

Meeting Minutes

Project: NCDOT STIP Project U-5791

Subject: U-5791 CP1/CP2 Jacksonville Parkway Extension Merger Meeting

Meeting place: Microsoft Teams

Date and time: 08 September 2021 at 10:00AM

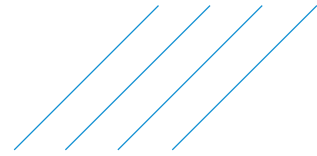
Present:

Brad Shaver - USACE	Mason Herndon – NCDOT
Amanetta Somerville – USEPA	Mike Sanderson – NCDOT
Gary Jordan – USFWS	Mark Staley – NCDOT
Jessie Howard – USFWS	Trace Howell – NCDOT
Cathy Brittingham – NCDEQ DCM	Wes Cartner – NCDOT
Stephen Lane – NCDEQ DCM	Wesley Chandler – NCDOT
Hannah Sprinkle – NCDEQ DWR	Anthony Prinz – City of Jacksonville
Robert Patterson – NCDEQ DWR	Deanna Trebil – City of Jacksonville
Kimberlee Harding – NCDMF	Anthony Encarnacion – Atkins
Renee Gledhill-Early – NC HPO	Bob Boot – Atkins
Travis Wilson – NC WRC	Bruce Payne – Atkins
Chris Rivenbark – NCDOT	James Parkhill - Atkins
David Leonard – NCDOT	Lauren Dix - Atkins
Hannah Headrick – NCDOT	Matt Cusack – Atkins
Katie Hite - NCDOT	

ITEM	DESCRIPTION AND ACTION	RESPONSIBLE
1.	Remove Development Access and incorporate LOS information into Project Need	NCDOT/Atkins
2.	Include predicted Control of Access within Alternatives Analysis	NCDOT/Atkins
3.	Include more information regarding impacts to Alternative 2a	NCDOT/Atkins
4.	Incorporate Henderson Drive Extension into Project Need	NCDOT/Atkins

NOTE TO RECIPIENTS:

These meeting notes record Atkins understanding of the meeting and intended actions arising therefrom. Your agreement that the notes form a true record of the discussion will be assumed unless adverse comments are received in writing within five days of receipt.



ITEM	DESCRIPTION AND ACTION	RESPONSIBLE
5.	Analysis of a new alternative as requested by the City of Jacksonville	NCDOT/Atkins

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) proposes to extend Jacksonville Parkway (SR 2714) from Western Boulevard (NC 53) to US 17 (New Bern Highway) as part of State Transportation Improvement Project (STIP) Project No. U-5791. The first segment of Jacksonville Parkway (south of Western Boulevard) opened in 2013. The project length for U-5791 is approximately 4 miles (1.5 miles on new location and about 2 miles of widening along Ramsey Road).

Meeting Purpose

Due to potential impacts to the human and natural environment, NCDOT STIP Project U-5791 is following the Section 404/NEPA Merger Process. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the project purpose and need (Concurrence Point No. 1 [CP 1]) and the preliminary study alternatives. CP 2 was also discussed, which includes determining which alternatives should be carried forward for detailed analysis and design.

Introduction

The NCDOT Project Manager, Trace Howell, opened the meeting with project team introductions. Consultant (Atkins) Project Manager, Bob Boot, then proceeded with a presentation that discussed the agenda of the meeting, the background of the project, and existing conditions.

Concurrence Point 1: Study Area Defined and Purpose and Need

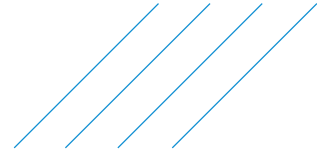
The project purpose and need were discussed as well as the proposed study area. The need for the project includes traffic congestion occurring along roadways within the project study area and that there are limited options for transportation access within this area of Jacksonville. The project purpose is to provide an alternate route to alleviate existing and future congestion along existing roadways and to enhance mobility along Western Boulevard and US 17.

Traffic Congestion Predictions

Brad Shaver (EPA) asked for the reasoning as to why there was such a high increase in traffic predicted along Ramsey Road (AADT increase range of 100-225% from 2018 to 2040). Boot explained that this was mainly due to proposed growth in the area. Anthony Prinz (Jacksonville) further elaborated this point by discussing how Gum Branch Road and Marine Boulevard are significant growth corridors in the area due to new development.

Purpose and Need

Concerns were brought up by Renee Gledhill-Early (NC HPO) regarding the portion of the purpose that states that the project will “provide additional access to development”. Mason Herndon (NCDOT) responded that the statement was misleading; the intent of the statement was to acknowledge that due to current and future planned development, more congestion along existing facilities could be anticipated. Amanetta Somerville (EPA) also commented that she would like to see the congestion identified in the purpose and need with Level of Service (LOS) information. It was explained that LOS is identified as a contributing factor for the project need but will be incorporated further into the project purpose. Shaver commented that he agrees with either rewording or deleting the portion of the project purpose that includes access due to not wanting to appear to appeal to developers that are wanting to develop property located within the project study area.



Study Area Limits

Shaver also expressed concerns regarding the study area limits and wanted further clarification as to why corridor alternatives north of Ramsey Road were not considered due to the potential impacts to residences located along Ramsey Road if it was widened. Boot explained that due to NCDOT's STIP including the widening of Ramsey, as well as the boundaries of Hoffman Forest being located nearby, an extension north of Ramsey was not considered. Herndon also explained that the corridor alternatives were developed based on the feasibility study (FS-0303C) that was conducted for the project, which only included alternatives that had Ramsey Road as the northernmost limit. He also mentioned that another new location alternative that does not use Ramsey Road was indeed considered (south of Ramsey Road), which will be explained in further detail. This discussion led to analyzing the designation of Hoffman Forest to determine whether it should be avoided for impacts. During initial corridor development, Hoffman Forrest was considered protected land by the project team, and corridors impacting the Forrest were not considered. Travis Wilson (NC WRC) stated that they do not want to see Hoffman Forest impacted as it is protected land, but that it technically does not have the same designation and protection of a national forest.

Concurrence Point 2: Detailed Study Alternatives Carried Forward

Alternatives Analysis

Boot described the alternatives development process, including the three screenings that were used to narrow down project alternatives. The first screening included identifying general approaches, to which the No-Build, Improve Existing Corridor, and New Location Alternatives were selected to move forward to the second screening. The second screening analyzed alternatives at the corridor level and evaluated each corridor's ability to meet the project purpose and need based on established screening criteria. Of the five alternatives (which does not include the No-Build alternative, which automatically moves forward), two alternatives (1b and 2b) were carried forward to the third screening. The third screening then analyzed four alignments from the corridor alternatives and compared impacts.

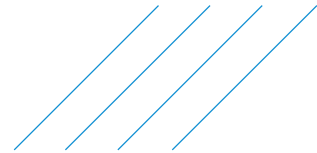
Median Width

Shaver expressed that they would like to minimize the median width (currently 23-feet) along Ramsey Road as much as possible. Katie Hite (NCDOT) explained that it is not preferred to do a 17.5-foot median, and 23-feet is the minimum for new-location roadways but could potentially look at doing a 17.5-foot median along Ramsey. However, Hite noted that a 17.5-foot median would not be analyzed until the 23-foot median was ruled out based on design and right-of-way.

Access and Corridor Widths

Shaver stated that access along the parkway should be limited as much as possible since there is only one main property owner and it might appear that we are providing access for that particular owner if access is not limited. Gledhill-Early asked if this project is going to be a superstreet, to which Hite responded that since we're still at the corridor-level, designs haven't been completed yet, but it is anticipated that superstreets would be incorporated at intersections. Somerville asked if the width of the corridor allowed for inclusion of a superstreet alignment, to which both Hite and Herndon responded that yes, the corridor widths are wide enough to include a superstreet design. It was also confirmed that a symmetrical alignment along Ramsey Road was analyzed at this high level, but that a best-fit alignment would be utilized for the environmental document.

Somerville expressed concerns as to why a 500-foot corridor was used in the second screening, and only a 250-foot corridor was used in the third screening when different alternatives were analyzed in each of the screenings. Boot explained that this was an effort to better define impacts from the 2nd screening to the 3rd screening. It was confirmed that more information regarding impacts for Alternative 2a be included. Cathy Brittingham (NCDEQ-DCM) also stated that the



project will likely need a federal consistency approval from DCM, and Gledhill-Early mentioned that a historic analysis would need to be conducted as well.

Henderson Drive Extension

Questions were brought up about the reasoning for including the Henderson Drive extension as part of this project instead of as a separate STIP project. Prinz answered that the Henderson Drive extension was included to alleviate congestion identified along Western Boulevard. Hite also mentioned that the extension will serve as a quadrant road to the Jacksonville Parkway/Western intersection. NCDOT is trying to avoid having to construct a large interchange at Jacksonville Parkway/Western Boulevard, which is why the Henderson Drive extension was added to help alleviate and minimize impacts that would otherwise occur with an interchange. It was suggested that this explanation be included in project documents and that the Henderson Drive extension be included in the purpose and need.

Sidewalks and addition of New Alternative

Brittingham asked if sidewalks will be included in the project, to which Boot responded that the corridor widths allow for the inclusion of sidewalks, but that at this stage of the project, it has not been analyzed yet. The inclusion of pedestrian facilities will be incorporated into the environmental analysis as the project further progresses and this will be stated in project documents.

The City of Jacksonville has requested that a new alternative that follows a similar alignment of Alternative 2B but connects to Ramsey instead of US 17 was requested to be analyzed.

Conclusion

The Merger Team agreed that another meeting would need to be held to review additional information for Henderson Drive in the Purpose and Need. Impact data for Alternative 2a and a new City of Jacksonville alternative connecting Alternative 2b to Ramsey Road will also be developed.