capacity and extreme delays. LOS D represents the level of congestion on a roadway at which the public begins to express dissatisfaction.

Based on the traffic forecast and no-build traffic capacity analysis for the base year, the overall intersection LOS for US 74 at St. Johns Church Road and Morgan Street is LOS B in both the AM and PM peak hours. Based on a review of the unsignalized intersection operations, the following unsignalized intersections have a lane group operating at LOS E or F in the base year no-build scenario:

- US 74 at McEachin Road
- US 74 at Corbitt Road / Old Hundred Road
- US 74 at Armstrong Road

Based on the no-build traffic capacity analysis for the future year (2050), the overall intersection LOS for US 74 at St. Johns Church Road and Morgan Street is LOS B or better in both the AM and PM peak hours.

Based on a review of the unsignalized intersection operations, the following unsignalized intersections have a lane group operating at LOS E or F in the future year no-build scenario:

- US 74 at McEachin Road
- US 74 at Corbitt Road / Old Hundred Road
- US 74 at Old Wire Road
- US 74 at Murdock Road
- US 74 at Church Street
- US 74 at Armstrong Road
- US 74 at Elmore Road

5 Project Study Area Defined

The proposed study area developed to address the Purpose and Need of I-6055 is shown in **Figure 5**. The proposed study area includes a width of 3,000 feet (1,500 feet either side of the centerline) throughout the length of the corridor, beginning east of Hamlet and extending approximately 10 miles to the project terminus, west of Laurinburg. The proposed study area extends an additional 2,000 feet along McEachin Road and extends an additional 2,000 feet south of Laurel Hill. The proposed study area was extended along McEachin Road to accommodate a potential realignment of McEachin Road and extended further south near Laurel Hill to accommodate a new location alternative to avoid expected high impacts to the Laurel Hill community, including obtaining full control of access and constructing an interchange at NC 144 on existing US 74. The proposed study area would encompass all direct impacts and temporary construction impacts associated with proposed realignments and interchanges, new location roadways, and potential service roads.

6 Avoidance and Minimization

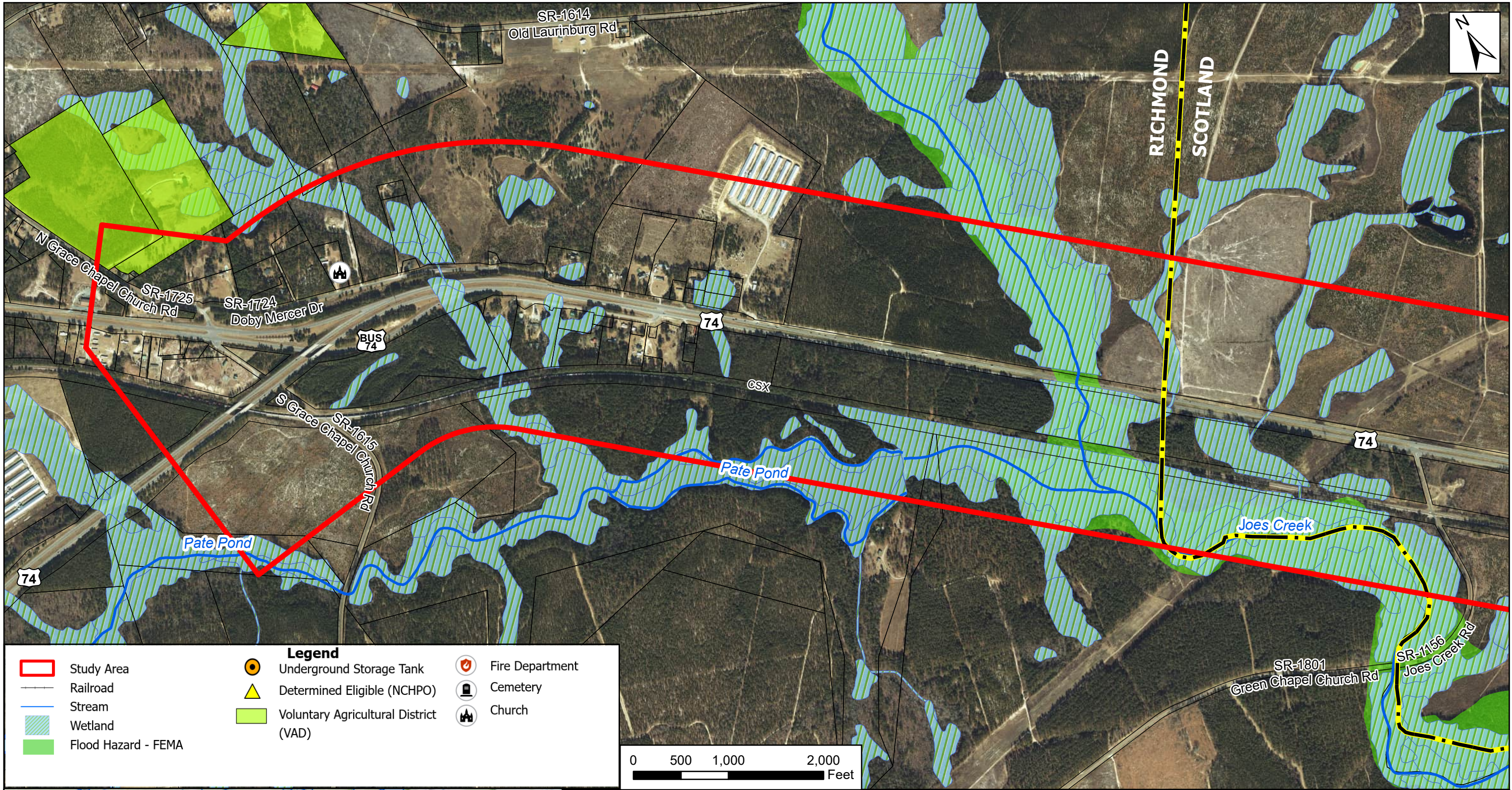
During project scoping, the study area limits were selected to avoid or minimize impacts to nearby wetlands and known cultural resources. As the project progresses through design, additional avoidance and minimization measures will be identified and documented.

7 Merger Plan Review/Next Steps

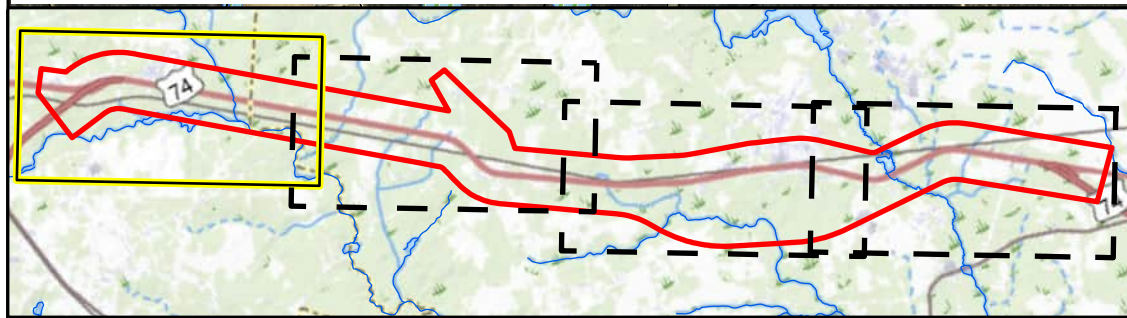
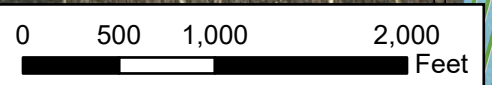
The Merger Plan currently has separate meetings for all the concurrence points. Based on the Merger Plan for the project, NCDOT proposes that the next Merger Meeting will be held to discuss detailed study alternatives to be carried forward (Concurrence Point 2 (CP2)). Prior to the next Merger Meeting, a meeting summary and signed concurrence form for CP 1 will be distributed.

In addition, NCDOT will complete conceptual roadway designs for the proposed study alternatives based on shell plan sheet mapping surveyed data. NCDOT will verify that the design provided includes appropriate horizontal alignment, vertical alignment, slope stake limits, and/or buffers to show quantifiable potential impacts, as available, to the resources evaluated at each concurrence point. This level of design may be dependent on project characteristics, types of resources in the area, schedule, and available mapping. Generally, impact calculations will be buffered 40 feet from slope stake limits for CP 2. The CP 2 meeting is anticipated to be held in Fall 2026. Merger Team members will be notified of any changes that require a revision to this timetable.

FIGURES

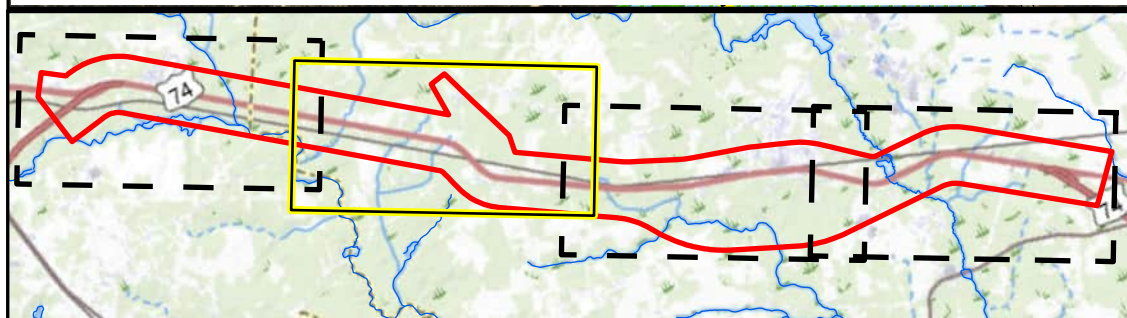
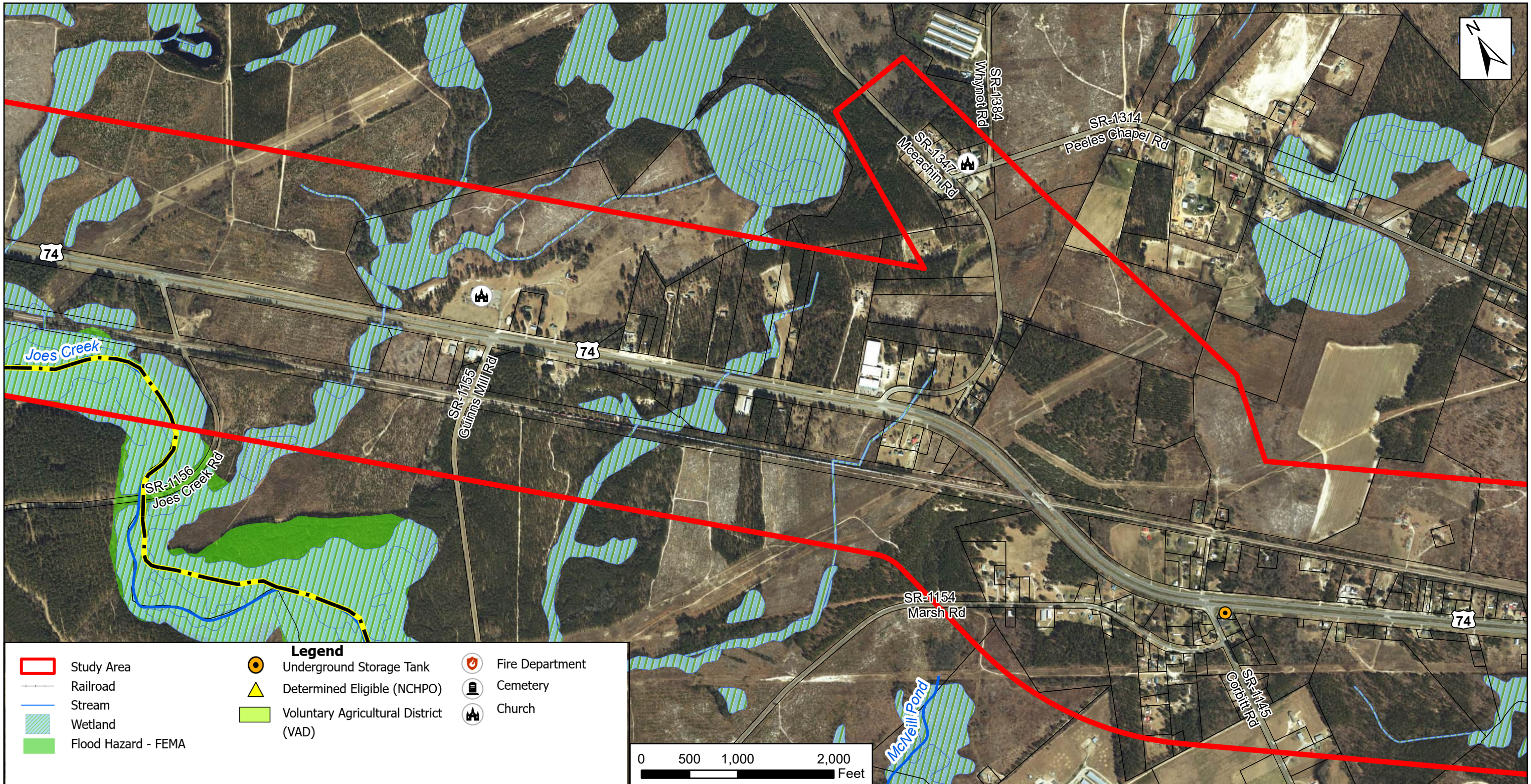


	Study Area		Underground Storage Tank		Fire Department
	Railroad		Determined Eligible (NCHPO)		Cemetery
	Stream		Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD)		Church
	Wetland				
	Flood Hazard - FEMA				



North Carolina Department of Transportation
 Division of Highways
 I-6055
 US 74/Future I-74
 Proposed Upgrade of US 74 to Interstate Standards from
 US 74 Business east of Hamlet to US 74 Business west of Laurinburg
 Richmond and Scotland Counties

Environmental Features
 Figure 3A

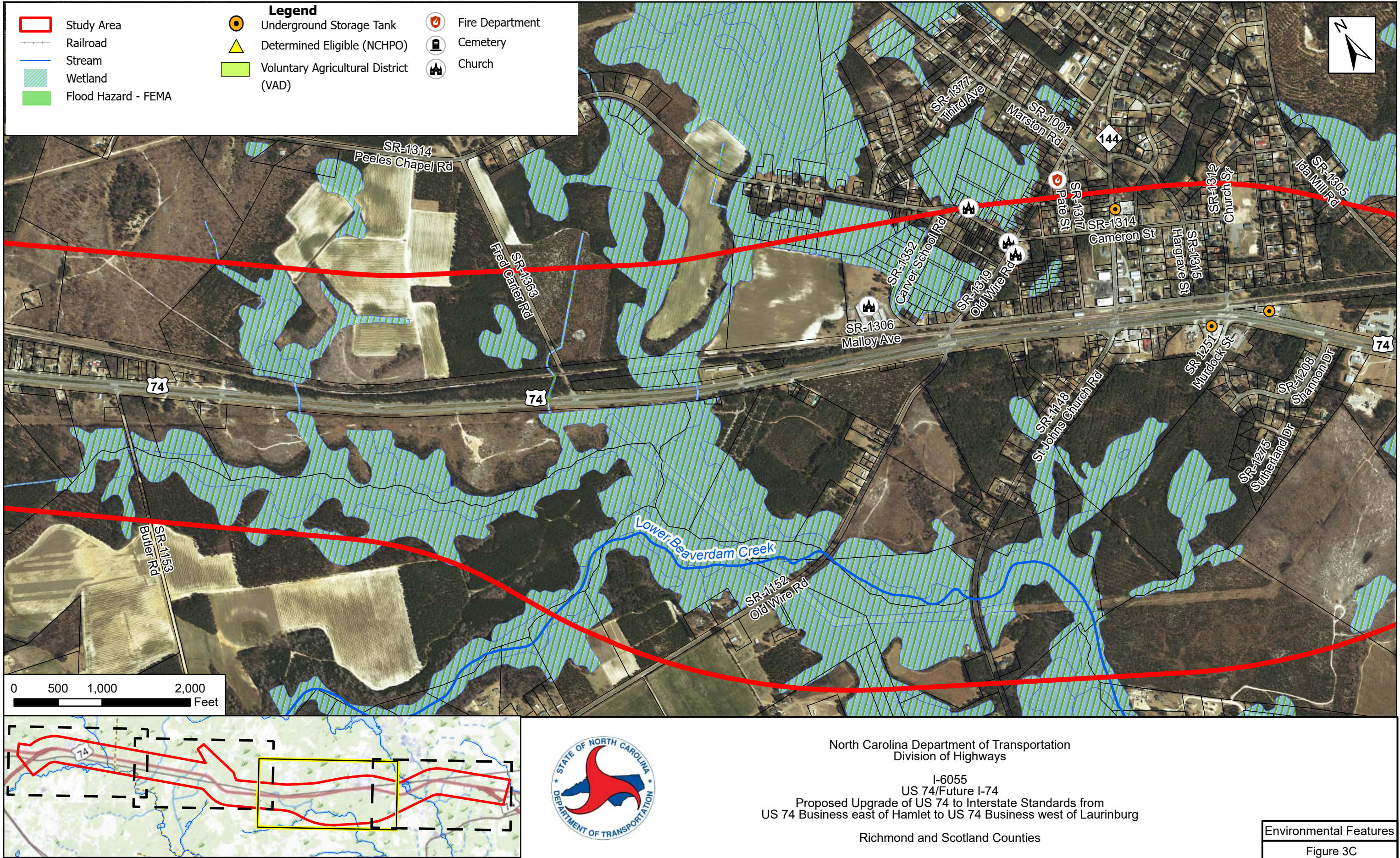


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I-6055
 US 74/Future I-74
 Proposed Upgrade of US 74 to Interstate Standards from
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Richmond and Scotland Counties

Environmental Features
 Figure 3B



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Feet

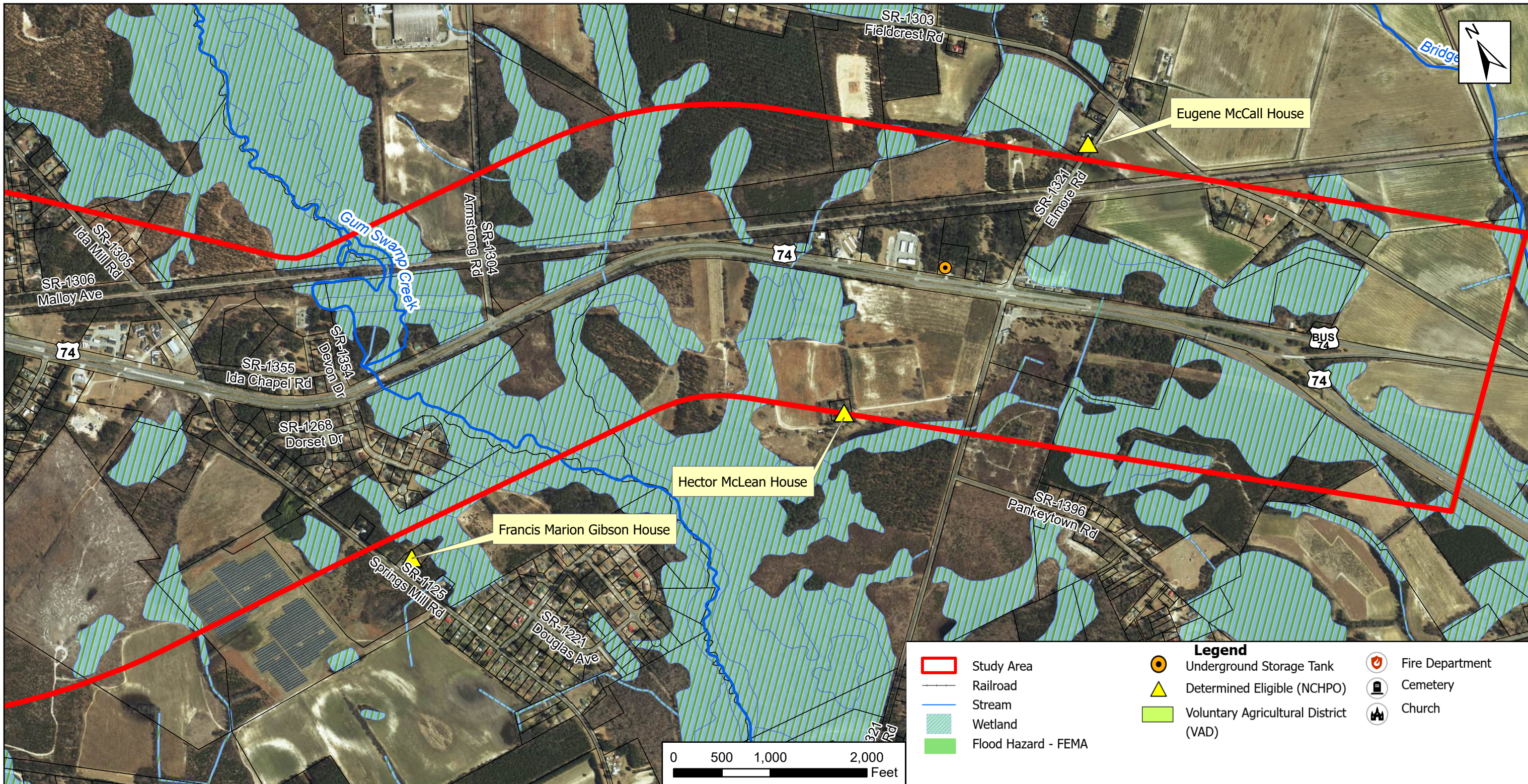


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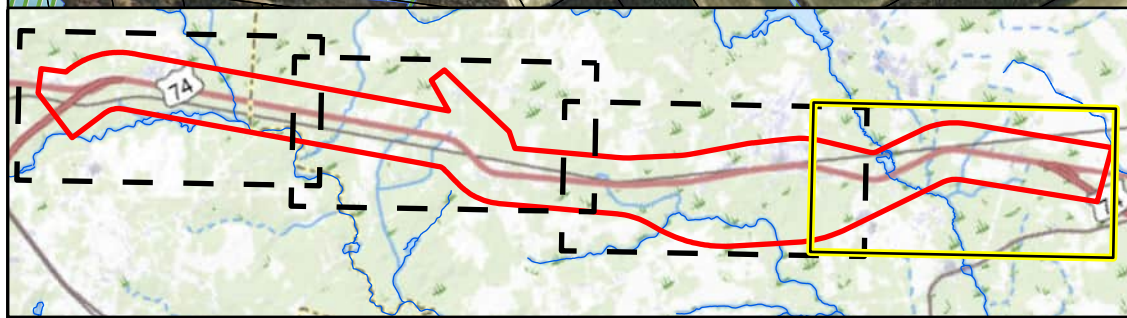
I-6055
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Richmond and Scotland Counties

Environmental Features
Figure 3C



Legend					
	Study Area		Underground Storage Tank		Fire Department
	Railroad		Determined Eligible (NCHPO)		Cemetery
	Stream		Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD)		Church
	Wetland		Flood Hazard - FEMA		

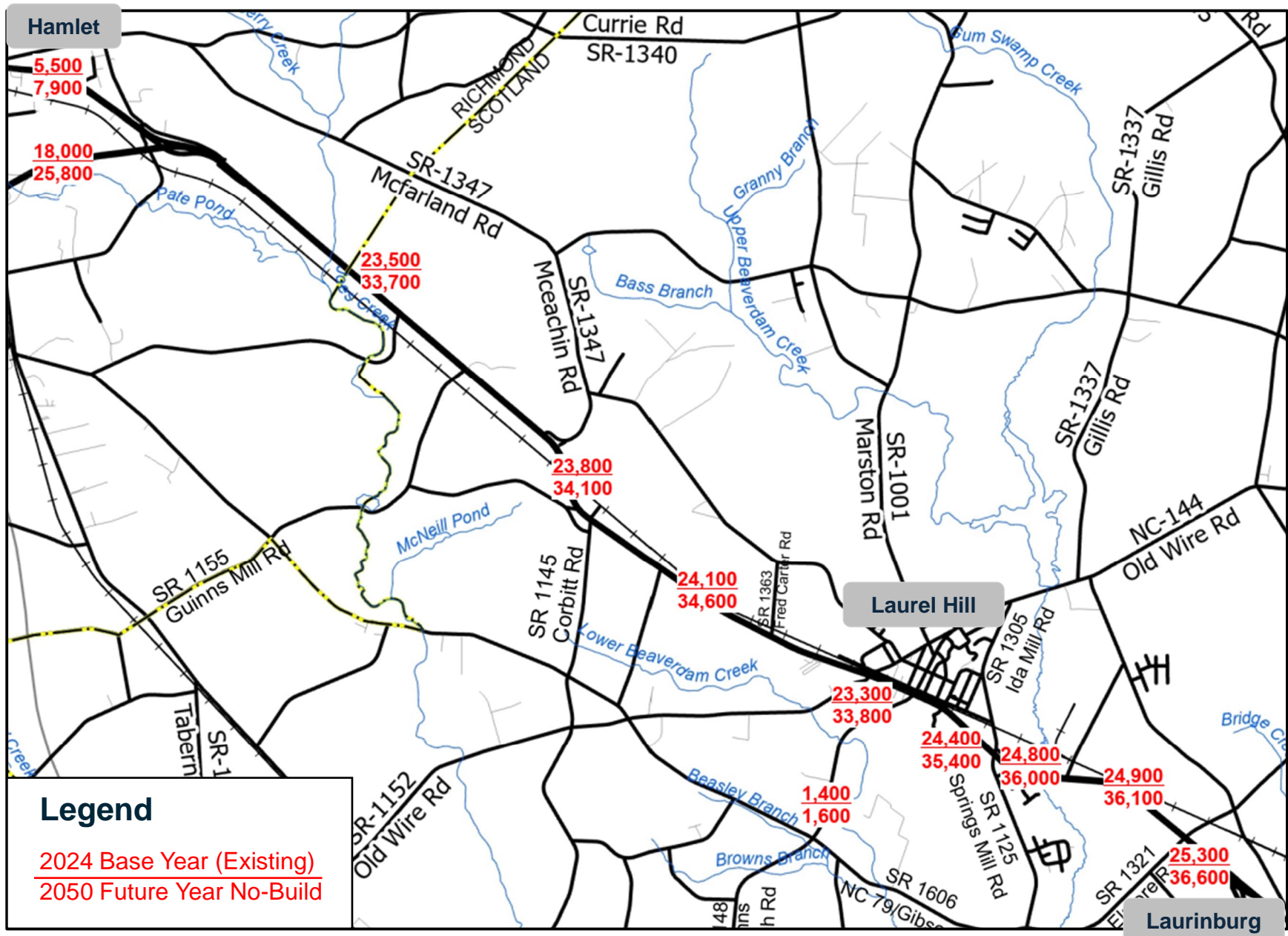


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Richmond and Scotland Counties

Environmental Features
 Figure 3D



EXISTING AND NO-BUILD TRAFFIC VOLUMES

Figure 4

