**Sample Merger Packet:**

**CP 1, Purpose and Need and Study Area Defined**

**“Simple” Widening Project with Competing Resources**

INSTRUCTION SHEET – DELETE THIS PAGE BEFORE FINALIZING THE PACKET

This CP1 Merger Packet Example and Guidance is to be used for all projects in Merger.

This instruction sheet is intended to assist the writer and should not be included with the CP1 Merger Packet submittal. For additional information please see the [CP 1 Guidance](https://connect.ncdot.gov/resources/Environmental/EPU/Merger/Documents/Merger-MOU.pdf#page=42).

**Hidden Text/Guidance**

This document uses the “Hidden Text” feature of Microsoft Word to assist the writer in in the creation of a CP1 Merger Packet. Hidden text can be enabled and disabled by going to File > Options > Display and then check/uncheck Hidden text. It is highly recommended you enable the guidance text if this your first time working in this document.

The purple hidden text explains the type of information needed.

The red Example Text sections provide example language. This language is not intended to be copied and pasted exactly as stated and should be modified to change the specifics as it pertains to your project.

The blue text are hyperlinks to guidance.

**Format**

Use text formatting (i.e. font, size, bold, italics, etc.) specifically as presented in this template. Follow the header and footer format as shown.

**PURPOSE AND NEED AND STUDY AREA DEFINED**

Insert STIP Description

Example TextI-240 Upgrade and Improvements

Insert County (ies)

Example TextBuncombe County

Insert STIP Project No.

Example TextSTIP Project E-8461

North Carolina Department of Transportation

Insert Division Number

Example TextDivision 13

****

**MERGER CONCURRENCE POINT NUMBER 1**

***Insert Meeting Date/Time***

**Insert Table of Contents (if desired)**

**Figures**

Vicinity Map

Study Area Map

Environmental Features Map

Other STIP Projects in Area

Traffic-related Maps (if applicable)

1. **Introduction**

**This section should provide information such as the Lead federal agency and primary points of contact for the project. Additionally, state the purpose of the meeting and if one or multiple concurrence points are being addressed.**

Example TextLead federal agency: US Army Corps of Engineers

Primary points of contact for the subject project are:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Agency** | **Name** |
| Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) | Glinda Moore |
| U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) | Harrison Porter |
| North Carolina Department of Water Resources (NCDWR) | Clara Reims |
| North Carolina Department of Transportation | Jo Merger |
| HNTB | Jane Merger |

The purpose of this meeting is to reach concurrence on CP 1, Purpose and Need and Study Area defined.

**1.1 Project Description**

This section should use the STIP description to introduce the project, provide the start and end points, the length of the project, and the project identification. It should also introduce Figure 1, the project vicinity map.

Example Text The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) proposes to widen (Amboy Road/Meadow Road) to multi-lanes from I-240 to NC 81/SR 3214 (Biltmore Avenue), with a new bridge over the French Broad River, in Asheville, Buncombe County, North Carolina. The project is approximately 2.7 miles long and is identified in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) as Project No. E-8461, WBS No. 39741.1.2, Federal Aid No. STP-3556(2). The project location is shown in Figure 1.

**1.2 Project History and Merger Plan**

This section should list the local plans that include the project and verify that it’s in the STIP, as well as to provide a basic schedule and cost information. At CP 1, cost data may include that in the STIP listing or other relevant estimates. The project schedule should be discussed in context with the proposed Merger Plan for the project. In this section, hyperlink the phrase “Merger Plan” and link it to the location in which current merger plan for the project resides (i.e., SharePoint). Based on agency review and comment, either before or during the meeting, potential changes to the Merger Plan will be discussed in Section 6.

Example Text The project is included in the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization’s (FBRMPO) in their 2015 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The plan lists the project as their fifth highest priority. The project is included in the current 2018-2027 STIP as project E-8461 and is being managed by NCDOT Project Management Unit. Right-of-way acquisition and construction are scheduled to begin in 2022 and 2025, respectively. The current costs for the project as estimated in the current STIP are shown in Table 1. The proposed project schedule is included in Table 2 and is based on the Merger Plan. The schedule and cost estimates are draft and subject to change.

**Table 1.** 2018-2027 STIP E-8461 Cost Estimate

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Phase | Estimated Costs |
| Prior Years Cost | $1,200,000 |
| Right of Way | $1,200,000 |
| Utilities | $600,000 |
| Construction Total | $20,000,000 |
| **Total** | **$23,000,000** |

**Table 2.** Draft E-8461 Project Schedule\*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Milestone** | **Format** | **Anticipated Date** |
| Combined CP 2/ CP 2A meeting | Virtual/Packet Concurrence | February 2022 |
| Public Meeting | Virtual Meeting | April 2022 |
| CP 3 (LEDPA Determination) | Virtual Meeting | May 2022 |
| Categorical Exclusion (CE) | Electronic Distribution | September 2022 |
| CP 4A | Packet Concurrence | October 2022 |
| CP 4B | Virtual Meeting | November 2022 |
| CP 4C | Virtual Meeting | December 2022 |
| Begin ROW Acquisition |  | August 2023 |
| Begin Construction |  | August 2025 |

\*Draft, subject to change

**1.3 Other STIP Projects Nearby**

Generally, projects are listed that are between 1 to 3 miles from the project centerline. This may vary based on project location and length.

Example Text

* STIP Project I-7777, construct an eastbound, multi-lane, low-angle bridge between Swannanoa in Buncombe County to Salisbury in Rowan County (Swanna-bury Glideway).
* STIP Projects U-6046 and U-5832, combined, propose upgrades to Swannanoa River Road (NC 81) from Biltmore Road to Tunnel Road (US 70).
* STIP Project U-5019 will construct an interconnected network of pedestrian, bicycle, roadway and streetscape improvements in southwest Asheville including RADTIP Improvements.
* STIP Project I-2513, the proposed I-26 Connector project, would construct approximately 7 miles of freeway that would connect I-26 in southwest Asheville to U.S. 19/23/70 in northwest Asheville.

1. **Existing Conditions**

**2.1 Transportation Features**

At a minimum, this section should include a description of the facility typical section, classification, and posted speed limit. It may also include a description of existing structures, existing traffic data, crash data, and/or intermodal connectivity, especially if any of these data inform project purpose and need.

Example Text Amboy Road is a 2-lane undivided roadway with grass shoulders; 2 lanes undivided with 2-foot paved shoulders along Meadow Road from the Amboy Road/Lyman Street intersection to west of the bridge over NS Railroad where it transitions to a 3-lane curb and gutter section to east of the Victoria Street intersection. It then transitions back to a 2-lane undivided shoulder section to the project’s eastern terminus at NC 81/SR 3214 (Biltmore Avenue). Lane widths vary from 11 to 12 feet. The posted speed limit is 45 mph along Amboy Road, and 35 mph along Meadow Road.

Existing Amboy Road and Meadow Road are classified as Minor Arterials in the NCDOT Functional Classification System. I-240 near the western terminus is classified as an Interstate, and Biltmore Avenue near the eastern terminus is also classified as a Minor Arterial.

**Table 4** lists basic information about each facility, including NCDOT’s functional classification, 2016 Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT), existing lanes, lane width, existing ROW, and posted speed limit.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 4. Existing Roadway Characteristics** | | | | | | |
| **Facility** | | **Existing Feature** | | | **Functional Classification** | **2016 AADT (vpd\*)** |
| **Lanes (width in ft)** | **ROW (est. in ft)** | **Speed Limit (mph)** |
| Amboy Road | (Amboy Road) | 2 (10) | 50 | 35 | Local | 500-1,999 |
| NC 81 | (Biltmore Avenue) | 3 (11) | 80 | 55 | Other Principal Arterial | 10,000 – 34,999 |
| SR 1113 | (French Broad Road) | 2 (10) | 60 | 45 | Minor Arterial | 10,000 – 34,999 |
| SR 1362 | (Victoria Street) | 3 (10) | 60 | 45 | Major Collector | 2,000 – 4,999 |
| SR 1335 | (Meadow Road) | 2 (10) | 60 | 45 | Major Collector | 2,000 – 4,999 |
| SR 1317 | (Lyman) | 2 (9) | 60 | 35-45 | Local | 500 – 1,999 |
| \* “vehicles per day” | | | | | | |

**2.2 Environmental Features**

At a minimum, this section should include a description of resources included in the environmental features map that may require avoidance and minimization as the project moves forward. Other potential items for inclusion are threatened and endangered species, special classification waters, buffer rules, and Section 106 and Section 4(f) resources.

Example Text Environmental resources in the project area are shown in the Environmental Features Map (Figure 3). The study area is part of the French Broad River basin (U.S. Geological Survey [USGS] Hydrologic Unit [HUC] 06010105). There are no water supply watersheds (WS-I or WS-II) within or within 1.0 mile downstream of the study area. There are no primary nursery areas (PNA) or anadromous fish within the study area. Additionally, there are no North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC)-designated trout waters within or within 1.0 mile of the study area. The North Carolina 2016 Final 303(d) list of impaired waters identifies no waters within or within 1.0 mile downstream of the study area as impaired.

The project is located along the banks of the French Broad and Swannanoa Rivers in south Asheville, near Mission Hospital and the developing River Arts district to the north, and the popular Biltmore Estate tourist destination across the rivers to the south. Development surrounding Meadow Road is mostly industrial, with the Norfolk Southern freight rail operations having a strong presence. In the western half of the project area, Amboy Road is a two-lane road that parallels a linear collection of riverfront parks: Carrier Park, Amboy Riverfront Park, and French Broad River Park.

1. **Project Purpose and Need**

**3.1 Identified Needs**

This section should include the deficiencies this project is proposed to address. The deficiencies noted should be supported by available data. In some cases, this may require completion of a traffic forecast or traffic analysis before the CP 1 meeting. A project may have multiple needs to address and can be divided between primary needs and secondary needs.

In some cases, it is helpful to note where the needs drop in intensity, as that will help define project termini and independent utility. For example, if after a certain intersection, traffic level of service goes from F to B in the design year, that may be good evidence that improvements can stop at this location.

Example Text The need for this study can be described as follows:

Operational and capacity deficiencies exist at the intersections along SR 3556 (Amboy Road/Meadow Road) within the project limits. These deficiencies are expected to worsen in the future.

Based on the Traffic Forecast Report for E-8461 (July 2018), 2018 annual average daily traffic (AADT) volumes ranged between 11,600 vehicles per day (vpd) along Amboy Road between I-240 and Carrier Park Driveway, and 18,400 vpd along Meadow Road between Amboy Road and Victoria Road (refer to Appendix B). These volumes are forecasted to increase to between approximately 13,800 and 21,900, in these same locations, respectively, in 2040 without construction of the project.

Based on the Capacity Analysis (SR 3556 (Amboy Road/Meadow Road) Improvements, March 2019), for the 2018 Base Year No-Build Scenario:

* During the AM peak period, 3 of 5 signalized intersections are operating at LOS E or F.
* During the PM peak period, 3 of 5 signalized intersections are operating at LOS E or F.
* 46% of the “lane groups”, or one or more lanes of an intersection that accommodate similar traffic movements are operating at LOS E or F in AM peak hour, and 39% are operating at LOS E or F in the PM peak hour.
* One movement of the three unsignalized intersections is operating at LOS E or worse in a peak hour.

With the expected increase in traffic volumes along the corridor in 2040, further operational degradation at the intersections is expected without improvements to the corridor, as shown in the results of the capacity analysis for the 2040 Future Year No Build Scenario:

* All five signalized intersections operate at LOS E or worse in at least one peak hour.
* During the AM peak period, 4 of 5 signalized intersections are expected to operate at LOS F.
* During the PM peak period, 5 of 5 signalized intersections are expected to operate at LOS E or F.
* 54% of the “lane groups”, or one or more lanes of an intersection that accommodate similar traffic movements are operating at LOS E or F in AM peak hour, and 71% are expected to operate at LOS E or F in the PM peak hour.
* Six movements of the five unsignalized intersections are expected to operate at LOS E or worse in a peak hour.

The bridge over the French Broad River is functionally obsolete and is in need of replacement. NCDOT Bridge Management Unit records indicate Bridge No. 521 currently has a sufficiency rating of 50.48 out of a possible 100 for a new structure. The bridge, built in 1951, is considered functionally obsolete due to a deck geometry rating of 3 out of 9 according to Federal Highway Administration standards.

Existing bicycle, pedestrian and greenway facilities within the project area include a few short-disconnected sections of sidewalk, with pedestrian crosswalks in four locations, as well as the French Broad River Greenway and the signed City of Asheville bike route on Lyman Street. Lyman Street, a municipal road, is a City of Asheville bicycle route with bicycle lanes in each direction.

There are existing safety concerns with pedestrian crossings along Amboy Road. The project area attracts a high number of bicycle and pedestrian activity due to the nearby parks and walkable neighborhoods. FBRMPO staff reported that pedestrian crossing safety issues have been observed on Amboy Road; even with installed pedestrian crossing signs motorists are traveling at a fast speed and not always observant of pedestrians trying to connect from the West Asheville neighborhoods to Carrier Park. Based on NCDOT bike and pedestrian crash data, three bicycle crashes occurred at Meadow Road intersections and two pedestrian crashes occurred at Amboy Road intersections.

**3.2 Proposed Purpose**

This section should describe the proposed approach that will allow the needs of the project to be met. As is the case with the need statement, there may be primary and secondary purposes for a project. Note that a build alternative must meet the proposed purpose and need of a project to be considered a Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative (LEDPA).

Example Text The purpose for the proposed action is as follows:

* Address the operational and capacity deficiencies that exist at the intersections within the project corridor.
* Replace Bridge No. 521 over the French Broad River
* Improve bicycle and pedestrian accommodations by providing a multimodal corridor that is compatible with the city of Asheville’s Wilma Dykeman Riverway Master Plan and other local plans.

**3.3 Proposed Purpose and Need Statement**

This section should include the summary of the purpose and need that is proposed to be included on the concurrence form.

Example Text This project is designed to update the facility to current design standards, address bicycle and pedestrian needs along the project corridor, and replace the functionally obsolete bridge over the French Broad River.

1. **Project Study Area Defined**

This section should discuss the general size of the study area. It should allow for a discussion about the proposed project limits; the area for which utility accommodations or intersecting road realignments may be needed; and should include the area in which direct impacts (e.g. construction impacts, loss of access, etc.) may occur. Note that there are other study areas that may be developed for community impacts, demographic impacts, land use study areas, etc. This study area should be large enough that it covers all direct impact areas associated with potential alternatives, but not so large as to require extensive surveys of areas very unlikely to be directly impacted by the project. The proposed study area should be shown on a figure and referenced in this section.

Example Text The proposed Project Study Area developed to address the Purpose and Need of E-8461 is shown in Figures 1 and 4. The study area ranges between 300‐620 feet wide and begins just east of I‐240 and extends approximately 1.12 miles east along Amboy Road to Meadow Road. The Study Area continues south along Meadow Road for approximately 1.54 miles to the project terminus at Biltmore Avenue. The Study Area also extends along the following intersecting roads:

* 400 linear feet north along Short Michigan Avenue
* 915 linear feet north along State Street, also extending 330 linear feet east along Lamb Avenue and Joyner Avenue
* 628 linear feet north along Riverview Drive
* 748 linear feet north along Lyman Street
* 1,466 linear feet north along Victoria Road
* 900 linear feet north and south along Biltmore Avenue.

1. **Avoidance and Minimization**

**Include all documented avoidance and minimization measures discussed to-date.  Use AMM Guidance from *At ALL Merger Concurrence Points and key design meetings.***

Example Text During project scoping, the Study Area corridor limits were chosen in order to avoid impacts to nearby wetlands.

1. **Merger Plan Review/Next Steps**

This section should include a brief discussion of next steps. As noted in Section 1.2, to access the Merger Plan, click on the hyperlink embedded in this Merger Packet. If packet concurrence is achieved, the Project Manager will make needed changes to the plan based on agency comment and update the plan on the project SharePoint site. If a meeting is held, there should be a discussion about the draft Merger Plan and any changes that will be made based on agency input during the meeting.

Example Text Based on the Merger Plan for the project, NCDOT proposes that the next Merger Meeting will be a combined CP 2 (Alternatives Considered) and CP 2A (Major Hydraulic Crossing Structures and Alignment Defined). Prior to the next Merger Meeting, NCDOT will complete the Hydraulic Planning Report, natural systems studies, and roadway designs based on surveyed data will be available for review. It is anticipated that the combined CP 2/CP 2A meeting will be held in six months; Merger Team members will be notified of any changes that require a revision of this timetable.