



NC 73 Council of Planning 2009 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 cohesive development 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 staffed 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, 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 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), commonly known as the stimulus program, provided \$21 million to assist in paying for the widening of NC 73 between US 21 and NC 115 in Huntersville. Construction of the widening is now scheduled for 2010.

There were two major studies of how to increase transportation revenues in North Carolina over the past year. A statewide committee called the 21st Century Transportation Committee recommended a range of strategies to the North Carolina General Assembly in December 2008. These included tolling I-77 through the Charlotte region, raising vehicle registration fees, and giving a higher local option sales tax authority to all counties in the state. The most controversial recommendation was a shift away from fuel taxes to a "vehicle miles traveled" (VMT) fee.

A local panel called the Committee of 21 explored strategies for Mecklenburg County, and recommended many of the same strategies as those recommended by the 21st Century Transportation Committee. Their recommendations included tolling I-485, raising vehicle registration fees, and adding a half-cent to the local sales tax. The 2009 NC 73 COP annual meeting featured the chairman of the Committee of 21 as a speaker.

Traffic Counts

The COP annually produces traffic count maps of the entire corridor. The most recent data available is from 2007. Since 1993 traffic counts along NC 73 in eastern Lincoln County and western Cabarrus County have increased by 100 percent, with the sections in Huntersville and Davidson increasing by 400 percent. These dramatic increases underscore the importance of improving this corridor in the future. The map with 2007 traffic counts is available at www.nc73.net.

Safety and Access Management along NC 73

The COP understands that many sections of NC 73 will not be widened in the near future. It is imperative that the COP communities and North Carolina Department of Transportation therefore maintain the existing mobility and improve safety in the face of continuing traffic growth. Centralina geocoded all curb cuts along NC 73 and collected crash data in order to assist COP member governments in their review of new development plans, and in the updating of development regulations. This was done in order to minimize the safety impacts of additional curb cuts on the corridor. The result showed that the sections of the corridor with the highest crash rates were adjacent to the I-77 and I-85 interchanges. The section of the corridor with the most severe accidents was along those sections of NC 73 with high volumes and high speeds: eastern Lincoln County, Davidson, and western Cabarrus County.

Concurrent Planning Efforts

The Carolina Thread Trail and Lake Norman Regional Bicycle Plan are two non-vehicular plans currently underway in the area. The Carolina Thread Trail is currently working with Mecklenburg and Lincoln Counties in the identification of off-road routes that can ultimately form a network across the region. The NCDOT has contracted with Centralina to develop a regional bicycle route around Lake Norman. This route will include non-road routes as well, and is coordinating with the Carolina Thread Trail. These initiatives are expected to be completed in 2010.

Upcoming Year

In 2009-2010, in addition to the regular tasks described on the previous page, the Council of Planning will work on the following projects: developing a scope of work for a future update of the corridor plan, and holding an annual meeting for elected officials and public along the NC 73 corridor. The members of the COP continue to work closely with the NCDOT to minimize conflict between land use and transportation plans.

Contact Information

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

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