



# NC 73 Council of Planning 2006 State of the Corridor

## NC 73 Council of Planning State of the Corridor July 2006

### Overview

The NC 73 Transportation and Land Use Corridor Plan was completed in 2004, and adopted by the NCDOT and each of the eight communities along the corridor. The plan is intended to serve as a comprehensive land use, urban design, and transportation plan that incorporates existing and anticipated land use and transportation patterns for local governments. The plan is tailored to meet the needs and demands of individual communities, while also promoting cohesion along the entire corridor. Issues addressed in the plan include future land use projections, needed roadway improvements on NC 73 and adjoining roads, multi-modal alternatives, right-of-way preservation, access management techniques, and small area plans. This plan also recommended that a Council of Planning (COP) be created to implement and monitor the plan. The COP was created in 2005 to perform these activities.

### Council of Planning

The Centralina Council of Governments (COG) has continued to provide staffing to the COP since its inception. The COP consists of the eight local governments, NCDOT, local transportation and transit planning agencies, and local chambers of commerce. The COP has met four times over the past year, with meetings attended by local chambers of commerce representatives, land use planners, utility providers, transit planners, traffic engineers, transportation planners, division engineers, local elected officials, and planning board members. The COP has developed a web site, [www.nc73.org](http://www.nc73.org), with links to COP contact information, development regulations, previous presentations, past meeting notes, and the overall plan and technical appendix. The web site also serves an important function for peer review. When a COP member has a plan or project along or near the corridor, it can submit the project to the COG for uploading to the website for peer review by other COP members.

### Transportation Funding and Improvements

The North Carolina Department of Transportation's current construction funding situation can only be described as a "Perfect Storm" of financial pressures. The federal government has reduced federal transportation funds by nearly one billion dollars over the next three years. State gas tax and vehicle fees revenues are flat compared to 2005 levels. Construction costs are increasing by approximately *13 percent per year*. With these constraints, the NCDOT is tasked with maintaining and improving the nation's second largest State-maintained road network in the face of continued population and traffic growth. Funding by the NCDOT for nearly all of the identified needs along the corridor is uncertain in the next decade.

The Town of Huntersville decided to jointly fund improvements along a portion of NC 73, between NC 115 and US 21, with financial assistance from a local developer and the Mecklenburg-Union MPO (MUMPO). This municipal funding was provided through a 2003 bond referendum. The improvements result from a concerted, multi-year effort by the elected officials and Huntersville staff, fully supported by MUMPO and NCDOT, to create a coalition of resource partners within the framework of the NC 73 corridor study.

Lincoln County and the NCDOT worked with Wal-Mart over the past year to determine needed improvements to NC 73 near the new NC 16 corridor. Wal-Mart ultimately agreed to add multiple turn lanes into the site, as well as additional through lanes along NC 16 near the site. These improvements will aid mobility in a fast-growing section of Lincoln County, near a key interchange along NC 16.

### **Small Area Plans**

Lincoln County, Huntersville, Cabarrus County, Concord, Kannapolis, and Davidson are planning, have begun, or completed small area plans along NC 73 over the past year that recommend service drives, more intense land uses near intersections, mixed-use development, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and access management. The NC 73 Small Area Land Use and Economic Development (LUED) plan, completed in the fall of 2005, presents a long-term (20 - 30 years) vision for land use and associated transportation improvements that will be required to accommodate anticipated growth and development within the plan study area, encompassing approximately 1,800 acres along NC 73 from Davidson-Concord Road to Poplar Tent Road. The LUED plan was jointly developed by five of the eight COP members. Huntersville also approved small area plans at Sam Furr Road/US 21 and at Gilead Road/US 21. These plans are intended to serve as guiding documents for the Town in the planning, review and approval of future transportation and land use projects within the study areas.

Davidson has passed new zoning laws consistent with the NC 73 Plan. These recommendations are consistent with the *preservation* role of the COP. Land use and access management decisions play a significant role in mobility along a corridor, and the member governments have taken a proactive stance in this role. Go to [www.nc73.org](http://www.nc73.org) to visit each of the municipalities and to review these small area plans.

### **Upcoming Year**

In addition to the regular tasks described on the previous page, the Council of Planning will work on the following projects in 2006-2007:

**Corridor Preservation:** The eight COP municipalities will research and evaluate whether they can adopt a common Right-of-Way preservation ordinance to help preserve the corridor for an improved NC 73. This ordinance has the potential to assist the NCDOT with project development and acquisition costs, as well as provide a predictable and orderly process for land owners and developers along the entire 35-mile corridor.

**Branding the Corridor:** The eight COP municipalities will review and evaluate potential activities that could be adopted along the corridor to help develop a "brand" and "sense of place" along the entire corridor. These activities can range from common signage and landscaping standards to colored sidewalks. These activities have the potential to unite the municipalities in developing a commonality along the corridor for the traveling public and local residents, as well as demonstrate the ability for the COP members to join together in a mutually supportive process.

### **Contact Information**

For more information about the COP, please contact Bjorn Hansen at (704) 688-6501 or [bhansen@centralina.org](mailto:bhansen@centralina.org). To contact an individual member, or to view the entire COP membership roster, please go to [www.nc73.org](http://www.nc73.org).

**Visit us on the web: [www.nc73.org](http://www.nc73.org)**