

MINUTES OF AGC-DOT JOINT BRIDGE SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING
(Approved August 12, 2026)

The AGC-DOT Joint Bridge Subcommittee met on June 10, 2026. Those in attendance were:

David Snoke	State Structures Engineer (Co-Chairman)
Victor Barbour	Carolinas AGC – Highway Division Director (Co-Chairman)
Boyd Tharrington	Deputy Chief Engineer
Wiley Jones	Director of Field Support
Emily McGraw	Director of Highway Operations
Gichuru Muchane	Assistant State Structures Engineer
Trey Carroll	Assistant State Structures Engineer
James Bolden, Jr.	Structures Management Unit – Project Engineer
Nicholas Pierce	Structures Management Unit – Project Engineer
Doug Cantrell	Structures Management Unit – PRR Team Leader
Asa Godfrey	Structures Management Unit – EDS Team Leader
James Hawk	Structures Management Unit - Engineer
Liam Shannon	Assistant State Construction Engineer – Eastern
Brian Skeens*	Assistant State Construction Engineer - Western
Aaron Earwood	State Bridge Construction Engineer
Aaron Griffith	Construction Unit – Bridge Construction Engineer – Western
Tyler Rogers*	Construction Unit – Bridge Construction Engineer – Western
Patrick Cheeves	Construction Unit – Bridge Construction Engineer – Eastern
Randy Hall	Construction Unit – Bridge Construction Engineer - Eastern
Casey Bowman*	Construction Unit – Project Closeout Engineer
Nicholas Winters*	Construction Unit – Project Closeout Engineer
Jon Weathersbee	State Estimating Engineer
Todd Whittington	State Materials Engineer
Brian Hunter	State Laboratory Operations Engineer
Jason Civils	Manufactured Products Engineer
Nichole Fletcher	M&T Unit Manufactured Products Staff Engineer
Matt Alexander	State Geotechnical Engineer
Scott Hidden	Geotechnical Unit – Support Services Supervisor
Majid Khazaei*	Geotechnical Unit – Eastern Operations Supervisor
Erick Frazier	S. T. Wooten Corporation
Larry Cagle	Thompson–Arthur-APAC
Adam Holcomb	Dane Construction, Inc.
Justin Carter	Sanford Contractors
Dan Paulsen	Blythe Construction
Terry Whitson	Branch Civil
Brian Weathersby	Reeves Construction Co.

* Joined Via Microsoft Teams

During the review of the December 10, 2025, meeting minutes, the following items were discussed:

1. *Hurricane Helene Relief Update*

Hurricane Helene relief projects are working through permitting issues and starting to mobilize for construction. Mr. Holcombe noted utility companies are overwhelmed, and permits are slowing down getting started with construction. These permitting delays have significant impacts to construction schedules due to the short construction season in the mountains. Mr. Earwood noted that NCDOT will continue to work with Contractors to address these delays as they occur.

Mrs. McGraw stated we are 20 months into Hurricane Helene recovery efforts. NCDOT has spent \$1.622B and has received reimbursement for \$746.9M. This equates to an approximate 43 percent reimbursement rate. NCDOT has asked FHWA for additional funds to cover 90% reimbursement of expenses. She noted that the Governor's office has been requesting the Federal Government to cover 100% reimbursement of Hurricane Helene relief efforts. NCDOT will continue to work with FHWA in Hurricane Helene reimbursement efforts.

Action item:

None

2. *Buy America Changes*

Mr. Shannon discussed a few changes to *Build America, Buy America* (BABA) guidelines in the past year. In January of 2025, FHWA eliminated the manufactured product waiver. All manufactured products must comply with the final assembly completed in the USA. Starting October 1st of this year, a new requirement goes into effect stating 55 percent of the material required must be fabricated in the USA. NCDOT has updated the Standard Specifications and ensure certifications are received for any iron/steel used on a project. Due to the new requirements for manufactured products, inspectors are expected to receive fabrication certification for each construction material received on a job site. This certification is necessary to pay invoices. Mr. Shannon is working on a guidance document for NCDOT in coordination with FHWA to clarify the process for BABA compliance. The document will include classification of materials to inform users, as well as define when and what stages material waivers can be used. Mr. Whittington noted to the group that if a material waiver is going to be pursued then this decision needs to be made in the design phase. He noted very few waivers are approved, and it is best practice to determine if a waiver is needed, early in project development.

Mr. Barbour inquired if these requirements would apply to projects receiving State funds for construction but received federal funding for PE. Mr. Shannon stated it's possible this scenario could arise and we would need to identify how materials can be purchased for these types of projects. He noted that on most projects if any Federal funds are utilized, then the BABA requirements are typically applicable.

Action item:

None

3. Cored Slab Hold-Downs

Mr. Earwood inquired about the progress on the hold-down details used for cored slab units. Mr. Godfrey stated that his group is still investigating the change from swedge anchors to fully threaded rods.

Action item:

SMU to continue to work on updating the cored slab and box beam hold down details.

The minutes of the December 10, 2025, meeting were approved.

The following items of new business were discussed:

1. Projected Bridge Lettings

Mr. Snoke shared a presentation on FY2026 Bridge Let List. Mr. Barbour inquired if this Let List is updated every other month, Mr. Snoke confirmed it is and he shares this list with all those in attendance at the AGC meetings to make contractors aware of upcoming projects. Mr. Cagle noted some issues with Division projects getting let on schedule. Mr. Carroll noted utility relocation is delaying many of these projects.

Action item:

None

2. Mechanical Concrete Pile Splices

Mr. Frazier noted they are seeing increasingly longer prestressed concrete pile requirements on projects. The extended pile lengths cause issues in handling, transportation and installation. He shared descriptions of new mechanical concrete pile splices and wanted to inquire if NCDOT would be open to using concrete pile splices to reduce the pile lengths to more manageable lengths.

Mr. Hidden noted there is current research going on in other states on mechanical splices for concrete piles. Mr. Alexander noted FDOT uses concrete pile splices. Mr. Earwood stated that Geotech and Construction had met with a manufacturer of these types of splices in the past and would be open to continuing to evaluate their use in North Carolina. He recommended reviewing FDOT's details for these pile splices moving forward.

It was noted on some design-build projects contractors investigated the use of these types of pile splices. After investigation, they decided to move forward with steel pipe piles to save on cost.

Action item:

SMU and Construction to investigate the FDOT guidance for Concrete Pile Splices

3. Use of Composite Piles

Mr. Frazier noted that he has seen steel/concrete composite piles used on projects with longer piles and inquired if this is something we could investigate. Mr. Alexander noted that designing composite piles is difficult for design-bid-build projects due to unknowns such as what equipment contractors will have available and the lack of test piles driven prior to project letting to determine if they can drive composite piles on the specific project site. Mr. Alexander noted the Geotech unit is working on updating their design manual and could include a section on composite piles.

Mr. Frazier mentioned it seems all projects are requiring larger pile driving hammers. Mr. Hidden noted this increase in hammer size is occurring across the board, pile driving loads are getting larger. Mr. Earwood suggested that during design, NCDOT investigate the option of adding more piles to reduce the tonnage required for the pile driving hammers when possible, and if it helps reduce hammer and crane size. AGC members noted they often are bidding projects based on what size cranes they need for the hammer and to pick the piles as opposed to girder erection.

Action item:

None

4. Pile Encapsulation

Mr. Frazier noted that pile encapsulation work performed on bridge preservation projects is typically paid for by the linear foot, but the cost is really determined by a material volume requirement, i.e. amount of grout needed for the repair. The plans and special provisions often require the encapsulation to extend down to the mud line or sometimes a foot below the mudline. In some cases, the existing piles are more severely deteriorated or reduced in section and end up with more grout or epoxy placed than anticipated. Mr. Frazier asked if there could be some consideration on changing the pay item unit from linear foot to volumetric measurement.

Other committee members noted they have done some preservation projects but have not had any overrun issues on pile encapsulation.

Mr. Shannon asked Mr. Frazier how they would measure the volume of grout needed for the repair and how it would be paid for (i.e. would it be measured by the bag or exact volume installed.) Mr. Frazier assumes it would be the volume installed. Other committee members noted the bags state the volume each bag should produce but noted some waste is expected.

Mr. Holcombe asked if the jacket could be paid for by the linear foot and the grout paid for by the cubic foot.

Action Item:

SMU and Construction to review the pile encapsulation pay item and unit of measurement.

5. Division Let Limit

Mr. Tharrington stated that updating the Division Let Limit has been an ongoing discussion for years. He noted that the current Division let limit is \$5M. Looking back to 2011, the

limit was \$1.25M, in 2013 it increased to \$2.5M, and in 2016 it was raised to the current limit. He explained that he has looked at construction costs from Q1 2016 in comparison to Q1 2026 and there is a 126% price difference. Due to the price increases, he reasoned it is now time to adjust Division letting limits. He acknowledged there has been some concern in the past about increasing the Division limit by AGC due to inconsistencies in plans and contract language across the state. He noted that there was an audit done on Division plans/contracts vs Central let projects and there were some inconsistencies noted. There is an action list to eliminate some of the inconsistencies including:

- Improved guidance, (review current guidance and provide updates)
- Increased Division contract training, (return to a minimum of annual contract training)
- Implementing a checklist to provide continuity with centrally let projects
- Oversight established to review contracts and plans (Cursory plan review)
- Continue to gather feedback to make sure issues are being pointed out and addressed quickly.

Mr. Tharrington shared a few items identified in the audit and are on the list to address the differences between Central vs Division let contracts. The Preconstruction Division (formerly Technical Services Division) has reviewed contract addendums examining why they were issued and how they were executed. Mr. Tharrington asked AGC if there is anything NCDOT is missing that needs to be addressed. Mr. Cagle asked NCDOT to look at contract times and gave an example of a project that required utility relocation but the contract time was still only 120 days. Mr. Frazier asked Mr. Tharrington about the proper protocol for AGC to ask questions about Division contracts to ensure Mr. Tharrington and NCDOT management are aware of these questions. Mr. Tharrington stated that they are asking the Divisions to catalog the questions being asked by AGC to share with NCDOT management, so they can be addressed on future projects. Mr. Tharrington shared that they saw some issues with a project and the Division was open to the questions but still didn't adequately address the questions for the contractor to the point the contractor backed away from bidding. Mr. Holcombe noted there are still many instances of material price escalation and delays driving up project costs and requiring longer contract times. He also noted the need for constructability reviews on projects with increased budgets. Mr. Barbour noted that many times AGC reaches out to the Division with questions and doesn't receive a response to their questions.

Mr. Barbour asked how the audit was executed. Mr. Tharrington noted the Construction Unit completed the audit by pulling supplemental claims, then Mr. Earwood went through the various issues that they found which caused supplemental agreements, such as utility relocation or impervious dike installations.

Mr. Cagle noted Central lettings are consistent on meeting contract times for bridge projects and asked for the Department to conduct an audit to investigate why some Divisions are only letting 2 bridges a year when they are projected to let 5 or more. Mr. Tharrington noted that they are meeting with Divisions to ensure utilities and right-of-way acquisition have been

addressed on projects before they are added to the 12 Month Let List. The intent is to prevent projects being placed on the 12 Month Let List if those items haven't been addressed.

Mr. Tharrington noted NCDOT is working internally to address these concerns concurrently with increasing the Division Let Limit. There are some parts in the process where NCDOT may need to work with AGC to address legislative concerns.

Action Item:

AGC and NCDOT will continue to coordinate on any questions/inconsistencies found in Division let projects.

6. Median Barrier Rail Rebar/Anchoring

Mr. Earwood shared that NCDOT is looking to address different issues that have developed over the years pertaining to median barrier rail construction, often used to separate multi-use paths from vehicular traffic on bridges. He stated that in most cases, it is not possible to screed the deck with median barrier rail reinforcement projecting from the deck without costly and burdensome means and methods. This results in the need to finish the deck without the protruding rebar, then drill and epoxy anchor the median barrier rebar or push in the median barrier rebar before the concrete begins to set, i.e. "wet sticking" rebar into the deck after screeding.

There was concern about "wet-sticking" the hooked bars that anchor the median barrier rail to the deck in proper alignment and the possibility of creating voids in the concrete. Mr. Earwood noted that NCDOT is investigating various construction options to provide contractors alternatives to wet sticking. Some contractors noted that they had to utilize alternative strategies such as multiple deck pours and use double bogies on the screed to finish the deck on both sides of the median barrier rails.

Mr. Griffith mentioned he has seen ferrules being used on the deck to screw in the bars after the deck is finished. Mr. Rogers noted couplers were used on one of his projects which required some extra steps to make them work as intended.

Mr. Earwood proposed that plans show details for different options on how to connect the median rail reinforcement to the bridge deck including wet sticking, adhesive anchors, or ferrules.

Action Item:

SMU and Construction to work on median rail details. SMU to share the updated detail for median barrier rail.

7. Steel Beam Availability

Mr. Earwood noted that we are experiencing issues with lead times for procuring steel beams and other materials due to data center construction. The Construction Unit is working to identify projects with these materials to evaluate the impact on contract times. Construction will begin notifying the Divisions as well as the Contract Standards and Development Unit of

increased lead times to acquire steel beams/piles so they can incorporate those lead times into contract times prior to letting.

Action Item:

The Construction unit will continue to notify Divisions and Contracts Unit of any increased lead times for procuring steel beams/piles.

8. Barrier Wall Expansion Joints

Mr. Griffith shared an image of a barrier rail expansion joint showing FRP bars attached to the barrier rail longitudinal reinforcing to hold a steel plate or plywood used to form the expansion joint along the barrier rail. More contractors are starting to form their own barrier rails versus slip forming them. He shared this photo to inform the group that NCDOT would like to see some form of non-corrosive material used when forming the barrier rail in this manner. Using GFRP bars attached to the normal reinforcing steel to hold the steel plate or plywood forming the expansion joint significantly reduces the risk of corrosion propagating from the edge of the joint into the barrier rail reinforcement.

Action Item:

Construction to share the photos and include this in a future structures bulletin.

9. Timber Bridges

Mr. Earwood stated Hurricane Helene timber bridge projects are beginning to start construction. Mr. Rogers shared a timber bridge typical section where the asphalt wearing surface thickness was unreasonably deep to accommodate the roadway superelevation. He stated designers need to consider alternative ways to achieve the roadway. Mr. Earwood suggested designers attempt to get design exemptions for the superelevation when the design speed does not warrant the superelevation and a normal crown may be used. Mr. Rogers also shared a modified expansion joint detail showing a backer rod and silicone installed at a lower elevation, i.e. between the timber decking and backwall as opposed to an elevation near the asphalt wearing surface. He recommended eliminating the joint at the end bents and detailing the timber decking against the abutment backwall.

Mr. Holcombe noted he saw a superelevation that required them to wedge the timber deck nailers attached to the top flange of the steel beams. He added they have another 20ft span timber bridge with 11" of asphalt wearing surface on one side.

Contractors had no issues with installing no joints at the abutments and placing the decking boards tight against the abutment backwall.

Action Item:

SMU and Construction to work on updating details and design requirements for timber bridges.

10. Strip Seals

Mr. Earwood shared an image of both strip seal manufacturer's glands and the retainer rails. It was noted there is a slight difference in retainer rail shape between the two manufacturers.

Construction is noticing glands and retainer rails are getting mixed up in the field causing incompatibility issues. He wanted to bring this to everyone's attention so Contractors are aware that you can't mix and match manufacturer's strip seal glands and rails.

Action Item:

None

11. Railroad flagging

Mr. Cagle asked if there were any updates to NCDOT Railroad provision. Mr. Shannon and Mr. Skeens stated there were no changes to existing provision, but they could look at updating the NSR provision to handle flaggers. Mr. Shannon stated that NCDOT does not want to get involved with Contractors and Flagger coordination but are willing to make this a "pass through" pay item to reduce the risk on Contractors.

Action Item:

Construction to investigate updating the NSR provision to handle flaggers.

**** Upcoming 2025 Meeting Dates:**

August 12th

October 14th

December 9th