



PUBLIC INFORMATION

ITEM NO. 2.

DATE OF MEETING: January 19, 2010

REQUESTED BY: Marc Finlayson, Executive Director, Highway 17 Association

SHORT TITLE: Update on the Progress & Status of Highway 17

BACKGROUND: Mr. Finlayson updated the Board in August 2008 and would now like to give the latest update. The Highway 17 Association is currently working on an update Impact Study for the Highway 17 Corridor.

Highway 17 Association

Mission Statement and Goals

2009 – 2010

October 1, 2009 – September 30, 2010

Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Highway 17 Association to assure, through collective action and constancy of purpose, that the inclusion and funding of all unfunded portions of the US Highway 17 corridor shall be part of the NC Department of Transportation's 2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) or as soon thereafter as possible.

The Highway 17 Association will accomplish its mission by:

- Protecting Highway 17 projects now fully funded in the TIP.
- Being regional in vision and scope and not advancing one local project at the expense of another.
- Anticipating and resolving local issues and concerns, and facilitating solutions where local conflicts exist.
- Helping the DOT solve problems in planning, design, right-of-way acquisition and construction, in order to advance Highway 17 projects.
- Being an active partner with federal, state, regional and local stakeholders who share an interest in the completion of a fully controlled access, four-lane Highway 17 from Virginia to South Carolina.

Goals, Strategies and Tactics

Government Relations 2009 - 10

- Continue to meet regularly with County and City governing bodies in the Highway 17 corridor to keep elected officials apprised of progress and to address issues or concerns.
 - Who: Marc Finlayson
 - When: Throughout 2009-10 as appropriate.

Progress 10/1/09 – 12/31/09: Since the beginning of the Association's fiscal year (October 1, 2009) Finlayson has made a concerted effort to expand support for the Highway 17 Association among local governments who have here-to-fore not been official members. Working through tourism professionals in the northeast region, Finlayson secured financial support from both Camden and Pasquotank Counties for 2010. Finlayson met with Sabrina Bengel, newly elected alderman from the City of New Bern to discuss continued support. At the public hearing in Maysville on R-2514, Finlayson had a chance to visit with Jones County Commissioners Joe Wiggins, Sondra Riggs and Jesse Ray Eubanks and Onslow County Commissioner Bill Keller. Highway 17 board members Lionell Midgett (Onslow Commissioner), Jay Bender (Pollocksville Mayor) and Larry Meadows (Jones County Economic Developer) also attended. Mickie Wilson has begun setting up local

government briefings for Finlayson. Dates for Brunswick County and the City of Jacksonville have been confirmed.

- Continue to meet regularly with the DOT Board members representing the Highway 17 corridor and with key DOT staff to stay up to date on progress, issues and concerns.
 - Who: Marc Finlayson.
 - When: Throughout 2009-10.

Progress 10/1/09 – 12/31/09: Finlayson participated in the regular quarterly briefing on Highway 17 projects held in conjunction with the October DOT Board meeting in Raleigh. New Board of Transportation members Hugh Overholt (Division 2) and Leigh McNairy (at-large) participated, along with Stan White (Division 1) and Lanny Wilson (Division 3). Mr. White was named Chairman of the Highway 17 Committee for NCDOT. Rob Hanson, Project Development Engineer for eastern North Carolina conducted the meeting, joined by Jerry Jennings, Neil Lassiter and Allen Pope, Chief Division Engineers for Divisions 1,2 and 3 respectively. At this particular meeting DOT Chief Operating Officer Jim Trogdon participated in order to discuss the upcoming public hearing for the R-2514 project in Jones County. Finlayson met with Neil Lassiter in Greenville to discuss the R-2514 hearing in more detail. Finlayson participated in the public meeting in Bear Grass on the R-2511 project (Washington to Williamston) where he met with project manager Olivia Farr, as well as DOT staff from Divisions 1 and 2. Finlayson presented prepared remarks on behalf of the Association at the public hearing in Maysville on the R-2514 project; specifically the Association's preference for alternative 2A bypassing both Maysville and Belgrade. At the Jones County hearing Finlayson met with project manager Mark Pierce to discuss progress and timing. Along with several other transportation leaders, Finlayson met in Raleigh at DOT with Transportation Secretary Gene Conti, COO Jim Trogdon and Deputy Secretary Susan Coward to discuss the funding outlook for transportation projects in 2010 and beyond.

- Continue to nurture relationships with North Carolina's Congressional delegation and key staff and grow in knowledge of federal highway funding and administration.
 - Who: Marc Finlayson
 - When: Throughout 2009-10.

Progress 10/1/09 – 12/31/08: As a follow up to his September trip to Washington, DC, Finlayson corresponded with the offices of the NC Senators and Representatives with whom he visited; particularly Chris Wall in the office of Sen. Richard Burr concerning misappropriated funding for Highway 17. Finlayson is corresponding with Kim McClellan in the office of Rep. Mike McIntyre (7th District) to request appropriations for Highway 17 projects in the coming federal appropriations bill. Finlayson assisted state Senator Harry Brown in drafting correspondence to Rep. Walter Jones (3rd District) seeking a change in position by the US Army Corps of Engineers on the R-2514 project. Finlayson also met with Board of Transportation member Hugh Overholt about Rep. Jones' involvement.

- Continue to nurture relationships with the Highway 17 corridor's state legislative delegation, and grow in knowledge of state highway funding and administration.

- Who: Marc Finlayson
- When: Throughout 2009-10.

Progress 10/1/09 – 12/31/09: Finlayson worked closely with Sen. Harry Brown (R-Onslow) as he prepared remarks and correspondence about the R-2514 project in Jones and Onslow Counties. Finlayson monitored the December meeting of the Transportation Oversight Committee of the NC General Assembly and had a chance to speak with Highway 17 corridor legislators Rep. Arthur Williams (D-Beaufort) and Rep. Danny McComas (R-New Hanover), as well as House Co-Chairman Nelson Cole (D-Rockingham).

- Continue to nurture relationships with other stakeholders and organizations concerned with transportation issues in North Carolina, to develop a productive network of allies on issues of interest or concern to the Highway 17 Association.
 - Who: Marc Finlayson
 - When: Throughout 2009-10.

Progress 10/1/09 – 12/31/09: Finlayson continues to participate in the Tourism initiative coordinated by the three eastern North Carolina economic development partnerships, including a planning session held at the NC East Region offices in Kinston. The goal of the initiative is to have Highway 17 designated as a Heritage Highway by the federal government. Finlayson continues to serve as co-chair of NC Go!, the statewide transportation advocacy group and meets regularly with other transportation leaders in and out of government, among them Jay Stem, Executive Director of the NC Aggregates Association, with whom Finlayson met in November to discuss transportation funding prospects. Finlayson briefed the regular meeting of the Downeast Rural Planning Organization (RPO) on Highway 17 progress and issues. Finlayson met with Mark Sutherland, newly named Director of the Military Growth Task Force, to discuss transportation issues associated with the region's military growth; specifically the Jones County project. Deputy Director Jay Bender (of the Highway 17 Association board) also participated. Finlayson gave a Highway 17 update to the Breakfast Rotary Club of New Bern whose members included elected officials from the cities of New Bern and River Bend.

Goals, Strategies and Tactics

Public / Media Outreach and Marketing 2009 - 10

- Continue to expand and improve the Highway 17 Association web site. Add features that will make the site more informative, interactive and interesting to prospective viewers.
 - Who: Marc Finlayson and Mickie Wilson.
 - When: Throughout 2009-10.

Progress 10/1/09 – 12/31/09: Finlayson has corresponded with Rob Will and Alex Rickard of the Downeast RPO to monitor progress on the interactive map of the Highway 17 corridor that the RPO staff is building for the Association. This collaboration would enable viewers to the Highway 17 Association web site to monitor progress on discreet projects along the corridor by clicking the

appropriate section of highway. It would also contain statistics pertinent to the highway such as traffic counts and accident records.

- Continue to nurture relationships with editors and reporters covering transportation for the newspapers and television stations within the Highway 17 corridor, and respond to inquiries by the news media.
 - Who: Marc Finlayson with appropriate local directors.
 - When: Throughout 2009-10.

Progress 10/1/09 – 12/31/09: Finlayson provided interviews to WITN-TV and Public Radio East on the R-2514 project in Jones County; speaking particularly to the Association's support for the 2A alternative bypass around Maysville and Belgrade. Finlayson provided an interview with *The Washington Daily News* concerning an update on the R-2510 Washington Bypass project. While in Raleigh, Finlayson met with Lynn Bonner of *The News & Observer* of Raleigh to discuss transportation issues generally and other governance, public policy and political subjects.

- Continue to distribute news releases or other appropriate information to the media at least quarterly and follow up to ensure coverage.
 - Who: Marc Finlayson and Mickie Wilson.
 - When: Throughout 2009-10.

Progress 10/1/09 – 12/31/09: No newsletters or news releases were distributed during the period; however interviews have been scheduled with project managers and contractors to update progress on the Washington Bypass and New Bern Bypass projects. The next newsletter is expected to be published during the second quarter (January – March).

- Pursue research studies, grants and other opportunities that can advance the cause of Highway 17 planning, funding and construction. Publish or otherwise market such information in appropriate media and determine other ways to use the information to promote Highway 17.
 - Who: Marc Finlayson.
 - When: Throughout 2009-10 as appropriate.

Progress 10/1/09 – 12/31/09: Finlayson and Mickie Wilson have been working with Pamela Bostic of the Elizabethtown office of the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) to seek a grant to fund the economic impact study for the Association. Ms. Wilson has downloaded the files and walked through the application process with Ms. Bostic. The federal grant requires a one-for-one match so Finlayson is pursuing money from the NC Department of Commerce as a potential match. If the Association is successful in getting the grant it already has a scope of work and budget in hand through a partnership of UNC-Wilmington and a private consulting firm. At the same time, Tom Thompson has said he is working with UNC-Charlotte to put a proposal together and to identify potential funding sources independent of EDA.

Goals, Strategies and Tactics

Administrative / Financial 2009 - 10

- Continue to disseminate monthly budget and expense information to the Board and / or Finance Committee; Help the treasurer prepare reports for the Board meetings as appropriate.
 - Who: Marc Finlayson and Mickie Wilson.
 - When: Throughout 2009-10.

Progress 10/1/09 – 12/31/09: Mickie Wilson continues to provide monthly financial information to the Finance Committee and receives authorization to reimburse the Association's operating account for travel and promotional expenditures. Finlayson and Ms. Wilson prepared the 2009-10 budget that was approved by the Board at its September meeting. Ms. Wilson helped Treasurer Larry Meadows prepare the fiscal year-end Treasurer's Report to the Board at that time. Finlayson and president Lionell Midgett have executed the management contract for the 2009-10 fiscal year. The Association has already received some \$172,000 from its local government funding partners for fiscal 2009-10.

- See that tax returns are properly filed with the IRS and the NC Department of Revenue and ensure that the annual audit is conducted in a thorough and timely manner.
 - Who: Marc Finlayson and Mickie Wilson.
 - When: By the appropriate dates in fiscal year 2009-10.

Progress 10/1/09 – 12/31/09: Finlayson and Mickie Wilson have met with our auditor to provide information for the 2008-09 fiscal year audit. Ms. Wilson is also preparing and providing information that will enable the auditor to file our 2009 tax return for our 501(c)(6) organization.

- Continue to explore innovative ways to generate more income for the Association and its mission, including soliciting private donations for special events and seeking grant money for special projects.
 - Who: Marc Finlayson and Mickie Wilson.
 - When: Throughout 2009-10.

Progress 10/1/09 – 12/31/09: At the Board's request from its September meeting, Finlayson prepared a brochure with which the Association can solicit private-sector support for the organization. Board members have pledged to identify and contact at least five private companies in their respective counties to solicit. Finlayson will accompany Board members on these calls during the second fiscal quarter (January – March). Depending on the amount of contributions, the private-sector fundraising campaign may preclude the need for additional corporate support for the 2010 annual meeting. That is being determined by Finlayson and Ms. Wilson.