



October, 2002

Position Paper

Greenville Area Road Construction & Improvements

The Greenville area is an economic, cultural and retail hub in Eastern North Carolina. Many businesses and industries have located here because of Pitt County's position as that hub. Significant factors in the establishment of Greenville and Pitt County as a significant hub include East Carolina University, University Health Systems of Eastern Carolina, a diverse array of large-employer industries, the largest concentration of small businesses in the region and the 11th largest retail county in the state. Additionally, the completion of the Greenville Convention Center strengthens Greenville's position as a specific destination in Eastern North Carolina.

With Greenville's continued growth as a regional hub for retail shopping, education and medical care, we are faced with increased traffic and transportation challenges as a result. Growth is good, but it does bring infrastructure challenges.

The Greenville area is a growing urban area and that growth has been rapid. Census figures show it grew from 56,000 in 1990 to 84,000 in 2000, an increase of more than 50 percent (Greenville's population grew more than 30% since 1990 and Winterville's population grew more than 50% since 1990). Traffic congestion is a significant problem. If growth were to become stagnant because of unsolved traffic congestion, the vitality of all of Eastern North Carolina would be compromised because of Greenville's strength as an economic engine in this region. Transportation needs of this growing urban area must be addressed (not just rural interstates and intrastates) by the State in its TIP.

The growth of institutions such as Pitt County Memorial Hospital (PCMH) and East Carolina University (ECU) have generated significant increases in regional traffic for the area. The number of patients using PCMH has increased 450 percent since 1980. ECU has experienced 46 percent growth in enrollment since 1980. These growth factors are good for the region's economy, but at the same time, the infrastructure must be provided to accommodate this growth.

Safety is yet another factor. Pitt County Memorial Hospital, a regional tertiary-care medical center, services 29 counties. Ease and safety of road travel for medical service users and emergency vehicles is critical.

With the needs of our community and the region of Eastern North Carolina in mind, it is the current position of the Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce to support and uphold the priorities for road construction and improvements as outlined by the MPO (which includes Greenville, Winterville, and parts of Pitt County).

Priority #1: Southwest Bypass

- Serves as a regional facility providing access from Global Transpark to the Tidewater area of Virginia.
- Major bypass intended to relieve traffic on NC-11 (Memorial Drive) and to provide better access to the Regional Medical Center from the south and southwest.
- This project has been the area's number one highway improvement priority since the early 1980's. This is the MPO's Number 1 highway improvement priority since the organization was formed in 1992.
- NC-11 (Memorial Drive) already operates at or near capacity having an average daily traffic volume of around 45,000 vehicles per day. Traffic along NC-11 (Memorial Drive) is expected to exceed 60,000 vehicles per day in 2010 and 90,000 vehicles per day in 2025. The Southwest Bypass is expected to carry from 30,000 to 40,000 vehicles per day in the year 2025, the majority of which would otherwise travel along Memorial Drive (NC-11) enroute to areas north and west of Greenville.
- We are concerned that the schedule for the planning studies could fall further behind. The current schedule is:
 - Draft environmental report July 2003
 - Public Hearing September 2003
 - LEDPA (least environmentally damaging practicable alternative) selected January 2004
 - Final Environmental report March 2005
 - "Record of Decision" June 2005
 - Right of Way (Section B) August 2006
 - Right of Way (Section A) October 2006
 - Letting post-2010

Project History

1972 - Project placed on Greenville Thoroughfare Plan

1987 - Feasibility Study conducted by NCDOT

1988 - Project listed in 1988-96 STIP

12/1992 to 3/1998 - NCDOT conducts preliminary planning studies and environmental assessments on three alternative alignments

4/1998 to 12/2000 - Work on project suspended

1/2001 to present - NCDOT hires consultant; work resumes on project

- This project is proposed in an area that is developing rapidly. Any delay in selecting the preferred alternative will make it more difficult and more expensive to select and construct this project.
- We are concerned that a reliable funding source for this project has not been identified. This project is not listed an intrastate or urban loop under the Highway Trust Fund legislation but may qualify as an urban loop and could be added. The estimated construction cost is \$99.1 million

Priority #2: Fire Tower Road

This project, our number two (2) highway improvement project, needs to stay on schedule with no delays.

- This serves as a major east-west traffic carrier in our fast-growing urban area to the south

- Currently carries in excess of 20,000 vehicles per day; NCDOT estimates over 30,000 vehicles per day in 2025

Current schedule:

- Right of Way acquisition underway
- Project letting Nov. 2003
- Construction early 2004, expected to take two years to complete

Current estimated cost \$14.3 million (funded)

Priority #3: Stantonsburg Road/Tenth Street Connector

This is our number 3 highway improvement priority and needs to be added to the TIP to improve east-west access in our community

- Meets the demands of east-west traffic through the center of Greenville
- Connects core campus of ECU with the Medical School and uptown Greenville
- Gives direct thoroughfare access to uptown Greenville and East Carolina University
- Includes railroad grade separation at Dickinson Ave. to eliminate the major problem of traffic cut off from the hospital

Current estimated cost \$16.6 million - funded for planning and environmental studies

Priority #4: Evans Street/Old Tar Road Project

This is our number 4 highway improvement priority and needs to be added to the TIP for construction.

- Major Thoroughfare connecting Greenville and Winterville (autos, bicycles, pedestrians)
- Traffic volumes exceed capacity (up to 15,000 vehicles per day at present and 30,000 vehicles per day in 2025)

Current estimated cost \$14.9 million- funded for planning and environmental studies

Spot Safety Priority: Computerized Signal System Phase II

The dramatic increases in population, employment, ECU, the Regional Medical Center, and commercial development described earlier have increased traffic congestion at our major intersections. This is our number one spot safety project because it addresses much of the current and future traffic needs of our urban area.

- City committed almost \$4 million and NCDOT \$600,000 to construct Phase I. It is now operational with over 70 intersections connected to a central computer system all working to improve traffic flow along Greenville's major commercial corridors.
- \$4.4 million has been programmed by NCDOT to construct Phase II. It will interconnect an additional 50 signals. This system expansion will further improve signal operations within our urban area.

Adopted the 22nd day of October, 2002

Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors

Joel K. Butler, Chairman
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