



## **U.S. 64 CORRIDOR STUDY**

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

#### **General Questions about the Study**

##### **1. Is this a construction project or a planning study?**

This is an advanced planning study that will establish a blueprint for potential improvements to U.S. 64 from U.S. 1 in Cary to the U.S. 64 bypass in Pittsboro.

##### **2. What elements does the study include?**

The study is looking at the short-term and long-term needs and potential solutions for the U.S. 64 corridor. It is evaluating the traffic flow, environmental effects, land use, connections to other modes of transportation (such as pedestrian, bicycle and public transportation) of the suggested improvements, as well as recommend when improvements to each portion of the corridor should be implemented.

##### **3. What is the time frame for implementing this study?**

The 19-mile corridor has been broken down into smaller segments, primarily by intersection. Improvements could be constructed by intersection or by several intersections at once.

In general, the short-term improvements are recommended for construction within the next five to 10 years, depending on available funding. The long-term improvements are recommended when the short-term improvements can no longer accommodate the number of vehicles passing through each intersection.

Implementing any of these segments is based on the need for the improvements and having the available funding to construct the projects. Currently, the NCDOT 2009-2015 Transportation Improvement Program does not include any funding for the short-term or long-term improvements. Funding for future improvements to the corridor could come from NCDOT, municipalities or private parties.

##### **4. What has been done to reach out to the public for input on this study?**

The study has included several forms of outreach, including a Web site, newsletters, community workshops, advertising in select publications and coverage by local media. Information on the study is available on the project Web site, [www.ncdot.gov/~US64study/](http://www.ncdot.gov/~US64study/). The Web site provides contact information, including a toll-free number, for the public to use to ask questions or make comments. Three newsletters (March 2008, May 2008 and April 2009) were mailed to property

owners within 1,600 feet of U.S. 64 and those who requested to be added to the mailing list through the Web site.

A series of workshops were held in both Apex and Pittsboro in May 2008 and April 2009. The workshops were advertised in the *News and Observer*, the *Cary News*, the *Apex Herald*, the *Chatham Journal* and *Que Pasa*. The workshops were covered by the *News and Observer*, the *Cary News*, the *Triangle Business Journal*, WRAL-TV and NBC-17 TV. In addition to this coverage, the Town of Apex included information on both workshops in its utility bills, and the Town of Cary sent letters to all property owners within 1,000 feet of U.S. 64 prior to the second workshop. Chatham County included study information on its Web site through county e-mail notifications and postings at the planning department.

To provide a better understanding of the proposed long-term improvements, a video simulation of the corridor from U.S. 1 to Laura Duncan Road was developed. In an effort to respond to citizens' recent questions and comments, the study team will hold an additional community meeting to discuss the U.S. 64 Corridor Study on Thursday, July 16, 2009 at Green Hope High School in Cary.

#### **5. What additional steps must happen before a project is constructed?**

If funding is approved for any of the short-term improvements, detailed designs will be developed, and an additional public meeting will be held before any construction begins. If at some point in the future, congestion and/or safety issues arise that warrant additional major improvements beyond the recommended short-term improvements (such as new travel lanes or overpasses/interchanges), the department will conduct an in-depth environmental study in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969. During the in-depth environmental/NEPA study, there will be several opportunities for the community to provide input on an appropriate solution. Construction of any improvement is subject to funding availability.

#### **6. Will there be more public involvement opportunities once the study is completed?**

If funding is approved for any of the short-term improvements, an additional public meeting will be held before any construction begins. If the need arises and the funding exists for any of the long-term improvements, the public will have opportunities to comment during the project development process.

#### **7. What is the purpose of this study?**

The purpose of the study is to develop a master plan to preserve and enhance mobility and safety along U.S. 64, while balancing community access and interests. This plan will guide development and improvements along the corridor from U.S. 1 in Cary to U.S. 64 Business in Pittsboro.

## **8. Who is participating in this study?**

The U.S. 64 Corridor Study is a joint effort by the N.C. Department of Transportation (NCDOT), the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO), Wake and Chatham counties, and the Towns of Cary, Apex, and Pittsboro. The study is guided by a corridor study team, which includes the study sponsors listed above, as well as the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE), N.C. Turnpike Authority (NCTA) and N.C. State Park Service.

## **9. Am I required to disclose this study when selling my house?**

According to information provided by the North Carolina Real Estate Commission, this study is considered a “material fact,” which is a fact that relates directly to the property. Licensed real estate agents are required to disclose the study “to all parties with whom the agent deals if the agent is aware of such facts or should reasonably be aware of such facts.”

## **10. Is this study related to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (formerly known as the stimulus package)?**

No, this study began in late 2007 and is not related to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

## **11. Is this study being done as an alternative to constructing NC 540?**

No, this study is being done in addition to the NC 540 (formerly I-540) project and is needed to fulfill the overall needs of the transportation system in western Wake County and eastern Chatham County. The primary purpose of the **NC 540 project** is to accommodate the increasing transportation demand in western Wake County and relieve congestion on I-40, NC 55, Davis Drive and other north-south routes in the area. The U.S. 64 Corridor Study seeks to relieve congestion and improve safety on the only major east-west highway in eastern Chatham and western Wake County.

## **12. Could the study be implemented as a toll project?**

No, current state law does not allow for the tolling of existing roadways.

## **13. What is the difference between the short-term and the long-term plan?**

The short-term plan is comprised of relatively low-cost improvements, which can substantially enhance traffic flow, safety and pedestrian connections at each of the major intersections along the corridor. These improvements generally consist of modifications to the medians, construction of turn lanes, and traffic signal enhancements and coordination, primarily within the existing right-of-way NCDOT owns. No new travel lanes would be added, and the existing lanes would stay as they currently are.

The long-term plan is comprised of more costly improvements, which further enhance traffic flow, safety and pedestrian connections at the major intersections. The long-term improvements generally consist of converting the existing intersections to interchanges or overpasses, and adding service roads where needed.

#### **14. Why does it say that private entities may pay for some of the improvements?**

As properties along the U.S. 64 Corridor develop, private developers are required to evaluate the effects of the development on the transportation system. If it is determined that the proposed development will have a substantial impact on nearby highways, the private entity proposing the development will need to take measures to lessen those impacts. A master plan for the corridor allows developers to implement improvements that are consistent with the study recommendations.

### **Questions about the Short-Term Plan**

#### **15. How do bicyclists and pedestrians navigate a superstreet?**

A bicyclist approaching a superstreet intersection would have the choice of acting like a vehicle and following the same operations as a vehicle would, or acting like a pedestrian and utilizing the pedestrian crossing accommodations. The study team is continuing to evaluate additional options for bicyclists to cross a superstreet.

#### **16. How is it more efficient to make me turn right in order to go left on a superstreet?**

Reducing the number of vehicles turning at major intersections will give through traffic on U.S. 64 more green-light time, and help prevent congestion. The signals can be coordinated independently in both directions of U.S. 64. This will allow more vehicles to get through green lights on U.S. 64 than is currently possible. By preventing vehicles on side streets from turning left or going straight, U.S. 64 essentially becomes two one-way streets. The traffic lights are then coordinated as they are on one-way streets in downtown areas, such as McDowell and Dawson Streets in Raleigh.

Studies show the superstreet concept will improve or have no impact on travel for vehicles needing to turn or cross from the side street during peak driving times. In addition, studies indicate substantial improvement for vehicles going straight along U.S. 64. Therefore, motorists traveling to U.S. 64 from the side street will experience improved travel times once they are on U.S. 64.

### **Questions about the Long-Term Plan**

#### **17. Why is this expansion needed once the NC 540 (Western Wake Parkway) is completed?**

The traffic along U.S. 64 is expected to increase, even with the introduction of NC 540 (Western Wake Parkway). This is a result of the continued growth of the Triangle, particularly in western Wake and eastern Chatham counties. NC 540 is anticipated to draw little traffic away from U.S. 64, because it primarily serves north-south traffic heading to and from Research Triangle Park.

The majority of motorists who will use the future NC 540 currently use NC 55, Davis Drive and other north-south roads. The majority of motorists who currently use U.S. 64 east of Davis Drive are headed to Raleigh and points north and east, or destinations along U.S. 64 such as the MacGregor Office Park, the Cary Autopark and Regency Park.

### **18. Can U.S. 64 be rerouted onto NC 540 to U.S. 1?**

This may be a possibility in the future once NC 540 is completed to U.S. 1. However, rerouting U.S. 64 onto NC 540 would not necessarily change the expected increase in traffic on the existing section of U.S. 64 between NC 540 and U.S. 1. The potential of bypassing the area from U.S. 1 to NC 540 by using NC 540 and U.S. 1 was considered when the future traffic projections were developed. The traffic forecast evaluated whether vehicles would change routes if the congestion along U.S. 64 between NC 540 and U.S. 1 was heavy. It showed NC 540 and U.S. 1 would not be an adequate bypass for U.S. 64 due to:

- **Longer distance** – It is 5.5 miles from NC 540 to U.S. 1 on U.S. 64. The distance from NC 540 to U.S. 1 is 8.5 miles.
- **Toll** – It is expected to cost between approximately \$.50 and \$1.00 to travel on NC 540 between U.S. 1 and U.S. 64 each way.

### **19. Were other options considered in the development of the long-term plan?**

Yes, initially five general concepts were evaluated by the corridor study team, three of which were carried forward for further study and presented at the first workshop in May 2008. Based on comments received at that workshop, the study team decided to develop a fourth option that combined the positive attributes from each of the options suggested by the public.

### **20. Will there be opportunities to provide input on the aesthetics of the roadway?**

If the need and funding exists for any of the long-term improvements, the public will have several opportunities to comment during the project development and design phases. At that time, a greater emphasis will be put on the aesthetics of the roadway and commitments to individual aesthetic elements can be made.

### **21. Why are you proposing such drastic changes when the existing roadway is operating fine?**

The study evaluates the existing and future traffic flow along the corridor. The study's traffic projections show a real need to create a proactive approach to deal with future congestion. It is essential to maintaining the safety of this important highway and helping people get where they need to go efficiently.

Today, four of the six signalized intersections from U.S. 1 to Laura Duncan Road cannot handle all the vehicles trying to go through these locations at rush hour. As a result, motorists often have to sit through two or more traffic light cycles while waiting to go through the intersection, which creates congestion.

**22. Why are you proposing to make this roadway through a developed area a main route for through traffic?**

U.S. 64 has three functions throughout the study area. First, it serves statewide traffic for motorists traveling between the Triangle, the Triad, Charlotte and Asheville. Second, as the only major east-west highway in the area, the highway serves commuters traveling between Chatham and Wake counties. Finally, it gives area residents a way to travel between home, school, work, local shopping centers, parks, etc.

U.S. 64 is classified as a United States route, and has been designated as part of the National Highway System (NHS) and an NCDOT Strategic Highway Corridor. The roadway's status as an NHS route shows its importance to the nation's economy, defense and mobility. Its designation as a Strategic Highway Corridor requires that it be developed in a way that provides a safe, reliable, high-speed highway connecting travel destinations throughout North Carolina and just outside its borders. Due to past and projected future growth along the corridor, there is a need to improve the highway, so it can continue to serve all three functions adequately.

**23. How can you justify spending this amount of money based on the current economic environment?**

No funding currently exists for the improvements in the study. If money becomes available in the future, the study gives the municipalities a plan for implementing improvements to the highway.

**24. Were mass transit improvements considered as part of the study?**

Transit alternatives were evaluated at the beginning of the study. Mass transit, such as light rail or bus rapid transit requires a certain housing density to be successful. A minimum of 20 homes per acre is needed within ¼ mile of a station, and 15 houses per acre are needed between ¼ and ½ miles from the station. Currently, there are not any areas along U.S. 64 that meet the criteria to support mass transit without substantial redevelopment, which none of the municipalities along the corridor are projecting.

Additionally, the Special Transit Advisory Commission (STAC) evaluated transit options for the entire Triangle region, and its recommendations do not call for any type of enhanced transit along the U.S. 64 Corridor. The recommended long-term plan does not preclude any future transit options such as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and express bus service.

**25. What effect will the long-term plan have on safety, especially at the schools, library and community park?**

The recommendations for the long-term plan would make U.S. 64 safer, because there would not be any traffic signals on U.S. 64 or cross streets. Cross streets go over or under U.S. 64. Motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists would cross U.S. 64 on a bridge or go under U.S. 64, ensuring their safety.

**26. Why are you closing the median opening at Green Level Church Road?**

The existing median at U.S. 64 and Green Level Church Road will be closed during construction of the NC 540 project. At the same time, the temporary traffic signal will be removed. This action is part of an agreement between NCDOT and the Town of Apex signed in 2004 to preserve mobility along U.S. 64.

**27. How much will the initial recommendation for the long-term plan cost?**

The construction cost of the initial recommendation for the long-term plan is approximately \$410 million for the entire 19-mile corridor, including approximately \$99 million for the segment from U.S. 1 to east of Lake Pine Drive. Please note that this cost estimate will be refined once changes are made to the long-term plan.

**28. Is the funding for the construction of U.S. 64 related to the funding for NC 540?**

NC 540 (Western Wake Parkway) is proposed to be under construction beginning in the summer of 2009, subject to the current economic situation. Tolls will be used to repay the bonds used for the construction of NC 540. Currently, the proposed improvements in the short-term plan and the 30-year long-term plan are not funded. Funding for any improvements along U.S. 64 will be prioritized based on other improvements needed in the area.

**Questions about the Potential Effects of the Study**

**29. How will this affect my property values?**

The effect of the recommended improvements on property values will vary, depending on location. If congestion increases along U.S. 64 and no improvements are made, there is potential for the property's attractiveness and value to decrease, because it will take longer to drive to the property. If improvements are made which reduce congestion and create a safer highway, there is potential for property values along the corridor to increase.

Noise may also affect a property's value. Improvements which reduce sound from vehicles, especially trucks, may positively affect a property's value. Other improvements may adversely affect a property's value, due to increased vehicle noise (see question #31 for additional information on noise walls).

**30. How will this affect the businesses along U.S. 64?**

Potential economic impacts to businesses include changes in business activity, available parking and land, and the marketability or resale value of land for development. How a business would be affected by a reduction in pass-by traffic can vary according to the type of business. A business that motorists go to regardless of the route, like a big box retailer or sit-down restaurant, is often unaffected or positively affected by reduced traffic. In contrast, a convenience- or impulse-type business, such as a gas station, relies on pass-by traffic and may be adversely affected.

**31. Will there be noise walls to reduce the noise along the corridor?**

Since the study is a long-term planning study, the evaluation of noise walls is not included. If the need and funding exists for any of the long-term improvements, a noise wall analysis will be performed during the detailed environmental/National Environmental Policy Act study and design process. Noise walls will not be provided along the corridor as a part of the short-term improvements.

**32. Will this increase air pollution along U.S. 64?**

The project will likely improve the air quality by reducing the number of vehicles idling and accelerating along the corridor. The increase in average speed along a road also positively effects air quality.

**33. Will this affect the entrance to my subdivision?**

The long-term plan will modify several of the existing roads into subdivision that connect to U.S. 64 directly. Motorists will be rerouted along service roads to adjacent interchanges or access points. Construction of the long-term plan will require the removal and/or relocation of some of the subdivision entrance signs and walls along the corridor depending on their proximity to the roadway. NCDOT would compensate the subdivision for the property and value of any structure removed or relocated.

**34. Will I be compensated for the change in property value as a result of the implementation of this study?**

If NCDOT needs to purchase a citizen's actual property to construct a roadway, it will compensate the property owner at fair market value. In the event that a piece of property has no roadway access, NCDOT would either provide an access road or purchase the entire parcel of land. NCDOT does not compensate property owners whose property is not directly impacted by the construction of a project.

**35. How will this affect my quality of life?**

The determination of how a specific project will affect quality of life is very difficult to evaluate, because the factors which determine an individual's quality of life are highly variable and subjective. Implementing the long-term plan may impact individual properties and citizens negatively through property acquisition, increased noise levels and a feeling of reduced visual appeal. However, the improvements to congestion and safety could positively affect those living along the corridor by improving air quality and reducing travel times.