



# NC 73 Council of Planning 2008 State of the Corridor

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### 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 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 five 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 maintains a web site, [www.nc73.net](http://www.nc73.net), that 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 continues to best be described as a "Perfect Storm" of financial pressures. Construction costs are rising faster than revenues by a factor of more than three, while growth continues along the corridor. Huntersville has delayed the construction of widening NC 73 between NC 115 and US-21 in 2008, but other the only other improvement, a redesign of the NC 73 and I-85 interchange, will not take place for several years. There has been no progress on the other sections of the corridor.

In 2006 and 2007 the City of Charlotte and other groups throughout the region actively explored alternate funding strategies to address transportation funding, particularly for funds generated and spent at the local level. A Regional Roads Need study determined that there are over \$4 billion worth of unfunded regional road needs in the Charlotte region. In response to these activities the NC legislature gave counties the authority to propose a 1/4 cent sales tax increase or a 1/4 percent land transfer tax, both to fund capital projects. The NC legislature has recently committed to eliminating the annual \$170 million transfer from the Highway Trust Fund by 2013. These funds may help pay for a one billion dollar bond for statewide transportation improvements.

NC 73 is of strategic importance regionally and statewide. The 2007 NC 73 COP annual meeting featured keynote speakers familiar with the funding issues facing the region and who have tried to find solutions. The COP continues to advocate for NCDOT improvements along the corridor.

### **Traffic Counts**

The COP annually produces traffic count maps of the entire corridor. The most recent data available is from 2006. For reference, a "normal" annual traffic count increase in a growing area would be on the order of two to three percent. The two-lane sections of NC 73 in Mecklenburg and Cabarrus Counties are already near or at their absolute capacity. The annual growth in traffic from 2004-2006 is two to five percent in those two counties. In Lincoln County the traffic counts are typically less than the absolute capacity, which means traffic is typically not deterred from using the road. NC 73 from the new NC 16 and the Mecklenburg County line saw traffic count increases ranging from 12 to 28 percent between 2005 and 2006. The map with 2006 traffic counts is available at [www.nc73.net](http://www.nc73.net).

### **Travel Time Study**

In 2007 Centralina solicited residents who drive the NC 73 corridor to provide their travel times and experiences so a baseline assessment of mobility could be established. This mobility study will be updated in the future to quantify changes in congestion as road improvements and development occurs. The general conclusions were that peak hour congestion was worst immediately near I-77, with average speeds on 12 mph, and travel to I-77 in the mornings and away from I-77 in the evenings had speeds at least 10 mph lower than those traveling in opposite directions. You may view the entire report at [www.nc73.net](http://www.nc73.net).

### **Land Use Planning Efforts**

Lincoln County is currently updating its zoning and subdivision ordinance in order to implement its recently updated land use plan. The plan update used the NC 73 process as a model for considering land use and transportation together. Davidson and Huntersville have jointly complete a small area plan for the area surrounding the Davidson Concord Road and NC 73 intersection.

### **Upcoming Year**

In addition to the regular tasks described on the previous page, the Council of Planning will work on the following projects in 2008-2009: hosting an elected official bus tour of the corridor, and holding an annual meeting for the elected officials and public along the NC 73 corridor.

**Updating the Plan:** The COP, with significant help from the Town of Davidson, updated the original map for the corridor into a more user friendly GIS map, which will allow for easier plan updates and mapping efforts. Sample maps will be posted to the COP web site. Please contact your respective community's planning department for more information about the plan in your jurisdiction. These updates were also done to help support a possible NC 73 plan update in 2009-2010.

### **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.net](http://www.nc73.net).

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