



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

ROY COOPER
GOVERNOR

JAMES H. TROGDON, III
SECRETARY

MEMO TO: Post-Public Meeting Meeting Attendees

FROM: Kevin Moore, P.E.
NCDOT – Project Management Unit

DATE: November 17, 2017

SUBJECT: Project 35993.1.1 (U-4700) Caldwell, Catawba, and Burke Counties
F. A. Project NHF-321(18)
Proposed US 321 Widening from US 70 in Hickory to Southwest Boulevard in Lenoir

**Post-Public Meeting
Meeting Summary**

The post-Public Meeting meeting was held on November 13, 2017 at NCDOT’s Century Center Roadway Design Conference Room. The purpose of the meeting was to review written comments received during the comment period after the U-4700 Public Meeting held on Thursday, October 12, 2017 at the Broyhill Convention Center in Lenoir, NC. Verbal comments received at the October 16, 2017 Caldwell County Commissioner’s meeting were also reviewed.

The following people met to discuss the comments:

Name	Agency/Unit
Kevin Moore	NCDOT – Project Management Unit
Eugene Tarascio	NCDOT – Project Management Unit
James Dunlop	NCDOT – Congestion Management
Diane Wilson	NCDOT – EAU Public Involvement
Dean Ledbetter*	NCDOT – Division 11
Michael Poe*	NCDOT – Division 12
John Marshall*	Hickory MPO
Colin Frosch	Kimley-Horn – Project Development
Teresa Gresham	Kimley-Horn – Project Development
Brandon McInnis	RK&K – Roadway Design

* *Joined by phone*

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Executive Summary

Project Description:

NCDOT and FHWA propose to widen US 321 to a six-lane median divided facility from just north of the US 70 interchange in Hickory (Catawba County) to the Southwest Boulevard (SR 1933) interchange in Lenoir (Caldwell County). The proposed improvements involve approximately 13.5 miles of existing US 321 with a majority of the roadway located in Catawba and Caldwell Counties and 0.3 miles in Burke County. The purpose of the project is to reduce congestion on US 321 in order to achieve level of service D or better in the design year (2040).

More information is available on the project website:

<https://www.ncdot.gov/projects/us321widening/>

Public Meeting Summary:

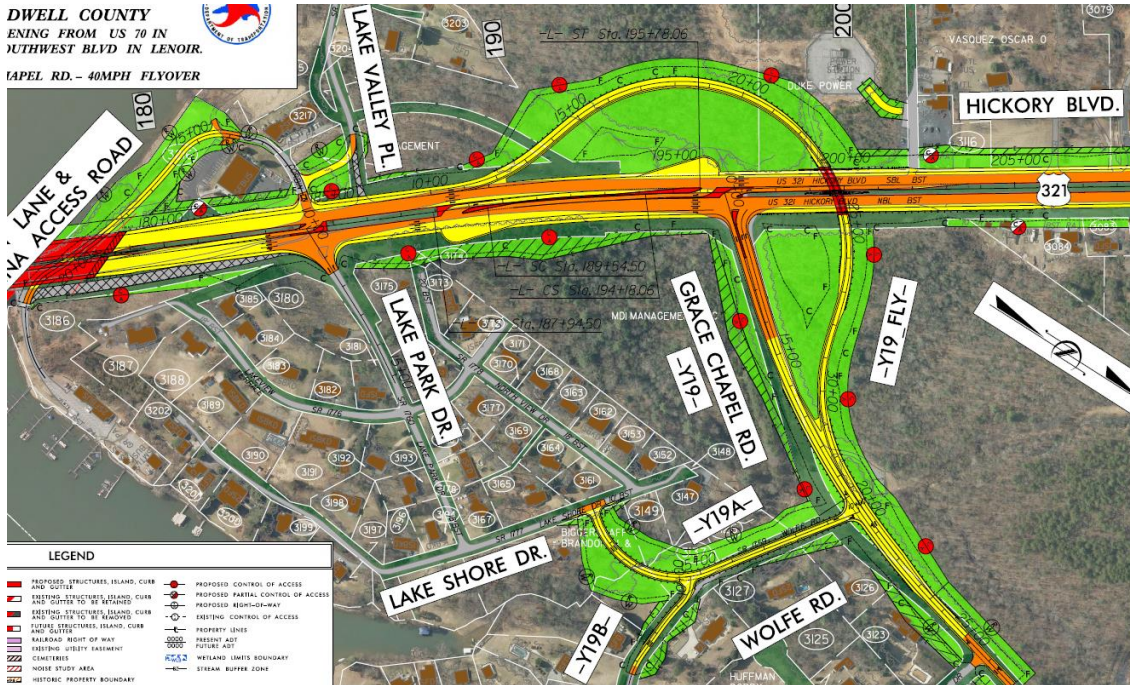
NCDOT's recommended alternative (as identified during the September 22, 2017 post-public meeting meeting) was presented at the October meetings.

During the public meeting, 178 people signed in. Written comments were received from a total of 19 citizens at the meeting and in the comment period ending November 9, 2017. An additional 8 verbal comments were made at the Caldwell County Commissioners meeting.

A. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED DESIGN

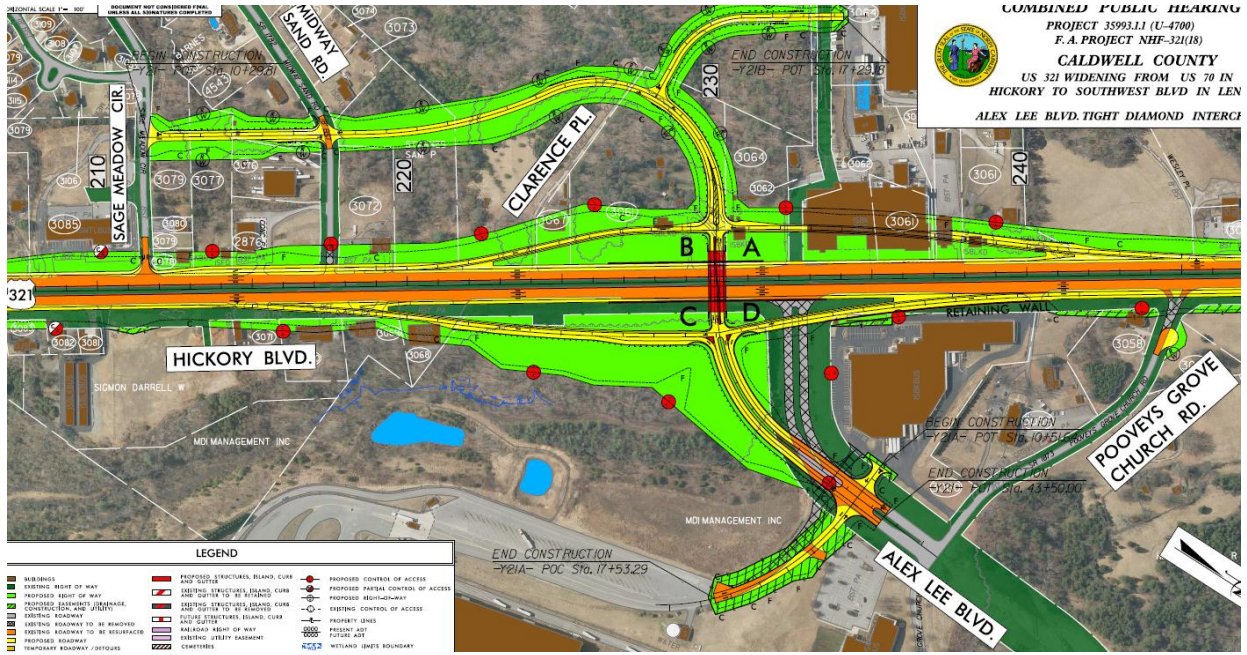
Grace Chapel Road

NCDOT recommends the **Flyover with superstreet intersection** alternative at Grace Chapel Road. An elevated road would provide a direct connection from Grace Chapel Road to southbound US 321. All other movements will be controlled with an at-grade signalized intersection. A new connector from Lake Shore Drive to Grace Chapel Road via Wolfe Road.



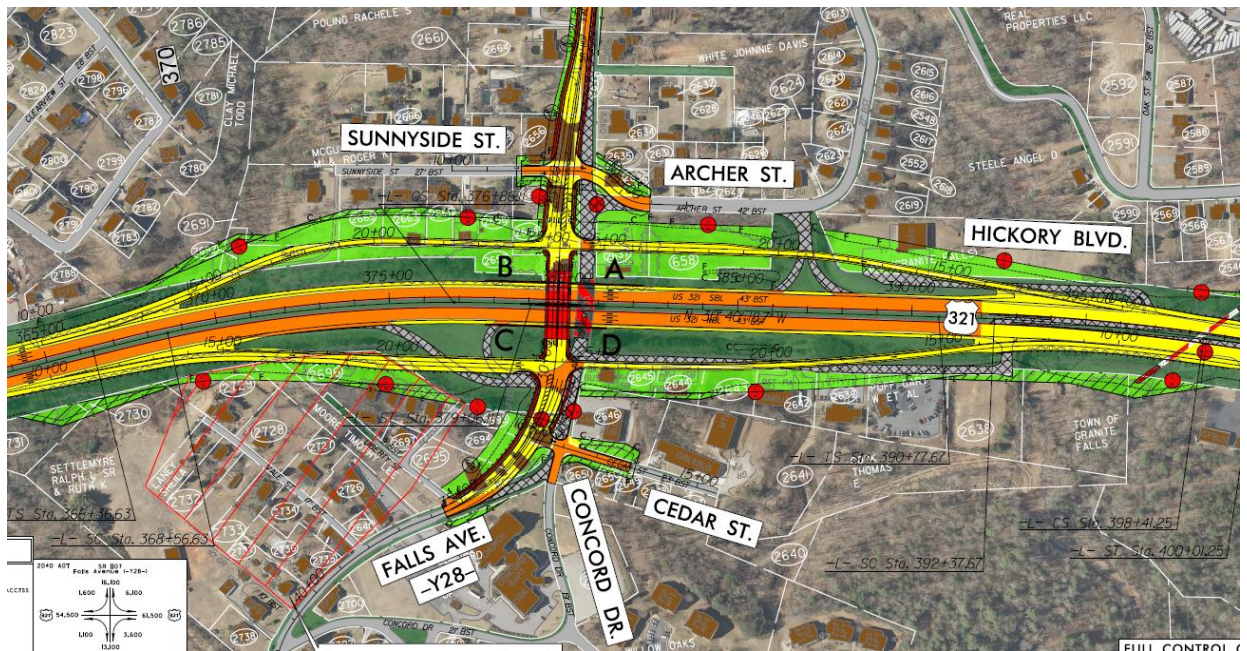
Alex Lee Boulevard

NCDOT recommends a **tight diamond interchange** at Alex Lee Boulevard. This interchange would have ramps in all four quadrants. In addition, a new road would connect Sage Meadow Circle, Midway Sand Road, and the new interchange.



Falls Avenue

NCDOT recommends a **tight diamond interchange** at Falls Avenue. This interchange would have direct on and off-ramps in all four quadrants.



Clement Boulevard

NCDOT recommends a **superstreet intersection** at Clement Boulevard. A superstreet intersection would allow left turns from US 321 onto Clement Boulevard. Left turns from Clement Boulevard to US 321, and on Clement Boulevard across US 321, would be restricted.



B. WRITTEN COMMENTS AND NCDOT RESPONSES

Comments in Support of Project

No response needed

1. Thank you for being ahead of the growth instead of behind.
2. Thank you for addressing access to the Lakeview Park community
3. Thank you for changing the Grace Chapel and Alex Lee interchange designs, they look much better. **(x2)**
4. I fully support this project!

Comments Regarding Grace Chapel Road

1. **Comment:** Can the speed limit on New Farm Road be increased to 45 mph? Can trucks be allowed on New Farm Road instead of spending money on the interchange? **(x3)**

Response: After further investigation by the NCDOT it was determined that the pavement structure on New Farm Road was designed to support truck traffic. It is unknown why exactly the “No Truck Traffic” signs were installed on this road. New Farm Road was designed for a posted speed limit of 35 mph. Most of New Farm Road is a local road; therefore, NCDOT does not control the posted speed limit. The interchange on U.S. 321 at Alex Lee Boulevard will allow businesses and the general public on both

sides of the road to have direct access to U.S. 321 and minimize the amount of truck traffic on local neighborhood roads.

2. **Comment:** Why is it necessary to use land on Grace Chapel Road if the existing road is moved further to the right? Concerned about property impacts along this section of Grace Chapel Road. (x2?)

Response: Some right of way or temporary easements on Grace Chapel Road will be needed to tie the new flyover into the existing road. During the final design process, the project team will minimize impacts where feasible to property along Grace Chapel Road.

3. **Comment:** How will we turn left from U.S. 321 onto Grace Chapel Road?

Response: There will be a dedicated left turn lane from southbound U.S. 321 onto Grace Chapel Road.

4. **Comment:** How long will the merge lane be on U.S. 321 South coming from Grace Chapel Road? Will it be long enough to be safe?

Response: The merge lane at the end of the flyover from Grace Chapel Road is approximately 850 feet long, and has been designed to meet the criteria for merging at the design speed on U.S. 321.

Comments Regarding Other Locations

1. **Comment:** How do I go southbound on U.S. 321 when exiting Fairwood Drive?

Response: Traffic exiting Fairwood Drive onto southbound U.S. 321 will make the same movement that is required today, including turning right (north) on U.S. 321 and making a U-turn at Clover Drive SW

2. **Comment:** There is a low income and minority neighborhood that will become isolated with a long detour to get uptown to 13th Street and 1st and 2nd Avenue. Pedestrian access to the area will also be cut off and unsafe due to missing pedestrian signals.

Response: A study is underway to evaluate potential impacts and mitigation measures for this neighborhood.

3. **Comment:** Please address access from Tom Calloway Lane on to Lower Cedar Valley Road. The residents need a better way out.

Response: The intersection of Tom Calloway Lane and Lower Cedar Valley Road will be retained in the current location. It is anticipated that the superstreet design on U.S. 321 will improve traffic operations along the corridor, including shorter queues on side streets.

4. **Comment:** I'm concerned properties and businesses near the Alex Lee Boulevard interchange will be negatively impacted and would be better off with the interchange at Walmart.

Response: The proposed interchange at Alex Lee Boulevard impacts fewer residences and businesses than would an interchange at Walmart.

Comments Related to Impacts

1. **Comment:** Concerned about negative impacts to businesses along the corridor due to limited access and inconvenience to consumers. **(x3)**

Response: Studies specific to superstreets have not shown conclusive evidence as to whether superstreets are positively or negatively impactful to local businesses. Studies on median divided roads indicate that there is typically no negative impact to businesses other than to some convenience-based ones (fast food restaurants, gas stations, etc.). Other studies have shown the benefits to businesses with improved traffic flow and reduced congestion. Many of the results are dependent on unique locational factors. Along this corridor, the project team has maintained access to buildings and is proposing a design that will improve traffic flow for users visiting these businesses.

2. **Comment:** Could the U-turn bulb near station 255+00 be moved north or south by 200 feet to minimize impacts in front of the house?

Response: The design of this U-turn bulb and the adjacent turn lanes will be evaluated during final design.

3. **Comment:** We can't see how the benefits outweigh the costs, and the project isn't cost effective.

Response: The project purpose is to improve traffic congestion along the U.S. 321 corridor between Hickory and Lenoir. This design will satisfy the purpose and need of the project.

4. **Comment:** What will happen to the protected flowers?

Response: Studies have been done to locate existing communities of threatened and endangered species, including the dwarf flowered heartleaf. The project has been designed to minimize impacts to these communities.

Design Questions

5. **Comment:** Making U-turns is unsafe without lights stopping the oncoming traffic. Will the lights be taken away at the U-turn areas? Concerned the superstreet design isn't safer. **(x4)**

Response: The combination of a right-turn followed by a U-turn has been shown to be safer than a direct left-turn from a side street. Traffic signals are proposed at U-turn areas that are projected to have sufficient traffic to warrant a signal. If not included with the initial construction, signals may be added in the future when warranted.

6. **Comment:** The travel time will only be reduced for drivers going through on U.S. 321. I don't see how travel time will be reduced with a superstreet. **(x2)**

Response: By synchronizing the timing of the lights, and reducing the total number of phases needed in a signal (grouping of traffic going a single direction), more time with a green light will be given to each direction. Most drivers on the side streets turn onto U.S. 321, and while there may not be a large travel time savings at that intersection, these drivers gain with the greatly improved travel flow on US 321.

7. **Comment:** Is the widening necessary? Why is the median so wide? I would rather see property not be impacted. I don't think the traffic on U.S. 321 warrants this project. **(x2)**

Response: The median is generally the same width as it is now. The width is needed to accommodate turn lanes for the left turns and U-turns. The current traffic data projections show that a six-lane superstreet is warranted to meet the traffic demanded in the design year 2040.

8. **Comment:** Concerned about long queues in U-turn lanes. **(x2)**

Response: The U-turn lanes have been designed to be long enough to accommodate the projected vehicle volumes. With a more efficient system, the queues are anticipated to be shorter than they are today.

9. **Comment:** How are these U-turns different than Texas U-turns?

Response: Texas U-turns are typically found at the end of off-ramps from a highway facility on an adjacent parallel road known as a frontage road. These frontage roads have lower speeds than the highway and allow drivers to access specific locations along the highway. The U-turns allow drivers to by-pass two signalized intersections typically to proceed the opposite direction on the neighboring superstreet.

Comments Requesting Additional Information

1. **Comment:** Lisa Yount requested a copy of the widening plans to review.

Response: The latest designs are available on the project website: <https://www.ncdot.gov/projects/us321widening/>, under "October 2017 Public Meeting Materials."

2. **Comment:** Scott Willis requested a copy of the video shown on loop at the public meeting open house.

Response: The video shown on loop at the public meeting open house can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GgmHD8O0qok&feature=youtu.be> or on the project website: <https://www.ncdot.gov/projects/us321widening/>

3. **Comment:** What alternatives were selected? (Gene Tarascio responded)

Response: The recommended design is described above in this meeting summary, or can be viewed online at the project website under "October 2017 Public Meeting Materials": <https://www.ncdot.gov/projects/us321widening/>

4. **Comment:** No relocation assistance brochure, right-of-way acquisition process brochure, or right-of-way FAQs were available at the meeting. Please send information via mail to Richard Pink.

Response: The NCDOT right-of-way acquisition process brochure can be viewed here: <https://connect.ncdot.gov/business/ROW/ROWManualsandPublications/Right%20of%20Way%20Brochure%20-%20Single%20Page%20Layout.pdf> and information on Relocation Assistance can be viewed here: <https://connect.ncdot.gov/business/ROW/ROW%20Documents/Relocation%20Assistance%20Brochure.pdf>

C. NEXT STEPS

Following review of public comments, impacts, and anticipated costs, NCDOT confirmed their recommendation of the design shown at the October 2017 public meeting. Further investigation will be completed to potentially add pedestrian accommodation to provide access between the community divided by the proposed U.S. 321 and 13th Street interchange.

If anyone has any questions or comments regarding this information, please contact Kevin Moore, PE, Roadway Design Project Engineer at 919-707-6287.

KM/cmf

cc:
Attendees