

Corridor Public Hearing Meeting Response to Comments



Meeting Date: December 8, 2011

Subject: B-4929 – Topsail Island Bridge Replacement Project
Corridor Public Hearing Meeting

The following is a summary of comments received by the Project Team members during the Pre-Hearing Open House, Corridor Public Hearing, and written comments that require a response by the Project Team:

COMMUNITY INPUT

- 1. Can you involve some members of the community like elected officials, business owners, and residents in discussions with the Project Team? Include people that are from the island since we live here and appreciate where we live. (Citizens 1, 12)**

Response – The Project Team has held two Citizen Informational Workshops. Prior to each workshop, an elected officials meeting was held introducing the workshop presentation material. The Project Team also held individual meetings with the three municipalities to determine each municipality's concerns and vision for this project. During the elected officials meetings and workshops, Project Team members were available and numerous one-on-one discussions were held with local citizens, business owners, and elected officials. These discussions have been documented and considered during project development. Local citizens were also provided the opportunity to complete comment cards and/or address publically their comments at the Corridor Hearing. All comments received were given equal due diligence. The Project Team will continue to seek community engagement and we anticipate future public meetings and additional targeted conversations with the community. Local citizens are requesting steering committees to ensure community input on the project. NCDOT is considering forming a steering committee after the selection of a preferred alternate (LEDPA).

- 2. What do we need to do to make sure that NCDOT in Raleigh hears our concerns loud and clear? (Citizen 14)**

Response – Your comments at the public hearing and on the comment cards have been included and presented to the Project Team. You can also communicate your comments with local representatives and continue to provide your comments to NCDOT. After a Preferred Alternative is selected, the Project Team will hold a Design Public Hearing where additional feedback from citizens will be requested.

- 3. What weight is placed on what the citizens of Surf City and Topsail Island want versus what the state wants to do? (Citizen 15)**

Response – Public input is taken into consideration along with input from regulatory agencies, environmental impacts, property impacts, costs, and other factors in order to determine the Preferred Alternative.

- 4. During the presentation at the hearing, you stated that the purpose of the hearing was to gather input from those affected by the project and that all alternatives were still being considered. However, comments were made by a member of NCDOT staff prior to the formal presentation seemed to indicate otherwise. Please clarify. (Citizen 39)**

Response – No decision has been made. After consideration of input provided by the public, local governments, and regulatory agencies, as well as project specific design criteria, a Preferred Alternative will be selected.

The comment made by the NCDOT staff is referring to adverse impacts to the Section 4(f) usage. As mentioned in the Corridor Public Hearing presentation and handout, Alternative 6 and 7's detour alignments would result in adverse impacts to the Soundside Park, which is a Section 4(f) usage. As a result, the Project Team, by law, will be required to choose another feasible and prudent alternative (such as Alternatives 4, 5, 5R, 17, or 11, which would either avoid impacts or results in *de minimis* (minimal) impacts to the Soundside Park).

IMPACTS

- 5. Will you consider our working waterfront endangered? Give it the same weight of importance that you would for endangered species. (Citizens 1, 6)**

Response – The waterfront properties' impacts for the alternatives have been accounted for in the summary of property impacts and business impacts summarized in the Environmental Assessment (EA) document. No specific weight is given to any one impact item; all impacts will be considered when selecting the Preferred Alternative.

- 6. The high-level fixed bridges will greatly impact the shell fish beds and oyster beds in the Intracoastal Waterway because of the pylons in the water. Alternative 6 or 7 would have much less of an impact. (Citizen 2)**

Response – As part of the EA document, the aquatic communities were identified in the area for Topsail Sound and tidal pools in the marsh. These communities could support fish and shellfish such as Atlantic silverside, Atlantic croaker, flounder, menhaden, shrimp, blue crab, eastern oyster, and clams, as well as various benthic macroinvertebrates. The impacts to these aquatic communities will continue to be considered when selecting the Preferred Alternative.

- 7. The current bridge helps slow down boats that come through the Intracoastal Waterway. If there is a high-level fixed bridge it will not slow them down and will cause huge wakes with 4 to 5-foot waves to crash ashore. (Citizen 2)**

Response – NCDOT does not regulate the Intracoastal Waterway.

- 8. How much would Alternative 7 decrease bridge openings? (Citizen 8)**

Response – Alternative 7 is a mid-level moveable bridge, with a 30-foot vertical navigational waterway clearance. The Project Team performed a Vessel Survey in 2010 and estimated that this would eliminate one in every three bridge openings.

- 9. The high-level fixed bridge is a complete eyesore. The park will not be enjoyable or relaxing if you have to look at a 65-foot bridge right there (Alternative 17). (Citizen 10)**

Response – Additional renderings will be provided at the next public forum to better show potential impacts from adjacent sites, such as the park.

10. Noise impacts have not been taken into account. (Citizens 22, 37)

Response – As part of the Environmental Assessment document, a noise analysis was completed. Using the FHWA Noise Abatement Criteria, there will be property impacts that exceed the Noise Abatement Criteria in the future conditions (Year 2035) as follows:

- Do Nothing (No Build) – 18 impacts
- Alternative 4 – 16 impacts
- Alternatives 5 and 5R – 14 impacts
- Alternatives 6 and 7 – 16 impacts
- Alternatives 11 and 17 – 18 impacts

Based on this study, traffic noise abatement is not recommended and no noise abatement measures are proposed. During the construction, all reasonable efforts will be made to minimize exposure to noise sensitive areas.

11. Alternative 17 creates lighting (headlight) problems. (Citizens 16, 40)

Response – Once a Preferred Alternative is selected and a final alignment and preliminary design have been determined, potential lighting impacts will be assessed. If headlight concerns are identified, designs will be prepared to mitigate impacts accordingly.

JOBS/BUSINESSES

12. Several business impacts are not included in the study. My business is not one that would be directly cut off but it's at the start of one of the options which means traffic would be speeding by if there is a high-level bridge instead of stopping like they do now because traffic is slower. Also, there are new businesses that were not included in the numbers. Can we see a spreadsheet showing the property impacts that were presented at the meeting along with the updated information based on the new businesses? (Citizen 7)

Response – The property impacts reflect the total number of businesses on each parcel impacted as of June 2011. The data presented at the Corridor Public Hearing in December 2011 has been verified and does include both owners and tenants for each business; therefore no changes to the business impact summaries are necessary at this time. After Preferred Alternative selection and preliminary design, the number of impacts will be reevaluated. Information on property impacts is available in the EA – Appendix F. EA and its appendices can be found on the project website - <http://ncdot.org/projects/topsailislandbridge/>.

13. The island and Intracoastal Waterway frontage build out and current lack of mortgage financing would inhibit effected residents and businesses from relocating to other similar properties if they were displaced or their quality of life suffers from the project, even if buyout packages were favorable. (Citizen 22)

Response – If a citizen is required to move from their property, a right of way agent from NCDOT will contact them personally to offer assistance. The agent will explain the services and payments available. In the agent's offer of assistance, each citizen will be provided with current listings of affordable, comparable replacement housing, which are currently available and are "decent, safe, and sanitary".

http://www.ncdot.gov/download/construction/roadbuilt/RelocationBooklet_07.pdf

- 14. The roundabout on Alternative 17 will cut off access to the IGA and Ward Realty. It would hurt the local businesses, cause accidents for people trying to access the businesses and also affect the convenience store, restaurant, jewelry store, and art store. We would lose those businesses. Can we see a redesign with a stop light instead of a roundabout? (Citizens 3, 4)**

Response – If Alternative 17 is chosen as the Preferred Alternative, the Project Team will evaluate other options for the island intersection to minimize potential impacts to these businesses.

- 15. Any of the high-level fixed bridge alternatives will do away with the existing business corridor and waterfront business district and will result in most businesses closing. If businesses close on the island due to being “relocated” with construction requirements or lack of traffic because the corridor is moved, where are they going to go? There is very little commercial/retail space available currently. If we lose what’s currently here business and people may migrate to other beaches. (Citizens 6, 18, 21)**

Response – While impacts to the businesses and the central business district corridor will be taken into consideration when selecting a Preferred Alternative, some businesses may need to be relocated. A right of way agent from NCDOT will maintain listings of commercial properties for businesses and non-profit organizations that are displaced. Steps will be taken to minimize economic harm to them and increase the likelihood of their being able to relocate back into the community.

http://www.ncdot.gov/download/construction/roadbuilt/RelocationBooklet_07.pdf

TRAFFIC

- 16. The moveable bridges do not address the traffic issues in the summer – cars would still be backed up. (Citizen 19)**

Response – Alternatives 6 and 7 will continue to cause some traffic delays because of bridge openings. This traffic operation restriction is one of many considerations during project development and selection of a Preferred Alternative.

- 17. How would the roundabout operate on a Saturday morning around 11 AM when the rental properties are checking in/out approximately 1,000 to 1,500 tenants? (Citizen 13)**

Response – The 2035 traffic analysis indicates that the roundabout design operates similar to or better than the intersection design in terms of traffic operations.

- 18. How does the roundabout work with a SUV or Truck towing a boat? Wouldn’t this cause a bottleneck? (Citizen 4)**

Response – If a roundabout is chosen for the island intersection on NC 50/210, it will be designed to accommodate large trucks, cars/trucks with trailers, and bikes in the width of the roadway. The design speeds of the roundabout would be such that a larger vehicle should be able to travel through the roundabout without delaying the traffic behind it.

- 19. Since there is currently a study being done to consider widening NC 50/210 to 4 lanes, why would we put in a bridge with only 2 lanes? We would be creating a huge bottleneck. The island is not built out yet and has room for growth so we need a 4 lane bridge. (Citizens 4, 5, 13, 35, 36)**

Response – The funding available for the bridge replacement project will allow for a two-lane bridge but not a four-lane bridge. The study to widen NC 50/210 to four-lanes on the mainland side is currently in the feasibility planning stage with no funding available for construction. If the

widening of NC 50/210 is determined feasible, future planning, design, and construction would be beyond the NCDOT's current 10-year work plan.

20. Can there be consideration for a stop light at Little Kinston Road? There is a lot of traffic there in the summer (heavy months). (Citizens 4, 29)

Response – Once an alternative has been selected, the Project Team will investigate the need for a signal at this intersection.

21. I feel strongly that a roundabout needs to be added at the intersection of Little Kinston Road/ Atkinson Point Road and NC 50/210 rather than simply adding additional turn lanes. (Citizen 41)

Response – Once an alternative has been selected, the Project Team will investigate the need for a roundabout at this intersection.

SAFETY

22. What will the evacuation route be when winds are too strong and they would have to close a high rise bridge? (Citizens 6, 30, 38)

Response – Bridge closure due to high winds is determined by the local law enforcement authority. Typically, bridges are closed in the area when winds exceed 45 mph and prior notice is provided when evacuation needs to occur.

23. What would an ambulance do for Alternatives 6 and 7? Ambulances get caught waiting for the bridge. (Citizen 28)

Response – Currently, emergency responders are able to communicate with the bridge tender during emergencies. This policy would remain the same should Alternative 6 or 7 be selected.

24. The roundabout would be a disaster. Can you present specific accident statistics for the Ocean Isle roundabout example that shows it works? (Citizen 34)

Response – Since the Ocean Isle roundabout was only recently opened in 2008, no accident data is currently available. According to NCDOT research, roundabouts are a proven safety solution that prevent and reduce the severity of intersection crashes. NCDOT recently studied 30 roundabout locations across the State and found a 46% reduction in total crashes; a 76% reduction in injury crashes; an 85% reduction in high severity crashes; and a 76% reduction in frontal impact crashes.

COST

25. Can we see more accurate numbers for construction costs, utility costs, and operation and maintenance costs for Alternatives 6 and 7? Are employment salaries included in the costs? (Citizens 7, 9)

Response –The construction costs for this project were prepared by the NCDOT Cost Estimates Group, based on recent construction costs on similar projects. The operation costs, which include employment salaries, were estimated to be a total of \$150,000 per year over 75 year life cycle, for a total of \$11.3 million. The maintenance costs include average maintenance, part replacements (1 to 2 times over the 75 year life cycle), and routine bridge inspections for a total of \$14.7 million. If additional cost information is desired, please contact the Project Team at topsailislandbridge@rsandh.com.

Item	Estimated Cost Per Year	Estimated Cost Per Occurrence	Multiplier (per Year or Occurrence)	Total Cost
Average Maintenance Cost, first 10 years	\$25,000	-	10	\$250,000
Average Maintenance Cost, after 10 years	\$55,000	-	65	\$3,575,000
Replace Machinery (1 in 75 years)	-	\$3,000,000	1	\$3,000,000
Replace Controls (2 in 75 years)	-	\$1,500,000	2	\$3,000,000
Replace Coating Bascule Span (2 in 75 yrs)	-	\$750,000	2	\$1,500,000
Fender System Replacement (2 in 75 years)	-	\$1,500,000	2	\$3,000,000
Routine Bridge Inspection (Every 2 Years)	-	\$3,000	38	\$114,000
Fender System Inspection (Every 2 Years)	-	\$1,500	38	\$57,000
Machinery Inspection (Every 2 Years)	-	\$3,500	38	\$133,000
Underwater Inspection (Every 4 Years)	-	\$4,500	19	\$85,500
Bridge Operation	\$150,000	-	75	\$11,250,000
Total Estimated Operation & Maintenance Cost for Alternative 6 or 7				\$25,964,500

26. What part of the bridge operation and maintenance cost includes the bridge tenders salaries and benefits? Would the Town of Surf City be willing and able to cover that cost? (Citizen 2)

Response – The operation cost is approximately 38% of the total bridge operation and maintenance costs for each of Alternatives 6 and 7. The Project Team will discuss the option of the Town covering the operation cost with the Town of Surf City representatives.

CONSTRUCTION

27. How much additional time would it take to construct Alternatives 6 and 7 due to the temporary detour bridge as opposed to the high-level fixed bridges? The park would be out of commission during this construction. (Citizen 8)

Response – The construction time is estimated to be 2 to 3 years for each of the alternatives (both fixed and moveable). The park property would still be accessible during the construction period; however, several facilities would not be available for use during this period.

PEDESTRIANS/BICYCLISTS

28. What about doing sidewalk and bike lanes on only one side of the bridge, not both? (Citizen 3)

Response – Typically NCDOT’s policy is to provide sidewalk and bicycle lanes on both sides of the roadway for this type of surrounding land use and with the level of activity in the area. Also, the Town of Surf City has requested that sidewalk and bicycle lanes be provided on both sides.

29. Can you add a concrete barrier (maybe 36 inches) between the vehicles and the pedestrians/bicyclists on the bridge? (Citizen 9)

Response – Once an alternative has been selected, the Project Team will investigate this option.

30. How would the pedestrian and bicycle traffic be accommodated in the roundabout? (Citizen 11)

Response – Pedestrians will be accommodated using marked crosswalks and sidewalks along the outside of the roundabout. Bicycles become a part of the traffic stream through the roundabout and return to the designated bicycle lane upon exiting the roundabout.

IDEAS

31. Can you combine Alternative 17 mainland side with Alternative 11 on the island side? (Citizens 23, 24, 27, 31, 32, 33)

Response – The Project Team will investigate this option.

32. On Alternative 17, consider shifting the roundabout approximately 30-feet north of its current location so that it is centered more on the 4 vacant lots and avoid my commercial condominium development. (Citizen 42)

Response – The Project Team will investigate this option if Alternative 17 is chosen as the Preferred Alternative.

33. Has a tunnel been considered as an option? (Citizen 20)

Response – The Project Team investigated this option after the October 2010 public meeting and determined the tunnel would not be cost effective.

34. Has a single “pillar” bridge using the center line of the existing road been considered? (Citizen 26)

Response – The Project Team investigated this option after the October 2010 public meeting and determined this option would not be cost effective.

35. We have a bridge at the northern end of the island. Why not have one at the southern end of the island? (Citizen 25)

Response – The need for a southern bridge is considered a separate project requiring an independent Environmental Impact Statement.

36. Why were Alternatives 5A and 10A not considered for further study? It seems by eliminating the temporary moveable bridge, the construction cost would be significantly lower for these alternatives. (Citizen 17)

Response – Alternative 5A received lower support from the community and substantially impacted the channel connecting the Intracoastal Waterway to the private marina. Alternative 10A received lower support from the community and bisected Soundside Park; thereby using property protected under Section 4(f) of the US Department of Transportation Act of 1966.

Citizen #	Name
1	Hap Alexander
2	Patrick Barnes
3	David Ward
4	Jim Bird
5	Becky Tucker
6	Sydney Williams
7	Laura Bodeman
8	Allen Wilson
9	Marcie Kaiser
10	Casey Connell
11	Allen Padgett
12	Sally Ward
13	Hiram Williams
14	Stan Rogers
15	Audience Participant
16	Michaele Maguth
17	No name
18	Sandy Maddox
19	Nancy Shirley
20	Bill Horstmann
21	Lori Burnett

Citizen #	Name
22	Aaron Rogers
23	Catherine Clapp
24	No name (1344 Carolina Blvd)
25	Glenda Grady
26	George White
27	Frank Meece
28	Mary Bartholomew
29	William Fowler
30	Michael Moore
31	Mary Meece
32	Earlene Graham
33	Bonnie Hunter
34	Gerald Barrelli
35	Betty Saunders
36	David Prince
37	Nancy Wilkes
38	Deborah Prevo Wilson
39	Raymond Lisi
40	Louise Maguth
41	Stephen Morgan
42	Mike Hendy