

## **6.0 NEPA Document Status**

### **6.1 Project History**

#### *6.1.1 1993 Draft Environmental Impact Statement*

In 1990, NCDOT began studying replacement alternatives for the B-2500. The coordination for the project, including agency scoping, was initiated with a scoping letter to government agencies in May 1990 at the start of a Bonner Bridge replacement feasibility study. A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was released for review in November 1993. The DEIS assessed a single preferred alternative, the Parallel Bridge Corridor across Oregon Inlet. After the release of the DEIS, combined (corridor and design) Public Hearings were held in early 1994. Comments were received regarding the DEIS from the public and from federal, state, and local agencies. A preliminary Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) was prepared in 1996; however, it was never signed because formal consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act was not completed. Because it had been more than seven years since completion of the DEIS, a re-evaluation was conducted in 2001 to determine if the preliminary FEIS remained a valid assessment of project impacts. A decision was made in 2001 to prepare a Supplemental DEIS (SDEIS).

#### *6.1.2 2005 Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement*

Preparation of the SDEIS began in 2002 with a new study of potential Bonner Bridge replacement alternatives. The study area was expanded south to encompass NC 12 south to Rodanthe because NC 12 had begun to be regularly threatened by shoreline erosion and overwash. Three areas on NC 12, or “hot spots”, between Oregon Inlet and Rodanthe were identified as especially vulnerable. The SDEIS was completed and signed in September 2005. The SDEIS assessed five alternatives in two corridors, the Pamlico Sound Bridge Corridor and the Parallel Bridge Corridor. The Parallel Bridge Corridor alternatives are described in Section 3.1 of the ROD. Two Public Hearings were held in November 2005.

#### *6.1.3 2007 Supplement to the 2005 Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement*

A proposal made during the comment period following the release of the SDEIS led to the development of two additional Parallel Bridge Corridor alternatives, which are described in Section 3.1 of the ROD. These alternatives were assessed in the Supplement to the SDEIS (SSDEIS), which was signed on February 14, 2007. Two Public Hearings were held in March 2007.

#### *6.1.4 2008 Final Environmental Impact Statement*

The FEIS was signed on September 17, 2008. It identified the Parallel Bridge Corridor with Phased Approach/Rodanthe Bridge as the Preferred Alternative and addressed comments received on the SDEIS and SSDEIS.

### *6.1.5 2010 Environmental Assessment*

Several modifications were made to the detailed study alternatives and the impact assessment after the release of the FEIS. These modifications were made to respond to comments on the FEIS and take into account factors related to the history of the creation and maintenance of NC 12 in the Cape Hatteras National Seashore (Seashore) and the Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). The purpose of the Environmental Assessment (EA) was to document these modifications and to determine whether there were any new significant issues not addressed in the FEIS and whether a Supplemental FEIS was needed; the EA was prepared and signed on May 7, 2010. The EA included the following:

- The decision to add a new detailed study alternative (Parallel Bridge Corridor with NC 12 Transportation Management Plan) and select it as the Preferred Alternative;
- Refinements made to the detailed study alternatives since the release of the September 2008 FEIS;
- The elimination of the Pamlico Sound Bridge Corridor alternatives as detailed study alternatives;
- An assessment of impacts for the new detailed study alternative and an assessment of changes to several of the remaining detailed study alternatives at the community of Rodanthe and at the northern end of Hatteras Island; and
- New information obtained since the publication of the FEIS.

Two Public Hearings were held in July 2010. FHWA and NCDOT carefully reviewed the impact analysis included in the FEIS and the EA and the comments received on those documents and at the 2010 public hearings. Based on this review, FHWA determined that the changes identified in the EA did not result in any new significant impacts not previously identified; therefore, a Supplemental FEIS was not required.

### *6.1.6 Phase IIa Record of Decision*

Based on the EA and other NEPA documentation, FHWA issued a ROD on December 20, 2010 determining that implementation of the Selected Alternative is in the best overall public interest. The Parallel Bridge Corridor with NC 12 Transportation Management Plan Alternative (NC 12 TMP) was therefore approved for implementation in accordance with the provisions of the ROD.

### *6.1.7 Phase IIb EA released December 2013*

The 2013 Phase IIb EA was released in December 2013 for public and agency comment. It described the Phase IIb alternatives analysis, the Phase IIb detailed study alternatives (including a Preferred Alternative), updated the impact assessment presented in the 2008 FEIS and 2010 EA, updated the revised Final Section 4(f) Evaluation presented in the 2010 EA, described public and agency meetings conducted as a part of Phase II studies, and reached a tentative conclusion on whether a Phase IIb Supplemental EIS was needed. It listed the Bridge within Existing NC 12 Easement Alternative as the Preferred Alternative.

#### *6.1.8 Phase IIb Revised EA released May 2016*

The Revised Phase IIb EA, signed in May 2016 by NCDOT and FHWA, amended the 2013 Phase IIb EA. It assessed changes in the setting, project, and potential project impacts that might have occurred since the 2010 ROD and the 2013 Phase IIb EA. In addition to documenting these changes, the Revised Phase IIb EA documented the selection of a new Preferred Alternative for the Phase IIb project area (now the Selected Alternative). Updates to the 2013 Phase IIb EA included the following:

- A description of the public hearings held in January 2014 for the alternatives presented in the 2013 Phase IIb EA.
  - The development of two new alignments for the Bridge on New Location Alternative and a detailed description of those alignments.
  - On-going and additional new studies since the 2013 Phase IIb EA.
  - Identification of the 2014B Bridge on New Location Alternative as the Preferred Alternative.
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- An update of the assessment of the Phase IIb detailed study alternatives, including a description of changes in the environmental setting since the release of the 2010 ROD and 2013 Phase IIb EA and a description of the impacts of the detailed study alternatives.
  - An update of the Section 4(f) Evaluation for Phase IIb, including the least harm analysis.
  - An update of the comments and coordination section, including responses to written comments received from non-governmental organizations, local government, and federal and state agencies on the findings of the 2013 Phase IIb EA. Some of the changes in the Revised Phase IIb EA were in response to comments made on the 2013 Phase IIb EA.
  - A revised analysis of and preliminary conclusion on whether there is a need to prepare a Supplemental FEIS.

#### *6.1.9 Phase IIb Record of Decision*

Based on the EA and other NEPA documentation, FHWA issued a ROD on December 15, 2016 determining that implementation of the Selected Alternative is in the best overall public interest. The 2014B Bridge on New Locations was therefore approved for implementation in accordance with the provisions of the ROD.