

To:Meeting Attendees, File 3145S2 2.7.2

From:Jennifer Lewis, Parsons Brinckerhoff

Date:June 12, 2003

Subject:Meeting Summary - US 321 (TIP No. R-2237C) Town of Blowing Rock Mitigation Discussions June 12, 2003, (Meeting Number 2).

Attendees:

J.B. Lawrence, Town of Blowing Rock - Mayor

Barbara Ball, Town of Blowing Rock – Town Board

David Wray, Town of Blowing Rock – Town Board

Keith Tester, Town of Blowing Rock – Town Board

Rita Wiseman, Town of Blowing Rock – Town Board

Terry Lentz, Town of Blowing Rock - Town Board

Scott Hildebran, Town of Blowing Rock - Manager

Phillip Trew, High Country RPO

Kevin Rothrock, Town of Blowing Rock - Planner

Missy Dickens, NCDOT - PDEA

Greg Brew, NCDOT – Roadway Design Unit

Carl McCann, NCDOT – Highway Division 11

Trent Beaver, NCDOT – Highway Division 11

Jennifer Lewis, Parsons Brinckerhoff

Reggie Scales, Parsons Brinckerhoff

Al Rapp, Blowing Rock Historical Society and Concerned Citizen

Betty Howe, Blowing Rock Historical Society and Concerned Citizen

Ginny Stevens, Blowing Rock Historical Society and Concerned Citizen

Homer Ketchie, Blowing Rock Citizen and Property Owner

Ron Oberle, Blowing Rock Citizen

Sue Glenn, Blowing Rock Citizen and Property Owner

Mayor J.B. Lawrence opened the meeting and then recognized Missy Dickens who facilitated the mitigation discussion. Missy invited everyone to review the previous meeting's minutes and stated that the goal of the current meeting was to complete an item-by-item review of the "Town of Blowing Rock Town Board Goals and Issues" and the "Road Sections" assessment sheet. She also provided the following general outline of the scheduled mitigation discussions:

- During the scheduled July 10th meeting, the NCDOT will provide responses as to the feasibility of the Board's goals and issues discussed in June, and address any remaining questions or concerns.
- The current plan is for the August 14th meeting to serve as follow-up for any outstanding issues and finalization of all mitigation discussions.
- The September meeting should conclude the mitigation discussions with a resolution and adoption of the items discussed in the meetings with NCDOT by the Blowing Rock Town Board.

Missy also distributed copies of the project's Final Environmental Impact Statement timeline, which was requested at the last meeting.

The discussion then moved to a line-by-line review of the "Town of Blowing Rock Town Board Goals and Issues" and the "Road Sections" assessment sheet. The following items are the major issues and points addressed with each topic. The goals of the "Goals and Issues" were skipped because they had already been discussed in the previous meeting. Issues relating to construction were also previously discussed.

Goals and Issues

1. Safety

- The speed limit in the project corridor will remain at 35 mph, as currently posted and as requested by Town Board.
- Deceleration lanes, also called turn lanes, will be added where traffic projections warrant. The current plans (the hearing map) shows where turn lanes are warranted based on current traffic projections. The plans also show lanes that are long enough to accommodate traffic queues, based on these same projections. Traffic data will be updated as necessary during final design to make sure the lengths and locations of turn lanes remain appropriate. NCDOT requested that the Town Board review the proposed location of turn lanes and mark any additional locations where they would like them to be considered.
- "Traffic Calming" techniques similar to those used along Rivers Street at Appalachian State University and Spring Garden Road at UNC-Greensboro, will be discussed. Techniques of particular interests include landscaped medians and refuges, trees, and textured crosswalks at signalized intersections. It was noted that NCDOT prefers to have crosswalks only at intersections.
- NCDOT must maintain a certain standard of luminosity for all street lighting which may conflict with the request from the Town for "coach" style lighting; however, the request of the Town will be evaluated in context of NCDOT standards. If coach lights cannot be used, NCDOT will coordinate with the Town about mutually acceptable options.
- NCDOT will work to minimize the amount of visual clutter with signage along the new roadway. NCDOT will investigate providing a preliminary sign plan for the Town's comments. NCDOT will consider the Town's question about whether or not the Blowing Rock sign can stay within NCDOT right of way post-construction. The Town Board is to discuss SHPO's interest in creating scenic easements along US 321 which would minimize the number of billboards on the roadway. It was asked whether or not NCDOT can condemn for a scenic easement in the event of an unwilling seller. An answer will be forthcoming.

- Safety issues such as adequate drainage and recessed reflective markings are part of any NCDOT design process and will be provided with this project as well.
- The hearing map shows signals where they are warranted by current traffic projections. NCDOT requested that the Town Board indicate additional intersections they would like to see a signal considered. Not all intersections can be signalized.

1. Aesthetics

- NCDOT recognizes that the "little touches" and context sensitive details are important to the success of this project. NCDOT will provide examples of nontraditional traffic signal poles for the Town Board to consider in the next discussion. Specific mention was made of the green mast arm poles used in Boone along Rivers Street. NCDOT will also investigate the possible use of stone curbs for portions of the roadway in front of the Green Park Inn, the use of wood guardrail or wood-like guardrail, and stone retaining walls and/or retaining walls with decorative treatment.
- For the July meeting, NCDOT will bring a landscape architect to provide answers to questions about roadside and median landscaping details such as trees and rock walls. It was agreed that concerns such as sight distance, snowplowing and salt damage, and maintenance should be addressed. It may be possible to install an irrigation system which would minimize or possibly eliminate major maintenance needs. Installation of the irrigation system would require long-term maintenance by the Town and possibly some cost participation from the Town.

1. Efficiency

- A coordinated signal system will be investigated in further detail.
- NCDOT will investigate minimizing the number of curb cuts along US 321, as necessary. NCDOT requests that the Town Board indicate sensitive curb cut locations. Most current driveway access points will be maintained with final design, although opportunities to consolidate driveways will be sought (especially at parcels which currently have multiple driveways). The Board notified NCDOT of plans for a future Harris Teeter west (behind) of the current Outback Steakhouse location on US 321 Bypass. Traffic for this new development will need to be addressed. There was discussion about consolidating driveways at this location by giving Woodlands and the adjacent parcel access off of the Harris Teeter drive, essentially making them outparcels of the Harris Teeter. The Board also discussed the idea of implementing future Town ordinances or guidelines concerning curb cut locations that would be more in tune with NCDOT standards and preferences.
- NCDOT requests that the Town Board provide them with specific locations of preferred median cuts. The currently shown median cut in front of the Bollinger Hartley House will need to be reconsidered to accommodate for the necessary 700 foot minimum distance between median cuts. One option would be to make it a directional median opening; that is, traffic could turn left into, but not left out of, the Food Lion. Town Board expressed concern over access to the Food Lion being limited. They asked if the current design of the intersection at Main Street could be modified to keep it more like the existing configuration, which would separate the median openings more. The Town asked if a signal could be installed at the Food Lion. Apparently one was not warranted when last examined, about four years ago. The Traffic Engineering Branch will be asked if it can be reevaluated. There was also concern about tractor-trailers being able to access the locations along the median straightaway in front of Outback Steakhouse. Greg Brew indicated that this type of design impediment is usually accommodated by trucking companies planning routes to avoid difficult or impossible maneuvers. The issue can be addressed in the project's construction management plan.
- NCDOT requests that the Town Board provide a copy of their Capital Improvements Plan to assist with coordinating utility work for the project.

1. Community Character

- Section 106 requirements should ensure the protection of the integrity of the Green Park Historic District and contributing structures. Section 106 discussions will be conducted throughout the summer and the Board will have an opportunity to participate.
- The protection of large over-story trees and historic retaining walls should be required during construction. Wording in the construction contract may be established to discourage the contractor from removing trees. Missy asked that if the Town has trees that are especially significant, they be indicated. It may be that some trees can be spared but at the expense of others.
- The Board indicated that an important principle to employ concerning aesthetic treatments is "do it where you can". If the opportunity exists to do something in a location or two but not along the whole project, it should be done. Uniformity is not the highest priority.

1. Pedestrian Movement

- The NCDOT stated that cross-walks would be considered only at signalized intersections.
- Trees between the curb and sidewalks may impact the footprint of the roadway and provide a safety hazard to pedestrians and vehicles. A landscape architect will be at the next meeting to provide additional information about this issue.

Road Sections

- General Questions and Comments
 - As discussed in the previous meeting, only state funds will be used for this project. However, the State Environmental Protection Act's (SEPA) requirements in this project are similar to that of National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). A State EIS looks very much like a Federal one. Missy said she would send the SEPA website link to Scott to forward to the Board. Furthermore, the project is still subject to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Federal agencies are still involved – specifically, the US Army Corps of Engineers, Environmental Protection Agency, the US Fish and Wildlife Agency. Design standards are the same for state and federal projects.
 - The NCDOT Board of Transportation does not usually approve Memorandum of Agreements (MOA) or whatever legal instrument that will be used by the Town and NCDOT.
- Station 684+59.92 to 706+40.40
 - It was clarified that Town Board requests large over-story trees along this section to have a minimum 3" caliper *at planting*. It was agreed that crosswalks at the Country Club Road area are not necessary, but that the left turn at that intersection is dangerous and should be addressed. The team will investigate the possibility of a left turn lane at the Country Club Road intersection.
- Station 706+40.40 to 725+38.39
 - The driveway permit on Main Street at the proposed furniture store has been denied by NCDOT; consequently the extra "turn lane"/driveway tie currently shown on the hearing map will not be present in future designs. It is possible to add a signalized crosswalk at the intersection with Sklyand Drive/S. Main Street. Sidewalks will be provided on both sides of the road from south of the Green Park Inn to the Shoppes on the Parkway.
- Station 751+00 to 765+00
 - Due to the planned construction of Fire/EMS station along the US 321 Bypass, a future emergency vehicle access and emergency signal is desired near property #1504 on Project Hearing Map. NCDOT indicated that an emergency signal light should not be a problem at this location.
- Station 765+00 to 785+00

- The thick black line near the Main Street intersection is a median. NCDOT is willing to provide a park on the abandoned portion of Main Street, and will be sensitive to the Town entrance sign in the vicinity.

NCDOT will send the Town a full-size copy of the hearing map.

Following completion of the review, the meeting was adjourned.