



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS
P.O. BOX 25201 RALEIGH, N.C. 27611-5201

JAMES B. HUNT JR.
GOVERNOR

March 28, 1996

MEMORANDUM TO: Don Goins, B. G. Jenkins, Jr., and Calvin W. Leggett

FROM: Larry R. Goode, Ph.D., P.E.
State Highway Administrator

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Larry R. Goode", written over a printed name and title.

SUBJECT: Median Widths on Divided Highways

We recently spent a great deal of time debating the costs, benefits, and impacts of various median widths for future divided highways. The issues are generally cost versus a wider median, or impacts (primarily wetland takings) versus a wider median. In general, it appears when these issues develop, the department has a difficult time justifying a median width greater than 46 feet. While our design standards of 70 feet for freeways and 60 feet for other divided routes may be desirable from a safety and aesthetics function, we have not (particularly in the eastern portion of the state) been able to adequately justify the need for the greater median width.

Therefore, in recognition of our need to control costs and minimize wetland impacts, we will use a 46 foot median as our standard design for all freeway and other rural divided routes in the eastern part of the state (eastern generally being east of I-95). Beginning immediately, all cost estimates and preliminary designs for new projects in these areas should be based on the 46 foot width. Please do not change any projects that have progressed to the final design stages. I realize there may be specific instances where a wider median may be justified (due to safety, drainage needs, or traffic volumes approaching 4 lane capacity); however, these need to be site specific and justified individually.

In the remaining portions of the state, we have not experienced as many problems with the regulatory agencies over the width issue; however, we still need to remain very cost conscience. As early in the project development process as possible, the four factors of safety, cost, wetland impacts, and traffic need to be reviewed to see if a median width greater than 46 feet is desirable and cost effective.

Memorandum

March 28, 1996

Page 2

I hope this directive will minimize some of the conflicts we are currently experiencing with the Army Corps of Engineers and enable us to move ahead quickly to develop acceptable designs for the intrastate system in the eastern portion of our state. Thank you.

LRG/cwl

cc: Don Morton, P.E., Highway Design Branch
Ron Poole, Manager, Statewide Planning Branch
H. Franklin Vick, Manager, Planning and Environmental Branch
Whitmel H. Webb, Manager, Program Development Branch