



## **THE PURPOSE OF THE OPEN HOUSE AND PUBLIC HEARING**

Today's hearing is another important step in the North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT) procedure for making you, the public, a part of the project development process. The purpose of the hearing is to obtain public input on the location and design of the project.

There are two portions to today's event, an informal open house and a formal public hearing.

### **View the DEIS and detailed project maps**

Planning and environmental studies on the I-2513, I-26 Connector Project are available in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Copies of the DEIS, along with today's hearing maps, are available for review.

### **View the animated representation of the project**

A visualization of some of the proposed alternatives for the project will be played continuously during the pre-hearing open house. Please take a moment to view this video with an explanation of the project.

### **Speak with project representatives**

NCDOT representatives will be available between the hours of 4 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. to answer questions and receive comments relative to the proposed project.

### **Stay for the Public Hearing**

A formal presentation will begin at 7 p.m. The presentation will consist of an explanation of the proposed corridor location, design, right of way, relocation requirements/procedures, and the state-federal relationship. The hearing will be open to those present for statements, questions and comments. The presentation and comments will be recorded and a transcript will be prepared. If you can not stay, the Public Hearing will be streamed, live, on the project website and you can submit comments online or through the mail.

#### **Inside This Handout:**

<b>Frequently Asked Questions</b>	<b>Page 2</b>
<b>Project Purpose and Need</b>	<b>Page 2</b>
<b>Public Review and Comment</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>Project Timeline</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>Detailed Study Alternatives</b>	<b>Page 4</b>
<b>Section C Alternatives</b>	<b>Pages 4-5</b>
<b>Section A Alternative</b>	<b>Page 6</b>
<b>Section B Alternatives</b>	<b>Pages 6-7</b>
<b>Nearby Projects</b>	<b>Page 8</b>
<b>Summary of Project Impacts by Section</b>	<b>Pages 9-10</b>

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The I-26 Connector Project is an interstate freeway project that is being proposed to connect I-26 in southwest Asheville to US 19-23-70 in northwest Asheville. The NCDOT has programmed this project to upgrade and widen I-240 from I-40 to Patton Avenue, and then proceed northward from Patton Avenue on new location across the French Broad River and connect to US 19-23-70 just south of Exit 25 (Broadway). Upon completion, this project will be part of the I-26 Interstate that extends from Charleston, South Carolina, to Kingsport, Tennessee.

The proposed I-26 Connector in Asheville is approximately 7 miles long from the I-40 interchange to Broadway. The project includes three sections: C, A, and B.

### **Section C**

Improvements to the I-26/I-240 interchange with I-40 and the Brevard Road and Smokey Park Highway interchanges.

### **Section A**

Upgrading existing I-240 from the I-26/I-240 interchange with I-40 to the I-240 interchange with Patton Avenue, west of the French Broad River. This includes upgrades to the Brevard Road, Amboy Road, Haywood Road and Patton Avenue interchanges.

### **Section B**

Construction of the interstate on new location from the Patton Avenue interchange north across the French Broad River, tying into US 19-23-70 south of Broadway.

# PROJECT INFORMATION

## GENERAL

### ***What is the DEIS?***

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) NCDOT prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the I-26 Connector Project. The DEIS is a federally required environmental document that describes the purpose and need for the project, identifies project alternatives, and evaluates them for potential environmental effects.

### ***Are the Designs Final?***

The design plans shown at the Public Hearing are preliminary and have not been finalized. Additional information including traffic forecasts and updated property information may result in modifications of right-of-way limits, the limits of construction, road curves, or pavement markings.

### ***Has a Preferred Alternative Been Selected?***

At this point, a preferred alternative has not been selected. All alternatives under consideration are presented in the DEIS and to the project team for selection of the preferred alternative.

### ***What's Next?***

The next step in the planning process will be to summarize comments received at the public hearing and choose the Preferred Alternative. Your comments and recommendations will be on public record and will be considered when selecting the Preferred Alternative and to assist in developing the final design of the project.

### ***When Will Construction Start?***

Section C of the project will be the first to start construction and is scheduled to begin in 2021. Section B construction will commence in 2024, and Section A will begin in later years.

## PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

### ***Why is the I-26 Connector needed?***

The project is needed to address traffic capacity problems along the existing I-240 corridor (future I-26), across the Captain Jeff Bowen Bridges to US 19-23-70. Presently numerous areas do not meet interstate design standards and cannot be designated I-26 without being improved. The project would improve traffic flow, address the substandard roadway features, and provide an interstate roadway through West Asheville for the I-26 Corridor.

### ***How will traffic operate if the project is not built?***

Traffic operations are evaluated using a "Level of Service" rating ranging from A (best) to F (worst). If no improvements are made, in 2033, 41 of the 80 freeway elements will operate at an unacceptable level of service, based on Federal Highway Administration standards. The completion of portions of the adjacent NCDOT Project A-0010A (US 19-23-70 improvements from Asheville to the Tennessee state line) will further increased traffic demands along I-240 west of Asheville.

### ***What are the roadway deficiencies along the existing corridor?***

The existing route serving I-26 traffic has numerous design deficiencies that do not meet interstate design standards. The corridor was evaluated based on 19 design criteria, and 24 locations were shown to have elements that were substandard. Multiple segments of I-240 west of Asheville currently have an accident rate that exceeds the critical crash rate for similar North Carolina facilities, demonstrating the need for these improvements along this section of the facility.

## State-Federal Relationship

The proposed project is a Federal-Aid Highway Project and thus will be constructed under the State-Federal Aid Highway Program. Financing of this project will be 80% Federal funds and 20% State funds through the National Highway System Program. The Board of Transportation is responsible for the selection and scheduling of projects on the Federal Aid System, including their location, design and maintenance cost after construction. The Federal Highway Administration is responsible for the review and approval of the previously mentioned activities to ensure that each Federal Aid Project is designed, constructed and maintained to Federal Aid Standards.

# PROJECT INFORMATION

## What is done with input received?

A post-hearing meeting will be conducted after the comment period has ended. NCDOT staff representing Planning, Design, Traffic Operations, Division, Right of Way, Public Involvement, Community Studies, and others who play a role in the development of a project will attend this meeting. The project will also be reviewed with federal agencies such as the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), as well as state agencies such as the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources. When appropriate, local government staff may also attend.

All spoken and written comments are discussed at the post-hearing meeting. Most issues are resolved at the post-hearing meeting. The NCDOT considers safety, costs, traffic service, social impacts and public comments in making decisions. Complex issues may require additional study and may be reviewed by higher management, Board of Transportation Members and/or the Secretary of Transportation.

Minutes of the post-hearing meeting will be summarized and are available to the public by noting your request on the comment sheet. Once distributed, the post-hearing meeting minutes will also be posted on the project website.

## WHERE TO REVIEW PROJECT INFORMATION

The DEIS and Public Hearing Maps are available for public viewing at the following locations:

<b>NCDOT Division 13</b> 55 Orange Street Asheville, North Carolina 28801	<b>City of Asheville Transportation</b> 70 Court Plaza—Mezzanine Level Asheville, North Carolina, 28802
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The DEIS is also available for public viewing at the following public library locations:

<b>State Library of North Carolina:</b> 109 East Jones Street Raleigh, North Carolina 27601	<b>Pack Memorial Library:</b> 67 Haywood Street Asheville, North Carolina 28801
<b>West Asheville Library</b> 942 Haywood Road Asheville, North Carolina 28806	<b>Buncombe County Law Library</b> 60 Court Plaza Asheville, North Carolina 28801

People can also view the materials at the project website at <http://www.ncdot.gov/projects/i26connector/>

## YOUR PARTICIPATION

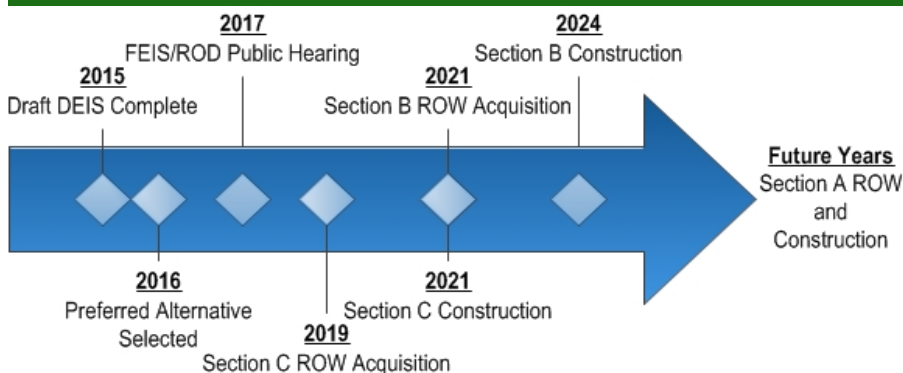
Now that the opportunity is here, you are encouraged to participate by making your comments and/or questions a part of the public record. This may be done by having them recorded at the formal Public Hearing, calling the project hotline at 1-800-233-6315, or by writing them on the attached comment sheet. Several representatives of the North Carolina Department of Transportation are present. They will be happy to talk with you, explain the design to you and answer your questions. You may write your comments or questions on the comment sheet and leave it with one of the representatives or mail them by December 16, 2015 to the following address:

Mr. Drew Joyner, P.E.  
NCDOT - Human Environment Section  
1598 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-1598  
Email: [djoyner@ncdot.gov](mailto:djoyner@ncdot.gov)  
1-800-233-6315

Additionally, comments can be submitted through EngageNCDOT, an interactive public engagement tool at <http://engagencdot.mysidewalk.com/>

Everyone present is urged to participate in the proceedings. It is important, however, that the **opinions of all individuals be respected regardless of how different they may be from your own.** Accordingly, debates, as such, are out of place at public hearings. Also, the public hearing is not to be used as a popular referendum to determine the location and/or design by a majority vote of those present.

## PROJECT TIMELINE

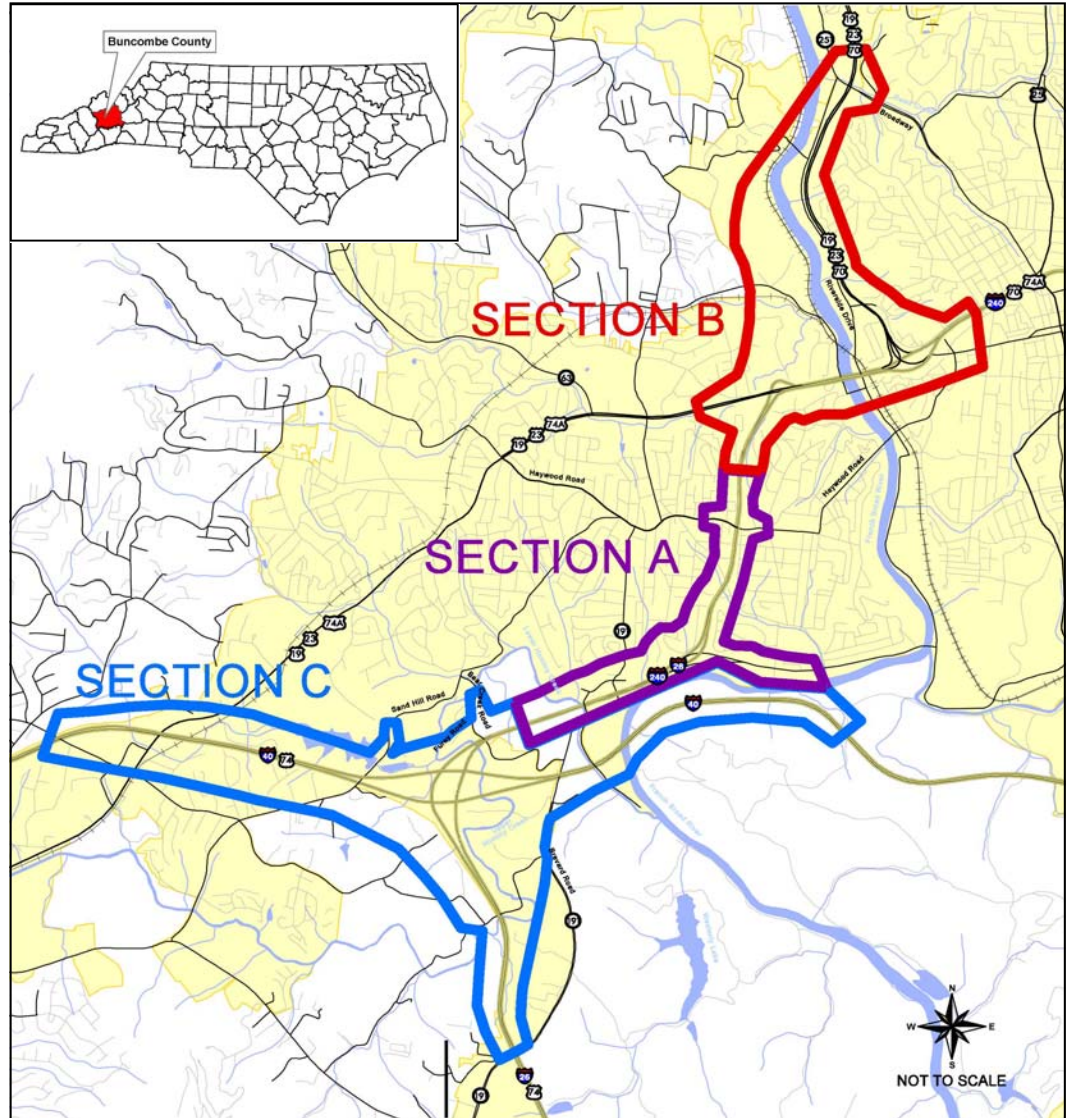


**NCDOT Mission Statement: Connecting people, products, and places safely and efficiently with customer focus, accountability and environmental sensitivity to enhance the economy and vitality of North Carolina.**

# DETAILED STUDY ALTERNATIVES

All of the detailed study alternatives would accommodate the projected traffic demands, as well as sharing common features such as landscaping, buffers, and color treatments on structural elements. However, each alternative balances the impacts to the human and natural environment in different ways.

The Project Study Area has been broken into three sections, as shown here. The proposed alternatives for each section are shown on the following pages.



## SECTION C

The four build alternatives for Section C, as presented on the next page, offer a variety of options to reconstruct the existing I-26/I-40/I-240 interchange. All alternatives provide the missing movements at the I-26/I-40/I-240 interchange.

**Alternative A-2** provides direct flyover ramps for all movements at the I-26/I-40/I-240 interchange. This is a comprehensive solution that will result in an interchange that moves traffic in all four directions.

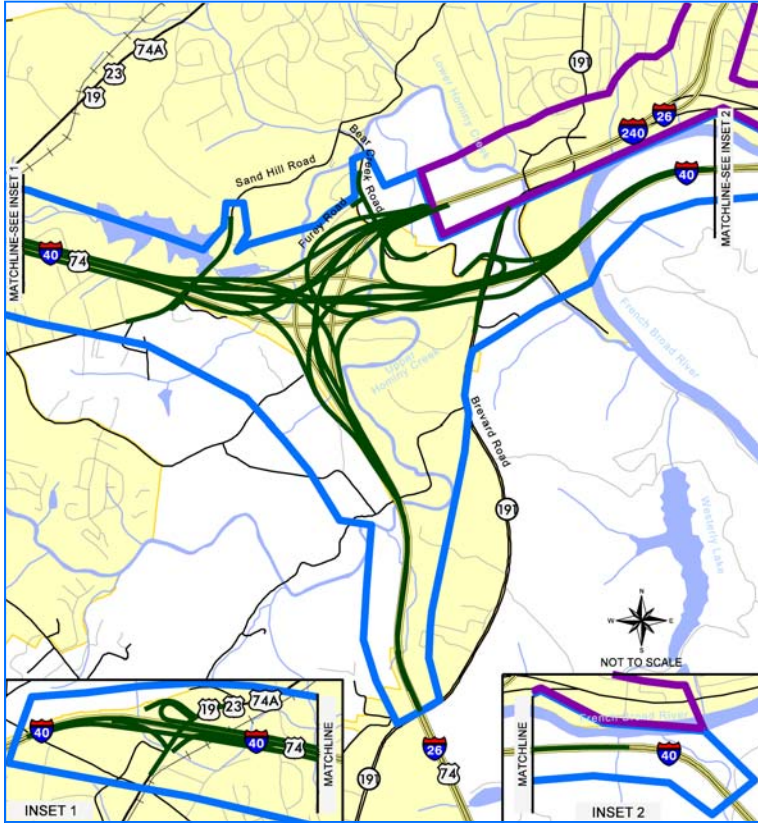
**Alternative C-2** provides two flyover ramps and two loop ramps at the I-26/I-40/I-240 interchange along with Collector-Distributor roadways in both directions along I-40 and in the eastbound direction along I-26. This solution balances between optimal traffic improvements and overall cost.

**Alternative D-1** provides three flyover ramps and one loop ramp at the I-26/I-40/I-240 interchange. This solution balances optimal traffic improvements with overall cost.

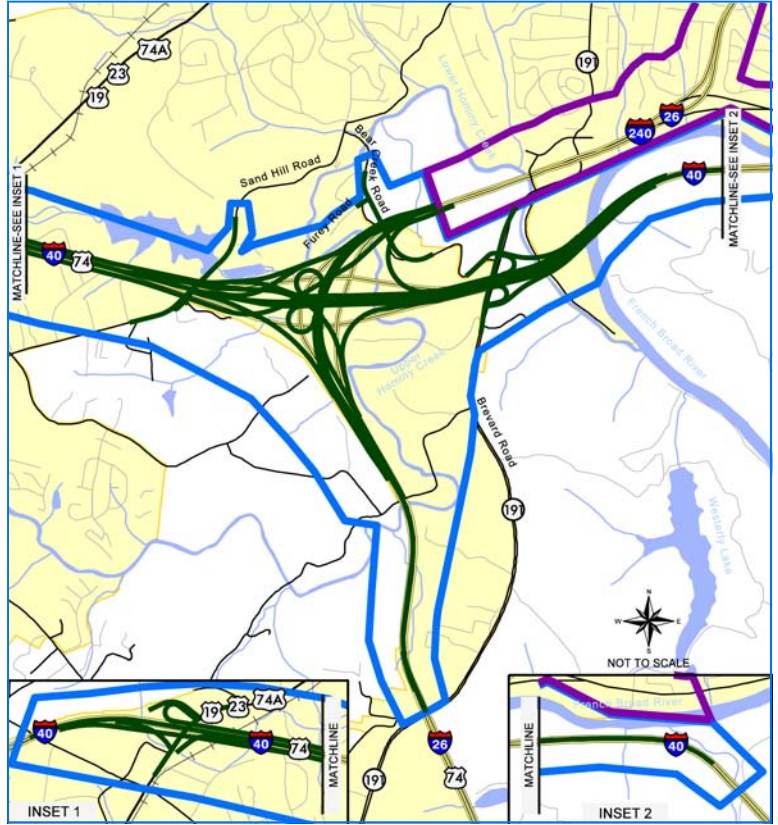
**Alternative F-1** reconstructs the existing I-26/I-40/I-240 interchange in the same general configuration as today but with the addition of two missing connections to I-40. This is a low-cost, efficient, solution that provides the missing movements in the interchange and accommodates projected traffic demands.

# DETAILED STUDY ALTERNATIVES—SECTION C

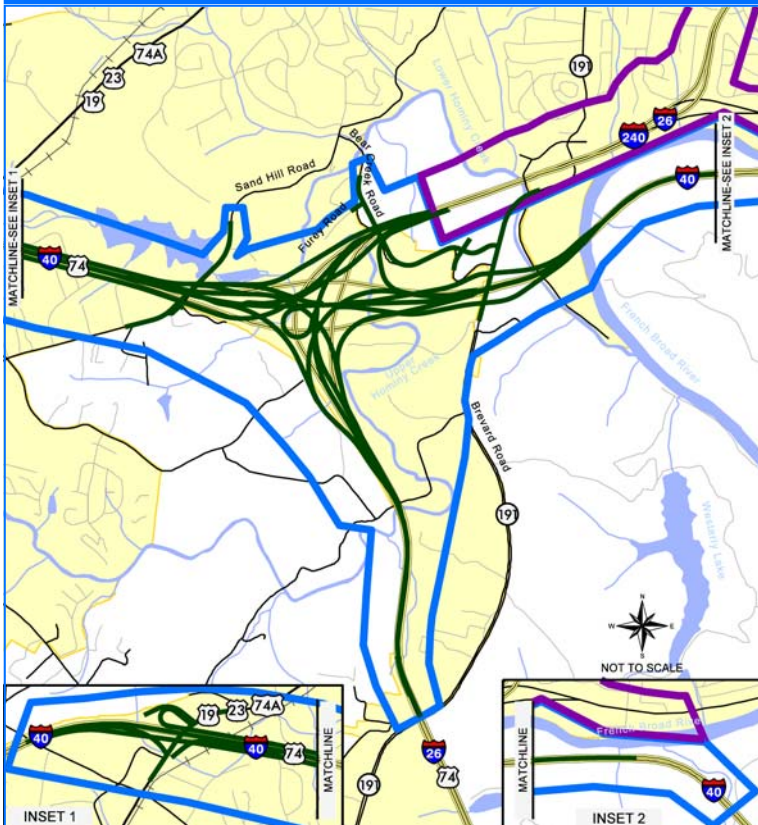
## Section C: Alternative A2



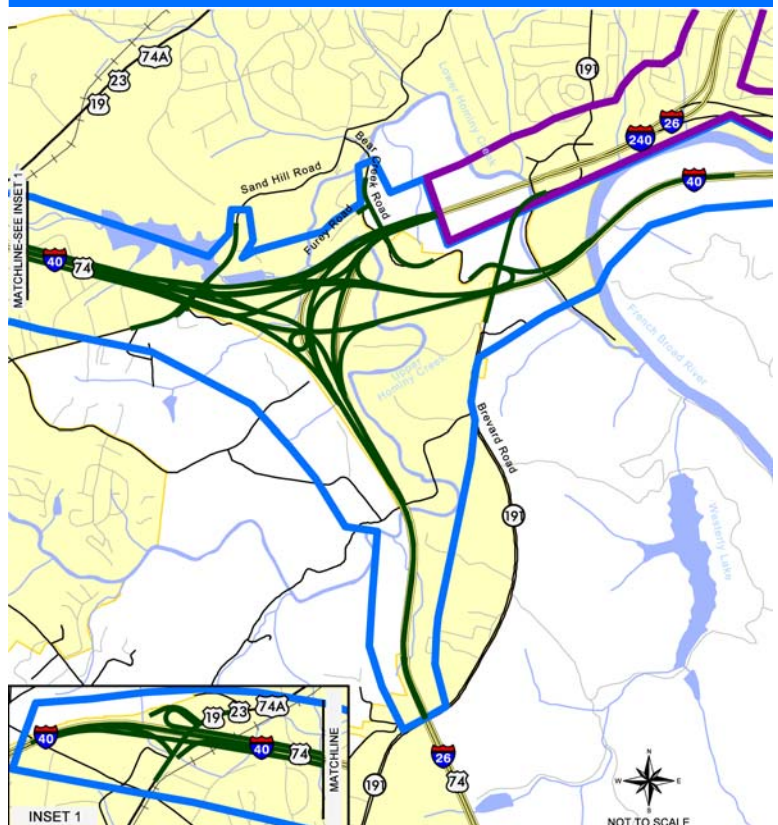
## Section C: Alternative C2



## Section C: Alternative D1



## Section C: Alternative F1



# DETAILED STUDY ALTERNATIVES—SECTION A

## SECTION A

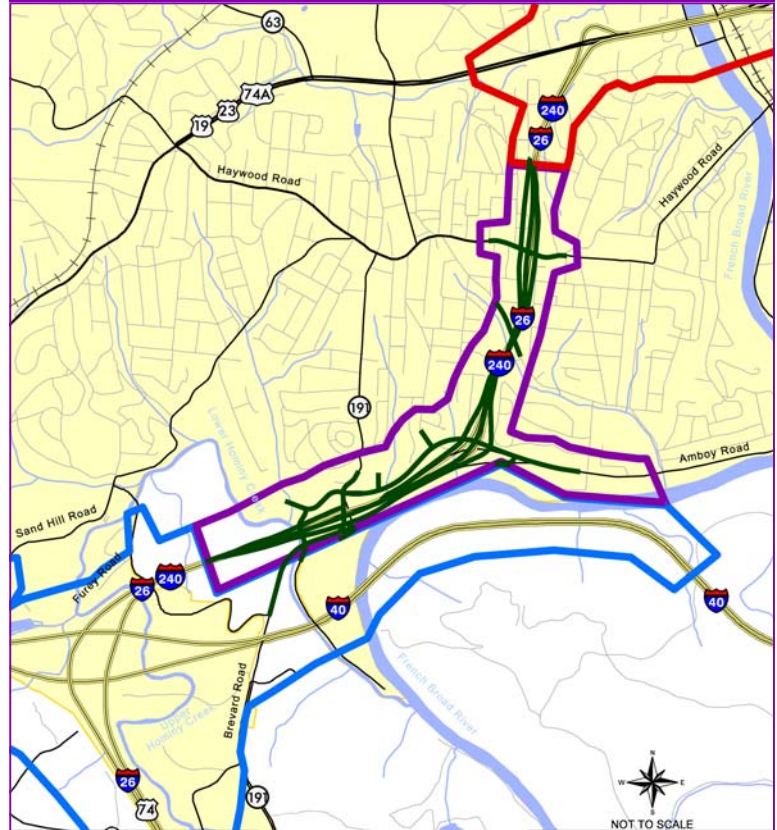
There is one build alternative for Section A, which would widen I-240 from four lanes to eight lanes and provide upgrades at three interchanges.

The interchange with Brevard Road would have limited connectivity because of close proximity to the Amboy Road interchange. I-26 East/I-40 West traffic would exit at an upgraded Amboy Road interchange and travel along a new extension of Amboy Road to Brevard Road.

This extension of Amboy Road would connect to Fairfax Avenue and Virginia Avenue and continue to an intersection at Brevard Road.

A third interchange, at Haywood Road, would be converted to a tight urban diamond configuration. This design would relocate the current exit ramp from I-240 East that connects to Hanover Street and relocate it to connect directly to Haywood Road. The current two-way section of ramp in the northeast quadrant would also be eliminated.

## Section A: I-240 Widening Alternative



## SECTION B

The four build alternatives for Section B, as presented on the next page, offer a variety of options for crossing the French Broad River and connecting to US 19-23-70 at the northern end of the project.

**Alternative 3** separates I-240 and I-26, with I-26 running north along a new alignment and I-240 continuing over the Captain Jeff Bowen Bridges as it does currently.

**Alternative 3C** follows the same alignment as Alternative 3, but crosses the French Broad River on two bridges further south.

**Alternative 4** separates the local traffic on Patton Avenue from the I-240 through traffic, but otherwise follows a similar route as Alternative 3.

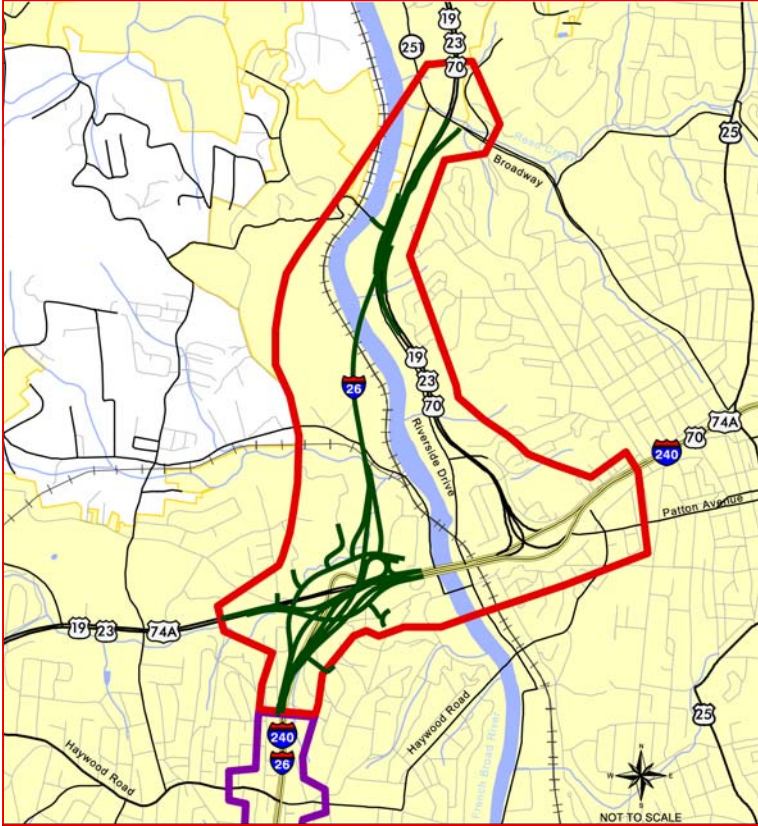
**Alternative 4B** also separates the local traffic on Patton Avenue from the I-240 through traffic, otherwise following a similar route as alternative 3C.

## Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodations

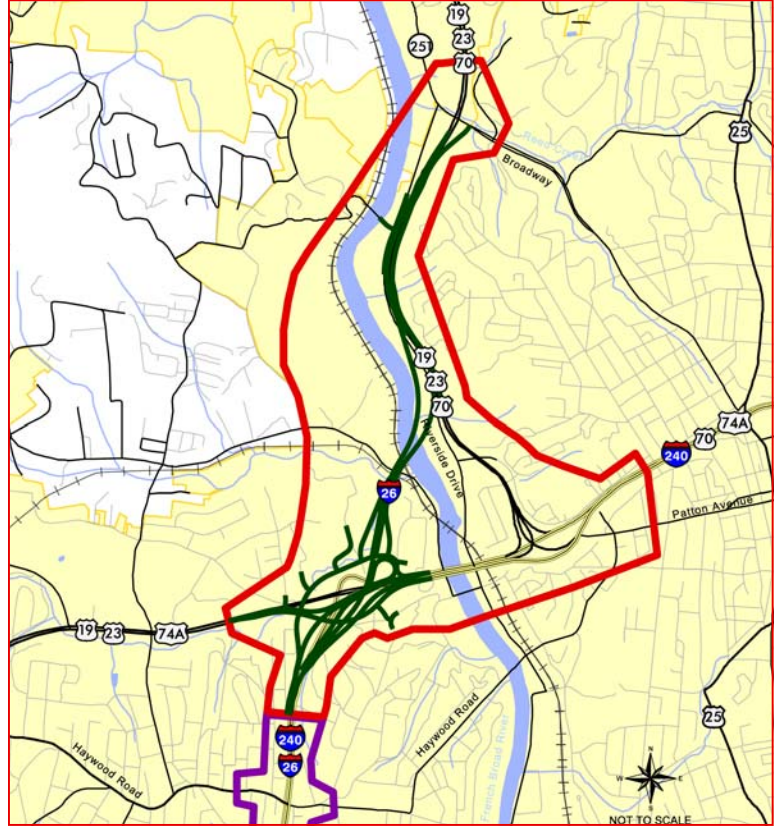
The City of Asheville has multiple plans to address bicycle and pedestrian accommodations throughout the city. In harmony with these plans, a greenway is proposed along Section A and all of the Section B alternatives. The greenway begins at Haywood Road and will follow the I-26 improvements in Section B, where it merges with Patton Avenue to cross the French Broad River and ties to the nearby streets, providing access to downtown Asheville. In addition, the proposed designs include multiple connections throughout the project area to existing sidewalks, bike paths, or transit routes.

# DETAILED STUDY ALTERNATIVES—SECTION B

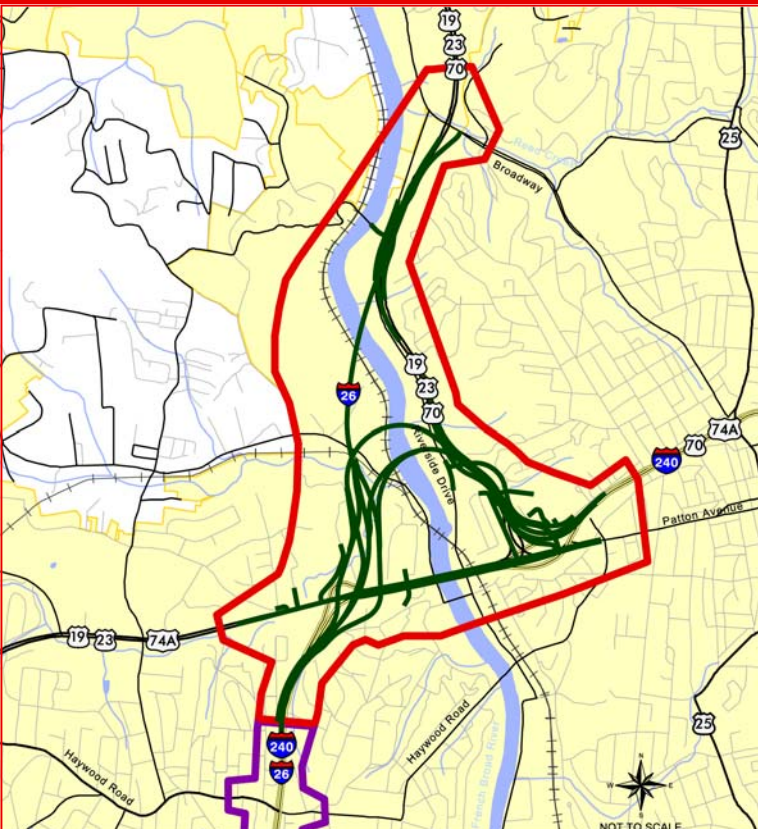
## Section B: Alternative 3



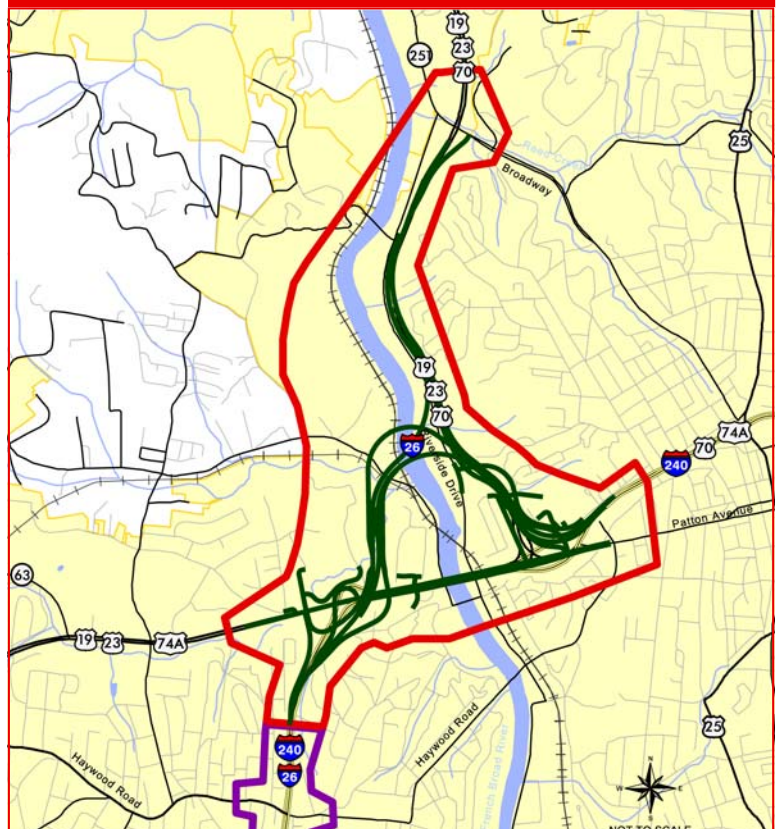
## Section B: Alternative 3C



## Section B: Alternative 4



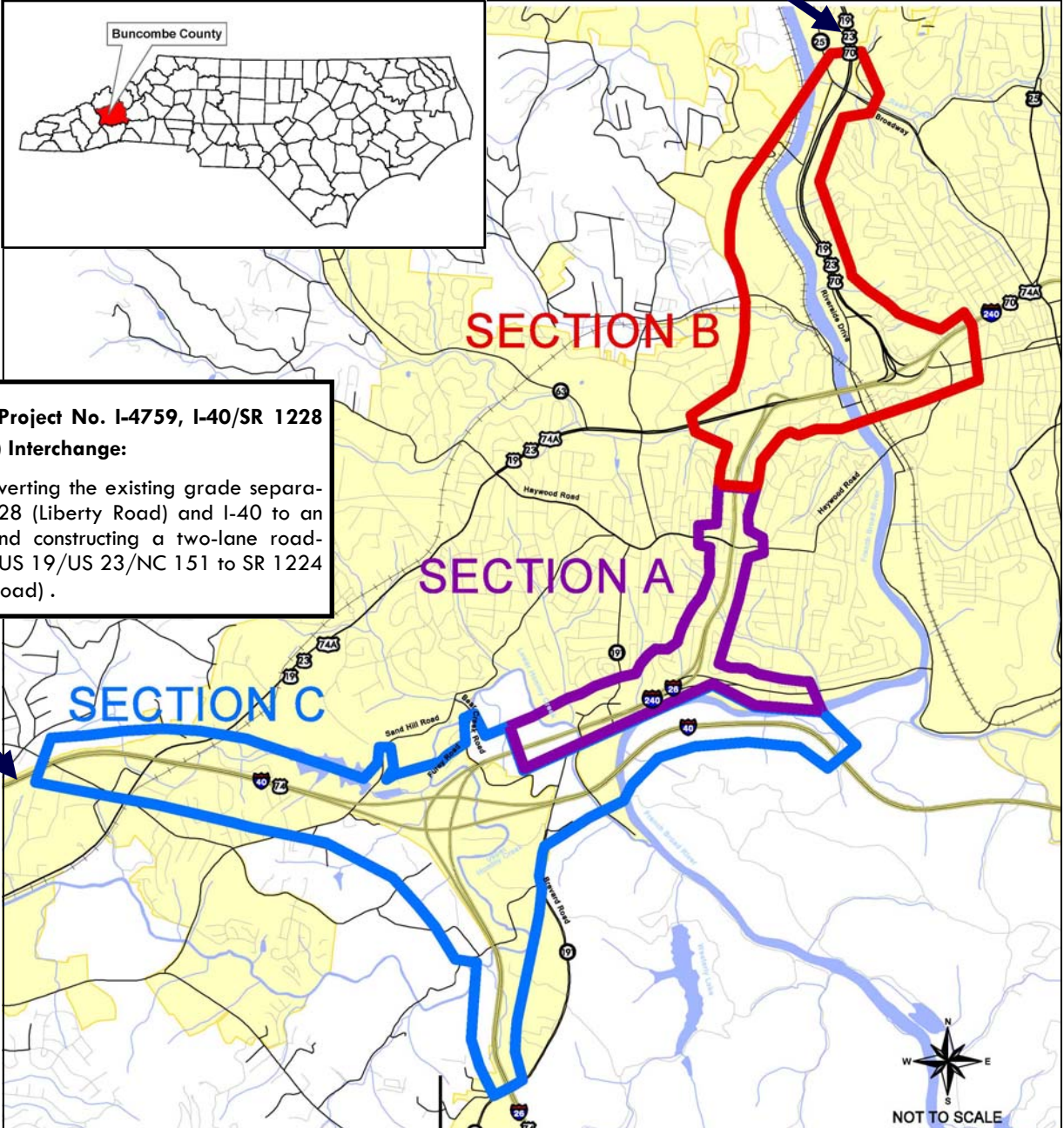
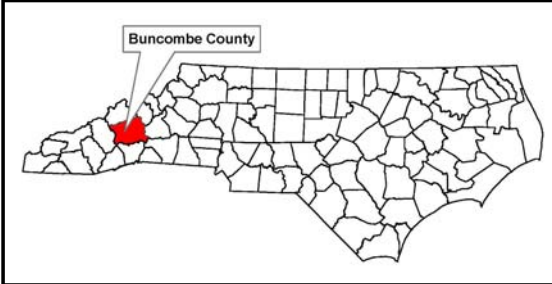
## Section B: Alternative 4B



# NEARBY PROJECTS

## NCDOT STIP Project No. A-0010A, US 19/23 (Future I-26) Improvements Project:

NCDOT is proposing to improve approximately 12 miles of US 19/23 from north of I-240 in Asheville to just south of Exit 13 (Forks of Ivy – Stockton Road) near Mars Hill. This project is currently in the early stages of the planning process.



## NCDOT STIP Project No. I-4759, I-40/SR 1228 (Liberty Road) Interchange:

NCDOT is converting the existing grade separation at SR 1228 (Liberty Road) and I-40 to an interchange and constructing a two-lane roadway between US 19/US 23/NC 151 to SR 1224 (Monte Vista Road).

## NCDOT STIP Project No. I-5504/Brevard Road Interchange project (Exit 33):

NCDOT is modifying an existing partial cloverleaf interchange, primarily to alleviate congestion by increasing the efficiency of the interchange. The project may include the widening of the NC 191 (Brevard Road) bridge over I-26.

## NCDOT STIP Project No. I-4400/I-4700, I-26 Widening Project:

NCDOT is proposing to widen approximately 22 miles of I-26 from US 25 (Exit 54) in Henderson County to I-40 in Asheville. This project is about to begin the preliminary design process.