

PUBLIC INFORMATION

ITEM NO. 4.

DATE OF MEETING: June 1, 2009

REQUESTED BY: Mr. Al Freimark

SHORT TITLE: Information Update Regarding US 17 Corridor Feasibility Studies

BACKGROUND: Mr. Freimark has been involved in the planning processes for the US 17 corridor, and desires to make the Board aware of potential changes to NCDOT's feasibility study focus.

From: Don Egger [mailto:deggert@capefearcog.org]
Sent: Tuesday, May 19, 2009 12:14 PM
To: Todd Rademacher; davenport@pender-county.com
Subject: US 17 DOT Feasibility Study

Just a head up, I attended a meeting in Raleigh yesterday concerning a feasibility study that DOT is beginning on the upgrading of US 17 in Pender Co. to a 6-lane road (i.e. adding a lane in each direction). Feasibility studies are a preliminary document prepared as the initial step in the planning and design process and is not the product of exhaustive environmental and design investigations. Such studies typically take 12-18 months to complete. DOT may be in touch with you about particular issues such as land development trends, infrastructure and the like. Don

Don Egger, AICP
RPO Director

Cape Fear Rural Planning Organization
910-471-0474 direct
910-395-2684 fax

The Cape Fear Area Rural Planning Organization exists to serve as the intergovernmental organization for local elected officials, the North Carolina Department of Transportation and residents of Brunswick, Columbus and Pender Counties to work cooperatively to address transportation issues.

Chronology...Hwy. 17 in Hampstead

Hwy. 17 was a 3-lane road

1994 - Meeting in Hampstead with NCDOT representatives including Rep. Odell Williamson to discuss the need for a by-pass around Hampstead. Subsequent meetings were held in Raleigh.

1997 - Meeting with NCDOT Officials, including Director Hunt, Rep. Garland Garrett and others at the Hampstead EMS building. We again underscored the need for a by-pass. NCDOT agreed to a by-pass later if we would agree to a 5-lane of Hwy 17 first. We agreed and shook hands. Subsequent meetings were held with Garland Garrett and others.

The 5-Lane was built...The By-Pass was "Promised"

The By-Pass remained as a topic of discussion, but no action

The traffic continued to grow as did "Downtown Hampstead"

2006 - Pender became a member of the WMPO

May, 2007 - GHHA proposed and received the unanimous agreement of the Pender County Planning Board and the Board of Commissioners for the establishment of a Hwy. 17 Overlay District. Completion promised by 6/30/08.

Today

- We don't have a By-Pass
- We don't have an Overlay District
- We do have a proposal for a 6-lane divided Hwy. through our Downtown
- And the By-Pass is #11 on the WMPO's top 10 list

al freimark

From: "al freimark" <alfreimark@charter.net>
 To: "David Williams" <williamsd2@pender-county.com>
 Sent: Monday, January 14, 2008 2:54 PM
 Subject: ByPass Background

The below document may help you to underscore the depth and breadth of the community's concern for the by pass and it's now over 14 yrs since we held that referendum.

To: Pender County Board of Commissioners
 From: Greater Hampstead Homeowners Association
 Date: August 16, 2004
 Subject: Protecting the Right-of-Way for the Hampstead Highway 17 By-Pass

Gentlemen:

Eleven years ago the residents of Hampstead expressed their concern about the ever increasing volume and incompatible mix of traffic on Highway 17 in Hampstead. In a 1993 non-binding referendum over 42% of the registered voters cast their ballots and 88% of them said they favored a by-pass. That was over a decade ago.

Unfortunately, for a variety of problems and reasons, nothing was done by the officials who could have favorably influenced this project. During this past decade Castle Bay Golf Community was born and created another obstacle to establishing a "preferred route". We cannot afford a repetition of what was allowed to happen.

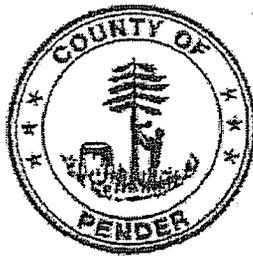
 We urge the Pender County Board of Commissioners to act in a timely manner and to work closely with the NCDOT in helping to determine, secure and protect the right-of-way for the by-pass.

 We are confident that the residents of Hampstead and coastal Pender County are even more supportive of this project now than they were 11 years ago.... and are counting on you to make sure it becomes a reality.

Very truly yours,

Alfred J. Freimark
 President

cc: Mr. Andy Hedrick, Pender County Mgr.
 Representative Carolyn Justice
 Mr. Mark Tinkler, Wilmington MPO
 Mr. Lanny Wilson, NCDOT



**RESOLUTION
IN SUPPORT OF THE HIGHWAY 17 HAMPSTEAD BYPASS PROJECT**

WHEREAS, Pender County has been reported as the 85th fastest growing county in the nation and the 6th fastest growing county in North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, the population of Pender County increased by 42% from 1990 to 2000, and projections are for the increase in the next decade to exceed another 50%.

WHEREAS, the a vast majority of County's growth has occurred in the Hampstead area, where over 60% of the County's building permits were issued in 2006; and

WHEREAS, The N.C. Department of Transportation has proposed 19 alternate routes for this highway bypass project, 17 of which pass through Pender County; and

WHEREAS, the County has limited resources available to prevent development in and to preserve any of the designated alternate routes; and

WHEREAS, this Board of Commissioners does not believe, based on the volume of subdivision applications, rezoning requests and special use permit applications pending for the Hampstead area, that the County can responsibly preserve this area from development for the next two (2) years.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Pender County Board of Commissioners urges the North Carolina Department of Transportation to work with the residents of the County and to hasten the selection process of the Hampstead Bypass Corridor, while ensuring this project receives adequate funding as a priority improvement.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that copies of this resolution be transmitted to the members of the General Assembly representing Pender County.

Adopted this the 7th day of May, 2007



F.D. Rivenbark, Chairman



Lori A. Brill, Clerk to the Board



**RESOLUTION
REGARDING THE STATE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT
PROGRAM**

WHEREAS, Pender County has been reported as the 85th fastest growing county in the nation and the 6th fastest growing county in North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, the population of Pender County increased by 42% from 1990 to 2000, and projections are for the increase in the next decade to exceed another 50%.

WHEREAS, the a vast majority of County's growth has occurred in the Hampstead area, where over 60% of the County's building permits were issued in 2006; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Transportation is currently accepting comments on the Draft 2009-2015 State Transportation Improvement Program (TIP); and

WHEREAS, the Draft STIP does not add any additional projects for Pender County; but the existing 2007-2013 STIP currently includes the Hampstead Bypass project; a project that has clearly become increasingly important due to traffic congestion, which creates a public safety concern; and

WHEREAS, the public safety concerns and traffic volume will continue to increase with the opening of the new Topsail High School, the addition of another elementary school, and the construction of numerous housing developments whose residents will rely on Highway 17 as their primary transportation corridor; and

WHEREAS, Highway 17 is a major transportation and economic corridor for Eastern Carolina from the South Carolina border to Virginia; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Pender County Board of Commissioners urges the North Carolina Department of Transportation to 1) fully fund and accelerate the Hampstead Bypass project; 2) Fund a study of the Highway 17 Corridor; and 3) explore alternatives to improve safety before the bypass can be constructed other than the 6-laning of Highway 17.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that copies of this resolution be transmitted to the members of the General Assembly representing Pender County.

Adopted this the 22nd day of January, 2008

J. David Williams, Chairman

Lois A. Bill, Clerk to the Board

Island towns support proposed Hwy 17 bypass

By Amanda Hutcheson

TOPSAIL — Both Surf City and Topsail Beach recently passed resolutions supporting the proposed Hwy 17 bypass. saying Hampstead would not be the only community to benefit from such a project.

"We've been at this for over 14 years, asking the DOT (Department of Transportation) to do a bypass," said Al Freimark, representing the Greater Homeowners Association. "They (Surf City Mayor Zander Guy and Topsail Beach Mayor Howard Braxton) are both supportive. They understand that the people who go to

Topsail Island, many of the are people who don't live there. They want to get there quickly as possible and they don't want to go through Hampstead. Other people who live in Hampstead don't really want all that extraneous traffic going through downtown.

"Our wish is to improve upon the DOT that it isn't just Hampstead that wants it, it's a lot of people in Coast Carolina, especially Pender County," Freimark added.

Both Mayor Guy and Mayor Braxton echoed Freimark's comments.

see **BYPASS** page 12A

BYPASS from page 2A

"As Hampstead continues to grow, we just felt like it was the right thing to do," Mayor Guy said.

Mayor Guy compared the proposed bypass to the completion of 140 to Wilmington, which greatly reduced the time it took vacationers from Raleigh and areas west to get to Topsail Island.

"We think it will enhance the traffic fines," he added. "People trying to go to Wilmington and from a safety standpoint. If you have an emergency, a lot of people go to New Hanover (Regional Medical Center). If there's another hurricane, the evacuations. We think it will be a tremendous asset."

Mayor Braxton agreed.

"It'd help relieve some of the traffic getting off the island, going into Wilmington every morning and coming back every evening," Mayor Braxton said. "With the projected increase in traffic, any additional space would certainly help."

"We have several people who live here and go back and forth to work every day, as well as the residents we have here who go back and forth to Wilmington and Hampstead and the area to doctor's appointments. It would just make driving a whole lot easier," Braxton added.

Much of the recent growth in Hampstead has been around Hwy 17, making it both a highway with people and trucks want to compete with or intimidated by 18-wheelers others who are in a rush. The DOT had also discussed widening Hwy 17 to six lanes, but Freimark and others, including the Pender County Board of Commissioners, have asked the DOT to explore other options to widening Hwy 17 until a bypass can be built. Freimark is encouraging DOT officials to act soon before it becomes even more expensive. "It all boils down to dollars and cents," said Mayor Guy. "Let's get with this because the door is closing quickly," said Freimark. "They understand our concern. It's just the longer we wait, the less available the land is to build and the less affordable it is."

"The longer the DOT takes, the more difficult it is to find land that is affordable and the more expensive it is," Freimark added.

While many use Hwy 17 as a high-speed route between Jacksonville and Wilmington, others use it as a road to Hampstead businesses, creating what some say is an incompatible mix of drivers and prompting local officials to ask for a bypass.

— photo Amanda Hutcheson

TOWN OF SURF CITY

P. O. BOX 2475 214 N. NEW RIVER DRIVE SURF CITY, NC 28445

Telephone: (910) 328-4131 Fax: (910) 328-4132

<http://surfcity.govoffice.com>

U. D. (Zander) Guy, Jr., Mayor
Jelva R. Albury, Council Member
Michael H. Curley, Council Member

Donald R. Helms, Council Member
Douglas C. Medlin, Mayor Pro-tem
William J. (Buddy) Fowler, Council Member

Resolution regarding the State Transportation Improvement Program

WHEREAS, Pender County has been reported as the 85th fastest growing county in the nation and the 6th growing county in North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, the population of Pender County increased by 42% from 1990 to 2000, and projections are for the increase in the next decade to exceed another 50%.

WHEREAS, the vast majority of County's growth has occurred in the Hampstead area, where over 60% of the County's building permits were issued in 2006; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Transportation is currently accepting comments on the Draft 2009-2015 State Transportation Improvement Program (TIP); and

WHEREAS, the Draft STIP does not add any additional projects for Pender County, but the existing 2007-2013 STIP currently includes the Hampstead Bypass project; a project that has clearly become increasingly important due to traffic congestion which creates a public safety concern; and

WHEREAS, the public safety concerns and traffic volume will continue to increase with the opening of the new Topsail High School, the addition of another elementary school, and the construction of numerous housing development whose residents will rely on Highway 17 as their primary transportation corridor; and

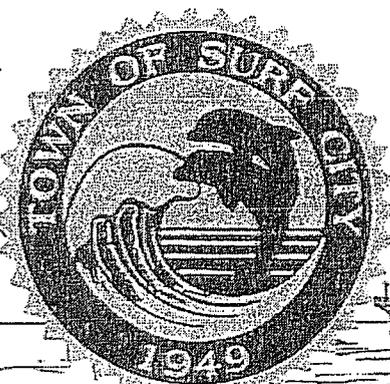
WHEREAS, Highway 17 is a major transportation and economic corridor for Eastern Carolina from the South Carolina border to Virginia; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Surf City Town Council urges the North Carolina Department of Transportation to 1) fully fund and accelerate the Hampstead Bypass project; 2) Fund a study of the Highway 17 Corridor; and 3) explore alternatives to improve safety before the bypass can be constructed other than the 6-laning of Highway 17.

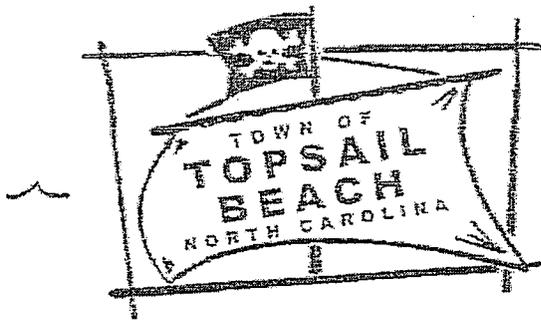
FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be transmitted to the members of the General Assembly representing Pender County.

Adopted this the 5th day of February 2008.

ATTEST: Patricia E. Arnold
Patricia E. Arnold, Town Clerk



A.D. (Zander) Guy Jr.
A.D. (Zander) Guy Jr., Mayor



820 S. Anderson Blvd.
Topsail Beach, North Carolina
Telephone (910) 328-68
Fax (910) 328-1559

Howard M. Braxton, Jr. Mayor
Duncan "Bobby" Humphrey, Mayor Pro-Tem
Garth W. Boyd, Commissioner

Harold "Hal" Hanig, Commissioner
Donald "Ray" Strader, Commissioner
Robert "Buck" Taylor, Commissioner

Resolution Regarding The State Transportation Improvement Program

WHEREAS, Pender County has been reported as being the 85th fastest growing county in the nation and the 6th fastest growing county in North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, the Hampstead area has been named as one of North Carolina's fastest growing areas with 60% of the building permits being issued in 2006; and

WHEREAS, the population of Pender County has increased by 42% from 1990 - 2000; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Transportation is currently reviewing Draft 2009-2015 State Transportation Improvement Program (TIP); and

WHEREAS, the existing 2007-2013 STIP currently includes the Hampstead Bypass; and

WHEREAS, the congested Highway 17 corridor, through the Hampstead area, is of great concern with the construction of a new high school and numerous housing developments; and

WHEREAS, Highway 17 is now the primary economic transportation corridor for Eastern Carolina from the South Carolina border to Virginia; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Topsail Beach Board of Commissioners urges the North Carolina Department of Transportation to fully fund and accelerate the Hampstead Bypass project.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be transmitted to members of the General Assembly representing Pender County.

Adopted this the 26th day of February 2008.

Howard M. Braxton, Jr., Mayor

ATTEST: _____
Stephanie A. Rivenbark, Town Clerk

September 9, 2003

Mr. Lannie Wilson
Department of Transportation
Raleigh, N.C.

Dear Mr. Wilson:

On behalf of the Pender County Board of Education, I would like to voice my strong support for a Hampstead bypass. I have been superintendent of schools in Pender County since 1996 and have seen a marked increase in traffic on Highway 17 through Hampstead. We have two schools located on the highway and it has been very evident that the increased traffic has made entrance and exit from our school properties much more hazardous.

Further, in 1998 we opened South Topsail Elementary School, on Hoover Road, off of Highway 17. At the time we opened South Topsail we petitioned the Department of Transportation for a connection of Hoover Road to Highway 210. We firmly believe that a connection on Hoover Road, west of the school will provide a safer environment for our students, staff and parents. If an accident occurred on Highway 17, closing the Hoover Road intersection, our students would not be able to leave campus to get home. Without another means of egress from Hoover Road, they would be helpless until Highway 17 reopened. A bypass around Hampstead could provide another means of access to Hoover Road.

Please feel free to contact me for any information you might seek. Also, feel free to use this letter of support in any way you deem it helpful.

Sincerely,

Marc J. Sosne, Superintendent
Pender County Schools

Cc: Mr. Al Freimark
Mr. Andy Hedrick, County Manager

Greater Hampstead Homeowners Assn.
Hampstead, NC 28443

Gentlemen:

My name is Al Freimark and I speak to you today representing the Greater Hampstead Homeowners Assn. (GHHA), an organization that represents 10 subdivisions and approximately 4700 residents of Hampstead, NC. The total population of Hampstead is estimated to be 14,000+. My purpose for speaking today is two fold:

1. We unanimously agree that the planning and completion of a by pass around Hampstead is a very high priority and must be accomplished as soon as possible. This is a project that has been on the back-burner for too long. In many ways coastal Pender is a suburb of Wilmington and New Hanover County. Vigorous residential and commercial growth are making the land less available and less affordable. The longer we wait the more difficult this project will become. For over 14 years we have worked closely with the NCDOT and have more recently become a member of the Wilmington MPO.

In addition to the growth we are currently experiencing we are very mindful of plans for ever-increasing pressure on "Downtown Hampstead" through which Hwy. 17 passes; to name a few:

- The Military Growth Task Force estimates 11,774 marines will be moving into Camp Lejeune within the next several years. Only 850 families will be housed on base. It is estimated that an additional 3000 new homes will be required in the surrounding area. From this project alone a total of 65,000 new people are expected to be added to the area.

- Residential development - St Georges Reach, a new subdivision in Hampstead where 1150 homes are planned. Sidbury LLC., A planned development on Sidbury Rd. for up to 3500 homes. Another large subdivision planned for the area adjacent to the present Topsail High School, and several others in the "talking stage".

- Commercial development - Two significant shopping centers have recently been permitted to be built on Hwy 17 adjacent to the Olde Point subdivision. Also, two new strip shopping malls have recently

been completed and several more are "on the books". A Medical building is also under construction on Hwy 17 just south of HWY 210. These businesses are focused on the local residents, not those who are just passing through. These merchants do not want to be located on a highway traveled by 18-wheelers or four-wheelers who are interested only in getting through as quickly as possible. Nor do the customers of these merchants want to compete with or be intimidated by 18-wheelers or others who are in a rush.

- Another New School - A new, larger Topsail High School that is immediately off of Hwy 17 is under construction and scheduled for completion in December, 2008. Also, there are presently two grammar schools, one middle school and one high school that are either directly on Hwy 17 or accessible only via Hwy 17. Total...5 schools, plus many school busses and "soccer moms" that use Hwy 17 at least twice a day.

- Commuter Traffic - In addition to the above, Hampstead is basically a bedroom community to Wilmington and many of the parents of those school children work in New Hanover County. They rely totally on Hwy. 17 twice a day for their commute.

- Incompatible Mix

- Those that live and/or work in Hampstead and only want to go to school, to church, to shop and do business, chores and/or visit locally.
- Those that simply want to get through Hampstead as quickly and as safely as they are able.

According to the North Carolina Hwy. 17 Assn. (of which GHHA is a member).... Bypasses have a proven track record in NC:

- Bolivia - completed
- Wilmington - mostly completed
- Hertford - " "
- Jacksonville - " "
- Edenton - completed
- Williamston - completed
- Elizabeth City - completed
- Windsor - Mostly completed
- Washington - Beginning construction
- Hampstead - On TIP - mostly unfunded