



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

MICHAEL F. EASLEY
GOVERNOR

LYNDO TIPPETT
SECRETARY

June 14, 2007

MEMORANDUM

TO: Jennifer Evans, PE, Project Development & Environmental Analysis

FROM: Public Involvement and Community Studies Group

SUBJECT: TIP B-3446 Bicycle and Pedestrian Survey

B-3446 Project Description

TIP Number B-3446, located in downtown Lexington, is a proposed project to replace bridge No. 415, which carries Center Street (SR 1243) over railroad tracks owned by the North Carolina Railroad and leased to the Norfolk Southern Corporation.

Methodology

In order to determine the amount and frequency of bicycle and pedestrian activity on the existing bridge, three methods were employed. First of all, NCDOT staff including members of Public Involvement and Community Studies, Division 9, and Project Development and Environmental Analysis conducted on-site surveys. These direct surveys took place on June 6th from 6 AM to 2 PM, on the 7th from 12 PM to 7 PM, on the 9th from 9 AM to 4 PM, and on the 10th from 9 AM to 2 PM. This entailed creating the survey form, traveling to the proposed project site, engaging people using the bridge, and administering the survey. Community Studies staff also visited local businesses, churches, governmental entities, and non-profit organizations in the immediate area, an approximately quarter of a mile radius of the bridge, to document any comments that they might have. Finally, all NCDOT personnel involved recorded general observations relating to additional pedestrian activity and railroad traffic.

NCDOT staff surveyed to the best extent possible 100% of pedestrians and bicyclists using the bridge during the chosen survey times. The differing survey times, on weekdays and the weekend, from early morning to early evening, were specifically chosen to capture the greatest cross section of users possible. However, there could have been additional users outside of these times that were consequently not surveyed. Also, it is important to note that some of the individual survey responses that were gathered actually represent multiple people that were traveling as one group. Furthermore, not all the surveys were answered in their entirety, hence the differing tally results for separate questions. There were also some hindrances that prevented 100% participation that were encountered while conducting the on-site survey. These included a few people that declined to

respond to the survey, as well as, a few instances of a language barrier that prevented fully engaging some Hispanic users of the bridge.

Survey Summary/Data Results

On June 6th and 7th, Wednesday and Thursday, the greatest number of surveys were administered between 11 AM and 1 PM, during lunchtime hours. On June 9th and 10th, Saturday and Sunday, the greatest numbers of people were surveyed between 9 and 10 AM. In total, there were 83 surveys collected on-site by NCDOT staff. These 83 surveys represented 106 people, the total number that crossed the bridge on foot or on a bicycle during the periods of time that NCDOT staff was present. Based on these figures, there was an average of four pedestrians or bicyclists per hour utilizing the bridge. There were also seven repeat surveys collected (all pedestrians) which accounted for thirteen people. Other notable survey findings include:

- Of the 83 surveys collected, 71 of those were pedestrians, 10 were riding bicycles, two were using motorized wheelchairs, and one was riding a lawnmower.
- The purpose of the respondents' bridge crossings breaks down as follows: 22% of respondents were crossing the bridge while walking or cycling for recreation, 15% were on their way to or from work, 15% were on their way to or from shopping, 9% were on their way to or from school, 4% were going to or from dinner, 2% were going to or from church, and 30% were traversing the bridge for unspecified reasons.
- The vast majority of these trips originated at the respondents' residence, or 81% of 58 responses.
- In addition, 32 of the respondents stated that they used the bridge daily, while 25 stated that they used the bridge weekly.
- NCDOT staff also observed every day on-site that many pedestrians in the area were accustomed to walking across the train tracks in various places including in the vicinity of 1st Street, which is in the manufacturing plant area, adjacent to Southern Lunch, approximately 400 yards west of the bridge. This means that people are often crossing the tracks in locations that are not designated railroad crossings.
- A high percentage of respondents did not own a car, or 70% of 58 responses
- The percentage of people who stated that they would use the free alternative transportation service if it were provided was 66% of 53 responses.

Businesses/Churches/Governmental Entities/Non Profit Organizations

- Todd's Tire- The owner, Todd Allen, commented that there was a lot of pedestrian traffic on the bridge, including a number of transients. He went on to state that he has been renting the garage since August 2006 and will decide later whether to stay during and after construction.
- Davidson County Electric Company- The person surveyed said not many people walk Center Street and cross the bridge. According to this person, pedestrians either cut across the tracks to Food Lion or they take the shortcut across the tracks to the plant area.
- Davidson County Transportation Services- Shuttle vans use the bridge on a regular basis shuttling Davidson County residents with special needs such as the elderly and the handicapped.
- Hilltop Terrace- This housing facility, the old hospital, has numerous residents with special needs. The Fire Department responds to a lot of calls at this location.
- Lexington Health-This facility, located off of Talbert Street, expressed concern over the proposed 18-month construction schedule.

- Pastor's Pantry- Barbara Jackson, the office assistant surveyed stated that approximately 300 clients use the food pantry and walk-in traffic accounts for between 3-10 people per day. She went on to state that the closure of the bridge would have only a minimal effect.
- Thomas Radford, President/CEO, Lexington Area Chamber of Commerce- He stated that the Lexington Manufacturing Plant #1 property of Railroad Street was recently purchased by the City which has plans to redevelop the property into a mixed use development, including some open space and an amphitheater. He went on to add that the bridge closing would be an inconvenience in the short term but worth it in the long run.
- Davidson County Senior Center- Joyce Benfield, a member of the Center's administrative support staff, stated that only one woman walks across the bridge to take advantage of the services provided and approximately 50-100 people use the Center daily. She went on to state that people walking from the south typically cut across the tracks to proceed into downtown and vice versa.
- Daymark Recovery Services- Linda Mallory stated that most of their clients arrive by car. She also added that there are a lot of people that cross the tracks going to and from downtown instead of using the bridge.
- According to staff at the Lexington Fire Department, they can recall four incidents involving pedestrians and trains in the last five years.
- Smart Start- Hilda Sink, Finance Director, stated that there are fair amounts of people that walk across the bridge daily. Also, they were unaware that construction would be taking place in such a short time frame because of misinformation from their landlord, Steve Gooze, who also works for the Davidson County Economic Development Corporation.
- First Reformed Church- Chunda Teal, with the church's Child Development Center staff stated that they use the bridge daily Monday-Friday to get materials from Smart Start, which is located on the south side of the bridge. In addition, Paula Lopp, the church's administrative assistant stated that to her knowledge there are not any church members walking to weekly activities such as choir practice or to Sunday services.
- St. Stephens United Methodist Church- nobody present
- Shady Side Presbyterian Church- nobody present

General Observations

- The weather conditions were generally sunny and hot every day on-site while administering the survey.
- June 7th--There were five trains that passed under the bridge from 12 PM to 7 PM. There were also five people observed walking along or across the tracks.
- June 10th--There were seven trains that passed under the bridge during the period that NCDOT staff was on-site. There were also ten people observed walking on the tracks during this same period.
- The vacant parcel to the northeast of the bridge, adjacent to the Pastor's Pantry, has a trail that leads through the woods to the neighborhood along Jamaica Drive. People were observed using this trail the majority of days on-site.
- The proposed pedestrian detour is 1.5 miles in length. It has discontinuous sections of sidewalk and in some sections, utility poles are placed in the existing sidewalk. Portions of the proposed detour are also desolate and not well lit.

General Cautionary Statements

There is a possibility that some people avoided using the bridge because of the presence of NCDOT personnel. There is also a possibility that survey respondents were simply stating what they perceived that NCDOT would want to hear. Finally, the survey questions relating to the possibility of free shuttle service were not designed with particular scheduled dates, times, origins or destinations making the question somewhat ambiguous.

cc: Ed Lewis, Supervisor, Public Involvement and Community Studies Group

Attachments: