

Meeting Notes Memorandum

FINAL VERSION

NCDOT/RS&H Project Team

Meeting Date: August 20, 2009

Subject: NEPA/404 Merger Team Concurrence Point 1 Meeting for Topsail Island Bridge Replacement Project TIP Project No. B-4929

Location: Board Room, NCDOT Highway Building

Attendees:

Agencies:

Brad Shaver, US Army Corps of Engineers
Kim Garvey, US Army Corps of Engineers
Tom Steffens, US Army Corps of Engineers
Teresa Russell, US Army Corps of Engineers
Christopher Militscher, US EPA
Kathy Matthews, EPA
Ron Lucas, FHWA
Travis Wilson, Wildlife Resources Commission
David Wainwright, DWQ
Gary Jordan, Fish and Wildlife Service
Steve Sollod, Division of Coastal Management
Renee Gledhill-Earley, DCR-SHPO

Via Conference Call:

Rich Carpenter, Division of Marine Fisheries

Consultants:

Chad Critcher, RS&H
Radha Krishna Swayampakala, RS&H

NCDOT:

Don Idol, Bridge Management
Missy Pair, PDEA
Rob Hanson, PDEA
Charles Cox, PDEA
Michele James, PDEA
Drew Joyner, HEU
Ed Lewis, HEU
Herman Huang, HEU
Thomas Stoddard, TIP
Development
Allen Pope, Division 3
Mason Herndon, Division 3
Mark Staley, Roadside
Environmental
Lonnie Brooks, Structure Design
Ray Moore, Structure Design
Judy Joines, Right-of-way
Don Eggert, Cape Fear RPO
Tony Houser, Roadway Design
Tyler Stanton, NEU

Bill Brazier, US Coast Guard, and Ron Sechler, National Marine Fisheries Service were unable to attend the meeting.

A NEPA/404 Merger Team meeting for the subject project was held on August 20, 2009 in the Board Room of the NCDOT Highway Building. The purpose of this meeting was to reach agreement on Concurrence Point 1 - Purpose and Need/Study Area defined.

Introductions:

Mr. Brad Shaver opened the meeting and invited introductions from attendees. Mr. Sharer then explained the purpose of the meeting and introduced Michele James - NCDOT PDEA Project Manager. Ms. James welcomed the attendees, requested all the attendees to sign in and introduced Mr. Chad Critcher with the consultant firm of RS&H.

Presentation:

Mr. Chad Critcher offered a Concurrence Point 1 packet to the attendees that did not already have one. Mr. Critcher then presented the PowerPoint presentation of the proposed project's Purpose and Need and Study Area Defined. Following is the presentation outline:

- Project Vicinity and Description
- Project History
- Study Area and Communities
- Purpose & Need Community Outreach
- Agency Comments
- Need for Proposed Action
- Purpose of Proposed Action
- Project Schedule and Funding

A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is attached with these meeting notes.

Questions and Comments:

A question and answer session followed the presentation. Comments and answers are shown below:

Christopher Militscher asked if the NCDOT Project Team has any information on the current and future projected AADT on the Topsail Island Bridge?

Chad Critcher responded that based on the existing data, the 2008 AADT is approximately 12,000 vehicles per day (vpd) and the 2035 projected AADT is 26,000 vpd.

Christopher Militscher asked if the island is mostly built out, what causes the projected traffic on the Topsail Island Bridge to double in the next 25 years?

Charles Cox responded that the island portion of Surf City is mostly built out. However, Surf City is growing more on the mainland side towards US Highway 17. Several residential and commercial developments are planned on the mainland portion of Surf City and most of the government facilities are located on the island portion of the town. As a result, residents/visitors of this area would commute more between the island and mainland via the study bridge, which is expected to add a lot more traffic.

Christopher Militscher inquired whether a two-lane bridge be sufficient to accommodate 26,000 vpd in year 2035? He also asked whether this traffic demand warrant more lanes on the bridge?

Charles Cox and Chad Critcher answered that a movable bridge with 26,000 vpd may require more than two lanes. Currently, the capacity of the bridge is limited by bridge openings to allow boats. These openings are causing delays to road traffic and thereby worsening the traffic flow conditions in the study area. A fixed span bridge would have more capacity compared to a movable bridge. As a part of the design process, NCDOT will perform a detailed traffic operations analysis which will determine the capacity needs for the proposed new bridge.

However, providing additional capacity is not a Purpose of Proposed Action NCDOT is presenting to the Merger Team.

Christopher Militscher asked why did the presentation indicate that bridge capacity is a problem?

Allen Pope responded that the presentation was referring to load carrying capacity of the bridge. Currently, the posted allowable load on the bridge is 14 tons for single vehicles and 19 tons for tractor trailers.

Christopher Militscher questioned whether the 19 tons load limit caused any issues? He also asked if there is any information about the number of trucks crossing this bridge every day?

Don Idol, Allen Pope and Chad Critcher said that the 19 tons load limit is causing issues. They also said that generally, fully loaded single vehicle and tractor trailer would weigh 42 and 45 tons respectively. According to the current standards new bridges are designed to carry these loads – 42 tons for single vehicles and 45 tons for tractor trailers. Over the years, the Topsail Island Bridge's structural capacity has deteriorated to 14 tons for single vehicles and 19 tons for tractor trailers.

At this point, the NCDOT Project Team does not have any specific information on the number of trucks on the Topsail Island Bridge. During field visits, the NCDOT Project Team members observed several trucks carrying higher than restricted load limits across the bridge every day causing a dangerous situation.

Christopher Militscher and Charles Cox mentioned that they do not expect higher truck traffic during the peak periods (summer time) across the bridge.

Renee Gledhill-Early said that the needs should be clearly stated in the Merger Team Meeting Agreement (Concurrence Form).

Charles Cox and Chad Critcher responded that the Needs for Proposed Action are included in the Concurrence Point 1 packet and they could be summarized and listed on the Concurrence Form.

Renee Gledhill-Early asked that as the existing bridge is narrow, is widening the bridge a Need for the Proposed Action?

Chad Critcher said that the existing Topsail Island Bridge is only 32' wide with two 12' lanes and 3' sidewalks. This narrow bridge is a safety concern for vehicular traffic, bicyclists and pedestrians. The NCDOT Project Team will design the new bridge with appropriate widths for travel lanes, bike lanes, and sidewalks to increase the safety conditions for commuters across the bridge.

Ron Lucas asked whether the NCDOT Project Team defined an appropriate travel width for this bridge?

Charles Cox and Chad Critcher responded that the desired width of travel lanes would be 12 feet. At this point, the NCDOT Project Team does not have any information on the proposed typical section. As a part of the design process, the NCDOT Project Team will develop a typical section for the proposed new bridge, which will meet the current AASHTO/NCDOT design standards.

Christopher Militscher stated that the Need for the Proposed Action should be something simple like – “bridge is structurally unsafe”.

Missy Pair said that the Bridge is not “unsafe”. NCDOT would not allow vehicular traffic on an unsafe bridge.

Brad Shaver and Gary Jordan said that the Need should be as simple as “Bridge is structurally deficient”. All other needs shown in the Concurrence Point 1 packet should be secondary. The Purpose should be “Replace structurally deficient bridge”.

Christopher Militscher said that he had a problem with the second point in the Purpose of Proposed Action: i. e. to “maintain current system linkage between the island and mainland”. This infers that a new bridge should be built in the same location of the existing bridge, which may limit the possible alternatives for the proposed bridge. This should be a secondary purpose.

Subsequent to Mr. Militscher’s statement, the merger team members further discussed the Purpose and Need being revised as follows:

<p>Need for Proposed Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Structurally deficient, functionally obsolete bridge <p>Purpose of Proposed Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve bridge safety and functionality <p>Secondary purposes are included in the Concurrence Point 1 package discussed on August 20, 2009.</p> <p>Study Area Defined</p> <p>The study area is as shown on the attached Figure 3-1 of the Concurrence Point 1 package.</p>
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The Merger Team members in attendance signed the Concurrence Form with the above revised Purpose and Need statement. A copy of the signed Concurrence Form is included with these meeting notes.

If any recipient of the meeting notes would like to add comments or feels a comment is erroneous or needs to be expanded, please feel free to contact Michele James at (919) 733-7844 ext. 233 or by email at mjames@ncdot.gov.

Copies to:

- Meeting Attendees
- Bill Brazier, USCG
- Ron Sechler, NMFS

Attachments:

- Concurrence Form
- PowerPoint Presentation