

Appendix A

Agency Steering Committee Concurrence Form and Meeting Minutes

**Pre-NEPA Agency Steering Committee Concurrence Agreement
TIP Project I-5133
I-95 Corridor Planning & Finance Study**

Project Name/Description: I-95 Corridor Planning & Finance Study, Robeson, Cumberland, Harnett, Johnston, Wilson, Nash, Halifax & Northampton Counties; Divisions 1, 4 & 6;

Project Need:

- Capacity Deficiencies
- Structural Deficiencies
- Geometric Deficiencies
- Higher than Statewide Average Fatality Crash Rate for Interstates
- Funding Deficiencies

Project Purpose:

- Improve Capacity
- Improve Infrastructure
- Reduce Fatality Crash Rate along I-95 Corridor
- Develop a Feasible Funding Strategy


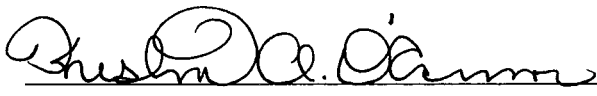
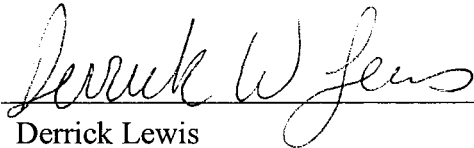
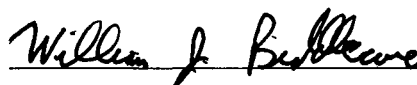
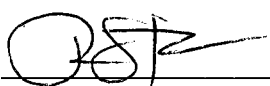
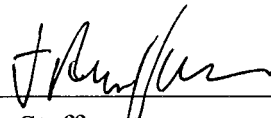
Goals & Objectives:

- Upgrade interstate to meet current design standards.
- Provide additional capacity for predicted future traffic volumes at a Level of Service (LOS) C or better for the entire corridor, with the possible exception of limited spot locations within urbanized areas where LOS D may be considered acceptable.
- Identify a plan for realistic and reliable funding options that will meet the long-term funding needs of the corridor.
- Utilize existing roadway right-of-way to the extent possible.
- Minimize environmental impacts.
- Ensure consistency with local transportation plans.
- Obtain informed consent from study participants (federal, state and local agencies, members of the public) on project Purpose and Need and Alternatives to be considered.
- Incorporate NCDOT Complete Streets Policy on overpasses, where appropriate.
- Maintain evacuation routes.

Preferred Design Concept & Scope:

- Widen on Existing Alignment:** This alternative will provide the desired LOS and enhanced safety for the I-95 corridor and would have the lowest impact on the human and natural environments, as compared to the other build alternatives. This alternative was recommended to be carried forward to the Tier 3 – Refinement stage. Further steps are currently being taken to refine the design elements of the Preferred Design Concept and Scope for financial analysis and operational feasibility. This will involve reviewing the “Widen on Existing Alignment” alternative to incorporate other improvement options, including interchange design improvements, feasible tolling scenarios, greenway enhancements, and a corridor infrastructure preservation plan.

The Project Team Members listed below have concurred with the pre-NEPA Purpose & Need, Goals & Objectives, and the Preferred Design Concept and Scope for all future TIP projects that result from the I-95 Corridor Planning and Finance Study. Concurrence is contingent upon NCDOT using the Merger Screening Criteria to determine if the project(s) need to follow the Merger process. If the screening guidance indicates the need to follow the Merger process, NCDOT will be willing to use the Merger process for the project(s) development.

Federal Highway Administration		5/19/11
	Ron Lucas	Date
NC Department of Transportation		5-19-11
	Kristine O'Connor	Date
NC Department of Transportation		5/19/11
	Derrick Lewis	Date
US Army Corps of Engineers		5/19/11
	Bill Biddlecome	Date
US Army Corps of Engineers		5/19/11
	Ronnie Smith	Date
US Army Corps of Engineers		05/19/11
	Tom Steffens	Date

US Fish and Wildlife Service	<u>Gary Jordan</u>	<u>5/19/2011</u>
	Gary Jordan	Date
US Environmental Protection Agency	<u>Chris Militscher</u>	<u>5/19/11</u>
	Chris Militscher	Date
National Marine Fisheries	<u>Fritz Rohde</u>	<u>6/6/11</u>
	FRITZ ROHDE	Date
NC Division of Water Quality	<u>Rob Ridings</u>	<u>5-19-11</u>
	Rob Ridings	Date
NC Division of Water Quality	<u>David Wainwright</u>	<u>5/19/11</u>
	David Wainwright	Date
NC Division of Marine Fisheries	<u>DEFERRED TO WRC - SEE ATTACHMENT</u>	
	Jessi Baker	Date
NC Division of Marine Fisheries	<u>DEFERRED TO WRC - SEE ATTACHMENT</u>	
	Kevin Hart	Date
NC Wildlife Resources Commission	<u>Travis Wilson</u>	<u>5-19-2011</u>
	Travis Wilson	Date
NC State Historic Preservation Office	<u>Renee Gledhill-Earley</u>	<u>6-14-11</u>
	Renee Gledhill-Earley	Date

O'Connor Kristine A

From: Hart, Kevin
Sent: Monday, June 06, 2011 1:06 PM
To: O'Connor Kristine A; Baker, Jessi E
Cc: Deaton, Anne
Subject: RE: I-95 Pre-NEPA Concurrence Agreement

Kristine,

After speaking with my supervisor, we feel that this project is far inland and we will defer to the NCWRC on this project. If you still need me to sign the form for this concurrence point as we were a member up until this point I have no issue signing it, just let me know.

If you have any questions please let me know.

Thanks,
Kevin Hart

-----Original Message-----

From: O'Connor Kristine A
Sent: Wednesday, June 01, 2011 8:56 AM
To: Hart, Kevin; Baker, Jessi E
Subject: I-95 Pre-NEPA Concurrence Agreement

Good morning,

Attached are the Pre-NEPA Concurrence Form and some additional information for the I-95 Corridor Planning & Finance Study. As I mentioned over the phone, I would like to get your signatures on this form, but I do understand that you may want to review it beforehand. Once you are comfortable with the information presented, please let me know and I will send out a hard copy of the original form. I would prefer to get all signatures on the same form so that I'll only have one original document.

Please let me know if you have questions.

Thank you,

Kristine

Kristine A. O'Connor, P.E.
Project Planning Engineer
North Carolina Department of Transportation Project Development & Environmental Analysis Branch Mailing Address:
1548 Mail Service Center Raleigh, NC 27699-1548 Physical Address: Century Center - Building A 1020 Birch Ridge Drive
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(919) 707-6034
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*Please note that my phone & fax numbers and physical location have changed.

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STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

BEVERLY EAVES PERDUE
GOVERNOR

EUGENE A. CONTI, JR.
SECRETARY

DATE: September 15, 2010

SUBJECT: Minutes for August 17, 2010 Agency Steering Committee Meeting
I-95 Corridor Planning & Finance Study, TIP # I-5133

PARTICIPANTS:	Kristine O'Connor	NCDOT PDEA Branch
	Charles Cox	NCDOT PDEA Branch
	Ron Lucas	FHWA
	Roberto Canales	NCDOT Dept for Strategic Initiatives
	Christopher Militscher	US Environmental Protection Agency
	Tom Steffens	US Army Corps of Engineers
	Bill Biddlecome	US Army Corps of Engineers
	Gary Jordan	US Fish and Wildlife
	David Wainwright	NC DENR Division of Water Quality
	Rob Ridings	NC DENR Division of Water Quality
	Travis Wilson	NC Wildlife Resources Council
	Elizabeth Lusk	NCDOT PDEA - Natural Environment Unit
	Missy Dickens Pair	NCDOT PDEA Branch
	Matt Carlisle	NCDOT PDEA Branch
	Rob Hanson	NCDOT PDEA Branch
	Beverly Goll-Yekeson	NCDOT PDEA - PICS
	Herman Huang	NCDOT PDEA - PICS
	W.M. Petit	NCDOT TIP Unit
	James Upchurch	NCDOT Transportation Planning Branch
	Mark Staley	NCDOT Roadside Environmental Unit
	Benjetta Johnson	NCDOT Congestion Management
	Mark Boggs	PBS&J
	Taruna Tayal	Martin/Alexiou/Bryson
	Bill Thomas	Michael Baker Engineering
	Bill Hood	Michael Baker Engineering
	Craig Young	Michael Baker Engineering
	Ken Gilland	Michael Baker Engineering

A meeting was held at the Transportation Building on August 17, 2010 from 9:00 to 10:30 a.m. The purpose of the meeting was to share project information on the I-95 Corridor Planning and Finance Study with the regulatory resource agencies. This pre-NEPA study is designed to develop purpose and need for subsequent NEPA studies for improvements to the I-95 corridor from Robeson County to Northampton County.

Introduction and Project Background

Kristine O'Connor led the introduction and project background discussion. The I-95 Corridor Planning and Finance Study is a pre-NEPA study with the goal of assessing the improvement needs of I-95 from the SC/NC state line to the NC/VA state line. The project covers parts of eight counties in North Carolina: Robeson, Cumberland, Harnett, Johnston, Wilson, Nash, Halifax, and Northampton, with the project demographic study area including portions of Hoke, Bladen, Sampson, and Wayne

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Counties. Preliminary studies are underway to determine potential improvement alternatives for I-95, including the number of lanes, median widths, right-of-way needs, potential truck restrictions or the use of truck-only lanes, improvement priorities, and funding strategies. At the beginning of the project, 11 alternatives were under consideration. It is anticipated that the number of alternatives will be reduced throughout the course of the study. This study will also begin the process of determining purpose and need for the alternatives to be carried forward. Resource agencies were given a copy of the Draft Goals and Objectives, as well as a rough outline of the Draft Purpose and Need. NCDOT requested that comments on these draft documents be received by September 17, 2010. NCDOT anticipates meeting with the resource agencies again in October to address these comments. NCDOT also sought public comment on the Draft Goals and Objectives at the seven Citizens Informational Workshops held in August and will summarize the comments received during the workshops prior to the next Agency Steering Committee meeting. By the summer of 2011, NCDOT anticipates that preliminary alternatives and financing options will be more clearly defined. An additional series of public workshops will be scheduled in late summer/early fall 2011 to relay the findings of the study to the public. The project is currently scheduled to be completed with a final report in the fall/winter of 2011.

Discussion

The US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) asked if adding new lanes to an existing facility would be considered “New Location” and if tolling existing roads would require new legislation. NCDOT responded that adding new lanes to an existing facility would not be considered a “New Location” facility and that new legislation would be required for a toll to be placed on an existing roadway. FHWA is assisting NCDOT with the development of a tolling application in the event that tolling is chosen as the appropriate funding strategy..

The US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) asked what percentage of traffic traveling on I-95 came from out of state. NCDOT responded that approximately 50 to 60 percent of the vehicles traveling on I-95 in North Carolina were registered in another state. They also pointed out that only 15 to 20 percent of the traffic went completely through North Carolina, indicating that North Carolina was a destination for over half of the vehicles with out of state registrations.

USEPA asked if it would be possible to have a breakdown of traffic and road conditions by section and the current number of lanes in other states. NCDOT will provide the section-based information in the existing conditions report, currently in the final stages of preparation and expected to be available by the end of 2010. NCDOT also noted that I-95 has eight lanes in portions of South Carolina and in Virginia from the North Carolina state line to Petersburg, and has additional lanes between Petersburg and Richmond. NCDOT stated that Virginia was seeking to place a toll on I-95 at the NC/VA border, but that no formal studies were underway in that state at this time.

USEPA asked about the Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT). NCDOT responded that the existing AADT along I-95 in North Carolina ranged from 35,000 to 55,000 vehicles per day (vpd) depending on the section. The average annual traffic growth rate was 0.5 to 1.5 percent. Traffic in the design year (2040) was estimated to range from a maximum of 75,000 to 80,000 vpd south of the I-40 interchange. The leading destination along the I-95 corridor in North Carolina was the City of Fayetteville.

USACE asked about the percentage of truck traffic on I-95. NCDOT responded that trucks accounted for 20 to 22 percent of traffic on I-95, and that 70 to 80 percent of truck traffic was registered out of state.

NCDOT informed the agency representatives that FHWA has recently requested a change in the discussion of safety improvements as it relates to a project’s Purpose and Need. In order to be able to show a measurable improvement in safety along I-95 and given that I-95 has a higher fatality rate than

comparable interstates in North Carolina (I-40, I-85), FHWA suggested that one goal of this project could be to reduce the fatality rate on I-95.

USEPA asked about travel time on I-95 and noted that crashes caused substantial backups on the roadway, which could have a negative impact on commerce. NCDOT responded that if a toll was placed on I-95, there would be an expectation to improve the level of service (LOS) and that recorded traffic speeds could be a metric for proposed improvements. This could be accomplished by designing for a higher LOS or placing a priority on the facility for plowing in the event of snowstorms.

USACE asked if there were fatality clusters along I-95. NCDOT responded that crash data for the past three years had been analyzed and that fatality rates in Robeson and Nash Counties were statistically higher than other portions of the facility. It was also noted that crashes were more prevalent in the vicinity of interchanges where differences in speed were contributing factors to the crashes.

USEPA asked if NCDOT was looking at interior paved shoulders. NCDOT responded that design standards have been changed since I-95 was constructed and that wider shoulders will be explored. If implemented, they will be constructed throughout the width of the corridor.

USACE asked about the median width on I-95 and if interior widening (within the median) would be possible. NCDOT responded that median widths for I-95 varied considerably throughout the corridor. For example, near Lumberton, there is no median, only concrete Jersey barrier, so interior widening would not be possible in this area. Throughout the corridor, both interior and exterior widening will be explored as applicable.

FHWA asked if there was a correlation between median width and crash rates. NCDOT responded that they were examining the issue and based on their current information, the only factor that appeared to have a correlation with the crash rate was ramp length.

The next meeting of the Agency Steering Committee will be scheduled for October or November 2010. Comments on the Draft Goals and Objectives are due by September 17.

If you have any questions, please contact the NCDOT project manager, Ms. Kristine O'Connor at 919-733-7844, extension 311 or the consultant project manager, Mr. Craig Young with Baker Engineering at 919-459-9041.

cc: Meeting Participants



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

BEVERLY EAVES PERDUE
GOVERNOR

EUGENE A. CONTI, JR.
SECRETARY

DATE: December 8, 2010

SUBJECT: Minutes for November 9, 2010 Agency Steering Committee Meeting #2
I-95 Corridor Planning & Finance Study, TIP # I-5133

PARTICIPANTS:	Kristine O'Connor	NCDOT PDEA Branch
	Charles Cox	NCDOT PDEA Branch
	Ron Lucas	FHWA
	Bill Biddlecome	US Army Corps of Engineers
	Gary Jordan	US Fish and Wildlife
	David Wainwright	NC DENR Division of Water Quality
	Rob Ridings	NC DENR Division of Water Quality
	Glenn Mumford	NCDOT – RDU
	Rekha Patel	NCDOT – RDU
	Sam St. Clair	NCDOT – RDU
	Tracy Pittman	NCDOT – Division 6
	Greg Burns	NCDOT – Division 6
	Rob Hanson	NCDOT PDEA Branch
	Terry Arellano	NCDOT – TPB
	Mark Staley	NCDOT Roadside Environmental Unit
	Herman Huang	NCDOT PDEA - PICS
	W.M. Petit	NCDOT TIP Unit
	Renee Gledhill-Early	DCR-SHPO
	Greg Thorpe	NCDOT PDEA Branch
	Mark Boggs	PBS&J
	Kirk Webb	PBS&J
	Taruna Tayal	Martin/Alexiou/Bryson
	Craig Young	Michael Baker Engineering
	Michelle Suverkrubbe	Michael Baker Engineering

A meeting was held at the Transportation Building on November 9, 2010 from 9:00 to 10:30 a.m. with regulatory resource agencies to discuss the I-95 Corridor Planning and Finance Study. This pre-NEPA study is designed to assess the improvement needs of the I-95 corridor from the SC/NC state line to the NC/VA state line (Robeson County to Northampton County), as well as to develop purpose and need for subsequent project level NEPA studies. The objectives of this meeting were to provide study updates, discuss the alternatives development and evaluation process, and consider pre-NEPA concurrence on Purpose and Need and alternatives to be carried forward.

Project Update

Kristine O'Connor provided a study update –

- To date, two comments had been received on the draft Purpose/Need and Goals/Objectives that were distributed to the agencies for comment in September 2010. No additional comments were made during the meeting.

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- Traffic modeling is ongoing, with a corridor travel demand model being developed to generate future year trips for build and no build alternatives. A draft will be distributed for comment to the agencies before the end of the year.
- Conceptual design is underway to include mainline widening, routine interchanges and potential interchange form changes.

Alternatives Screening

Mark Boggs presented the results of the Alternatives Development and Analysis Technical Memorandum, which was finalized and distributed to the agencies for review and comment in September. Comments on the Tech Memo are due at the end of the month.

The Tech Memo presented the results of the consultant team alternatives development and screening workshop held in July, 2010, including results of the August 2010 Citizens Informational Workshops. The Tech Memo also contained a summary of the draft project purpose and need, plus goals and objectives, which were developed by the team using baseline data from the physical, operational, environmental and financial conditions within the I-95 corridor.

The project needs include the following deficiencies: capacity (traffic flow and LOS), structural (bridges and pavement), geometric (ramp configurations and interchange spacing), fatality crash rates and funding. The purpose of the project is to provide improvements that correct the above listed needs/deficiencies.

The intent of the alternatives development and evaluation process was to identify a broad range of improvement strategies for I-95 and to screen them through a methodical process to yield a design concept and scope that will be more thoroughly evaluated through alternatives refinement. The three-tiered process included developing qualitative screening criteria based on the purpose and need for the project (prior to development of alternatives), developing a reasonable range of conceptual alternatives, and eliminating flawed alternatives from consideration.

Tier 1 and Tier 2 screening criteria were developed to screen alternatives in the following areas:

- Avoid environmental and local impacts
- Optimize cost feasibility
- Improve traffic operations
- Maximize safety
- Minimize constructability issues.

The criteria that best represent purpose and need are the Operations criterion and the Safety criterion. Accordingly, these were given a higher priority in the final overall rating.

Specifically, the screening process consisted of following:

Tier 1 (Fatal Flaw): A broad range of project improvements (10 total) were identified that could possibly meet the project purpose and need. The ten conceptual alternatives were evaluated and screened using a “good/fair/poor” rating scale, with the following concepts eliminated due to fatal flaws (they would not meet purpose and need or would have extraordinary environmental or local impacts), as discussed below:

Preservation and Modernization – The Preservation and Modernization Alternative would include no capacity improvements, but would replace or rehabilitate the highway infrastructure in order to preserve the existing highway operations with a modern facility that meets current design standards,

fixing or replacing inadequate infrastructure. This alternative was eliminated because it does not meet the purpose and need of improving traffic operations and safety on I-95, and the costs of replacing inadequate infrastructure would be very high with no capacity improvement.

Demand Management and System Management – The Demand Management and System Management Alternative would attempt to improve peak traffic flow through means other than traditional highway expansion, using system management measures such as improved signal timing at interchanges, message boards on the highway alerting travelers to delays or alternative routes, and using road sensors and cameras to notify authorities of congestion issues to improve response time. This alternative was eliminated because it does not meet the purpose and need of improving traffic operations and safety on I-95 or fixing inadequate infrastructure, even though it is a very low-cost alternative.

Multimodal Alternatives (Move Freight to Rail and Passengers to Transit) – The Multimodal Alternatives would attempt to improve operations and safety on I-95 by: 1) moving freight traveling through the corridor on trucks to freight trains that parallel the I-95 corridor; and 2) moving passengers and drivers traveling through the corridor in cars onto transit modes, including trains and buses. These alternatives were eliminated because they would not meet the purpose and need of improving traffic operations and safety on I-95, or fixing inadequate infrastructure. Moving freight to rail and passengers to transit would reduce the number of vehicles on I-95 by only a small percentage. This is because 15-25% of the volume in the corridor is due to truck traffic and that the corridor is not solely used for long distance trips (there is a lot of local usage), which are not as amenable to multimodal solutions. The multimodal alternatives would therefore be unlikely to reduce auto or truck traffic sufficiently to eliminate the need for additional highway capacity.

New Alignment Freeway – The New Alignment Freeway Alternative would construct a limited access freeway on new alignment, either west or east of I-95 for the entire 182 miles between South Carolina and Virginia, and leave the existing I-95 in place. This alternative was proposed as a way to address most of the operational, safety and infrastructure needs of the corridor, without the potentially severe impacts associated with staying on the existing alignment. This alternative was eliminated because it would have unacceptable impacts to the human and natural environments, would not fix inadequate infrastructure on I-95, a significant amount of traffic would remain on I-95, and the costs to build this alternative would be very high.

Four-lane US 301 – This alternative would upgrade US Highway 301 to four lanes along its entire length, keeping local access open. Because US 301 and I-95 are co-located on the same alignment for a portion of the way, a new US 301 alignment would need to be constructed in this area. This alternative was eliminated because it would have unacceptable impacts to the human and natural environments, requiring substantial amounts of additional right of way, place increased levels of traffic on inherently less-safe roads, increase traffic through the developed areas along US 301, and would not fix inadequate infrastructure on I-95. Also, there would be a significant amount of traffic remaining on I-95. Due to lack of access control, this alternative could not provide a comparable level of safety or improvements in travel speed and times as would I-95. The costs to build this alternative would also be very high.

Tier 2 (Qualitative): The Tier 2 evaluation was conducted for the three I-95 conceptual alternatives that passed the Tier 1 screening, plus the No Build Alternative, which was retained for comparison purposes (as required by NEPA) even though it does not meet the operations or safety evaluation criteria. These four alternatives were evaluated through a refined process and rated using a numerical scale between 1 and 10, where 1 = poor and 10 = good. This qualitative rating was based on data and team experience, as discussed below:

Add Managed Lanes – This alternative would add extra capacity with one or two additional lanes in each direction that would be tolled in order to guarantee a high level of service (LOS) of C or better. Only the new capacity lanes would be tolled and they would be separated from the general purpose

lanes with either soft or hard barriers. This alternative had the advantage in that it would provide the desired LOS throughout the corridor, but overall it scored the lowest (25 points out of 60), given the following disadvantages:

- Higher cost than Widen on Existing Alignment alternative due to additional lanes and shoulders.
- Higher impacts to the human and natural environments because of the wider typical section.
- Highest amount of right of way required (same as Add Truck Lanes alternative).
- Very low revenue potential that may not cover operating costs.
- Potential to construct a great deal of capacity that would be under-utilized.

Add Truck Lanes – This alternative would add extra capacity to I-95 with two additional lanes in each direction that would be reserved for truck use only; there would be no additional capacity added to the general use lanes. The truck lanes, as well as the general use lanes, would be tolled because there has been much negative feedback from the trucking industry on projects that propose to toll trucks but not passenger cars. The barrier-separated lanes could be on the outside or inside lanes, and would require special ramp configurations at the interchanges. This alternative scored better than Managed Lanes (with 28 pts), but less than the No Build Alternative (which scored 31 points).

Advantages of this option:

- Provide desired LOS in truck only lanes.
- Separation of trucks and passenger vehicles may have a perception of increased safety, but trucks would need to cross the general use lanes to access the truck only lanes. There would need to be an assessment of safety issues relative to this weaving.
- Provides a high level of revenue potential due to the assumption that all vehicles would be tolled.

Disadvantages of this option:

- Higher cost than Add General Use Lanes on Existing Alignment alternative due to additional required facilities.
- Higher impacts to the human and natural environments because of the wider typical section/larger footprint.
- Highest amount of right of way required (same as Managed Lane alternative).
- Additional capacity is required for the general use lanes to maintain acceptable LOS (additional costs).

Add General Use Lanes/Widen On Existing Alignment – This alternative would reconstruct the existing alignment of I-95, adding additional general use lanes to I-95 to improve traffic operations and safety conditions and replace or rehabilitate substandard infrastructure. The alternative would add one or two lanes in each direction, depending on the future traffic needs for each segment between interchanges. Deficient bridges and pavement would be replaced as well. This alternative would be tolled. The alternative has the disadvantage that, although it is the lowest cost of the three build alternatives evaluated in Tier 2, it is still expensive. For the following reasons, this alternative scored the highest with 39 points out of 60:

Advantages of this option:

- Meet desired LOS.
- Lowest cost of the Tier 2 alternatives.
- Lowest impact on the human and natural environments due to fewer lanes (narrower footprint).
- Lowest amount of right of way required.
- High level of safety.
- Least complex to collect toll revenue because fewer tolling points would be required.

Tier 2 Conclusions –

- 1) *Eliminate Add Managed Lane Alternative.* Managed lanes are typically constructed within heavily urbanized areas with a great deal of congestion. They are typically constructed to manage congestion and provide a significant travel time savings compared to general use lanes. The I-95 traffic profile is mostly rural and has a great deal of recreational use and peaking characteristics that are atypical of urban traffic.
- 2) *Eliminate Add Truck Lane Alternative.* Truck lanes are typically constructed within high traffic volume facilities that have hourly volumes approaching 2,000 trucks per hour and LOS of E or F. Neither of these conditions applies to the existing I-95 corridor. With the Add General Use Lanes on Existing Alignment alternative, acceptable LOS can be maintained at a much lower cost with fewer impacts to the environment and communities.
- 3) *Carry Forward the Add General Use Lanes on Existing Alignment Alternative.* This “Widen on Existing Alignment” alternative would provide the desired LOS and enhanced safety and would have the lowest impact on the human and natural environments as compared to the other build alternatives. This alternative is recommended to be carried forward to Tier 3 and retained as the “Design Concept and Scope” for the project. Feasibility of tolling or other financing options remains to be evaluated.

Tier 3 (Refinement): Further steps are currently being taken to refine the design elements of the Design Concept and Scope alternative for financial analysis and operational feasibility. This will involve reviewing the “Widen on Existing Alignment” alternative to incorporate other improvement options, including interchange design improvements, bypasses at selected locations to avoid severe community impacts, feasible tolling scenarios, greenway enhancements, and a corridor infrastructure preservation plan.

Mark Boggs concluded the screening presentation by reminding the committee that comments on the Tech Memo are due at the end of November. No comments were made by the Steering Committee at this meeting.

Discussion

Kristine O’Connor stated that even though the current study is not a NEPA study, it would be most efficient to agree on the overall purpose and need at this stage in order to avoid reinventing the wheel during the phased implementation of each of the planning and design elements of the project as they progress into their respective NEPA studies. She asked the Committee what their perspectives were on pre-NEPA concurrence on the Purpose and Need for the whole project. This would mean that individual projects would still require individual environmental documents, but that they would all contain the same design concept and same purpose and need.

The NC Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) stated that they would defer to the other team members, including the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) on the issue, especially regarding the issue of segmentation.

The USACE stated that as long as the projects have independent utility they would not be considered segmented.

FHWA stated that agreeing on the broad project elements such as purpose and need and screening alternatives in a larger study rather than repeating the process for multiple individual TIP projects is encouraged by NEPA and would be the best use of time and resources.

Kristine added that this approach would also get improvements on the ground more quickly and avoid costly duplications of effort.

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) had no problem with this concept. They asked if they would need to sign a pre-NEPA agreement.

Kristine O'Connor stated that she could prepare an overall Project Scope, Alternatives Evaluation and Purpose & Need agreement in the next few days for them to sign, if this would be acceptable to the agencies. The USACE asked if it would be a programmatic agreement like the NEPA Merger Process, and Charles Cox responded that he anticipated that each project would go through the Merger process, and by having this pre-NEPA agreement ahead of time, they could move quickly past Concurrence Points 1 and 2.

The USACE was concerned about whether or not the project would be eventually turned over to the North Carolina Turnpike Authority since they have been historically reluctant to participate in the Merger process. Kristine O'Connor stated that it is premature to state at this point whether the project(s) would be handled by the Turnpike Authority, but that NCDOT management would have set up a meeting with the NCTA management to discuss this. Craig Young mentioned that the NCTA is part of the Project Steering Committee and that there was already an assumption that the individual I-95 TIP projects would follow the Merger process if necessary. The NC Cultural Resources Department suggested that requiring the NCTA to participate in the Merger process be a caveat of the pre-NEPA agreement.

It was asked if currently programmed I-95 TIP projects (under design or construction) will be coordinated with this study. Kristine O'Connor stated that she is communicating with the relevant project managers to insure that their designs are compatible with the results of this study. Examples included I-3318BB and U-5026..

Project Timeline

Kristine O'Connor summarized the remaining milestones in the project schedule and stated that because of turnover in elected officials in the project study area, there will need to be additional public involvement activities after the first of the year. This will include updates to the website, Facebook, and Twitter, as well as local meetings and presentations as needed.

If you have any questions, please contact the NCDOT project manager, Ms. Kristine O'Connor at 919-733-7844, extension 311 or the consultant project manager, Mr. Craig Young with Baker Engineering at 919-459-9041.

cc: Meeting Participants