

## PUBLIC INFORMATION

ITEM NO. 7.

**DATE OF MEETING:** September 7, 2010

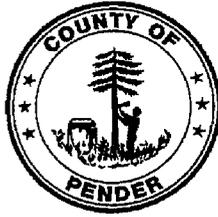
**REQUESTED BY:** Marc Finlayson, Executive Director, Highway 17 Association

**SHORT TITLE:** Resolution Approving Support of the Highway 17 Association in its Efforts to Secure Funding in the Amount of at Least \$250,000 to Conduct Research to Begin an Economic Impact Study for the US 17 Corridor in North Carolina.

**BACKGROUND:** For over a year the Highway 17 Association has been planning to begin an economic impact study for the US 17 corridor in eastern North Carolina. The effort has taken two parallel paths: to find a partner that can perform the work and begin to scope the details of the research; and to find funding to pay for the study. The Association believes it has found the right partner for the study-the Transportation Policy Department at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, a team led by Dr. Edd Hauser. The Association now needs to actively pursue the funding necessary to conduct the research; publish and distribute the study; and make the data and conclusions available and functional for all the stakeholders in the US 17 corridor. The Association has begun to explore every potential appropriation, grant, agency and foundation in order to secure funding in the amount of \$250,000.

**SPECIFIC ACTION REQUESTED:** The Board is requested to review and approve the attached resolution supporting the Highway 17 Association in pursuing funding for an economic impact study for the Highway 17 corridor.





## **RESOLUTION BY THE PENDER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**WHEREAS**, US Highway 17, the Ocean Highway, was once the primary north-south transportation route in the coastal plain of eastern North Carolina; and

**WHEREAS**, the building of the Interstate Highway System diverted significant amounts of traffic away from US Highway 17; and

**WHEREAS**, US Highway 17 has not received the attention and funding required to upgrade the facility, leaving more than 50 miles in dangerous, inadequate two lane condition; and

**WHEREAS**, because of a lack of an improved US Highway 17, eastern North Carolina lags behind the rest of the state in recruiting manufacturing industry, attracting tourists to the region's destinations, providing the transportation infrastructure needs of our state's two ocean ports and meeting the growth demands of the military; and

**WHEREAS**, there is a substantial amount of poverty, economic distress and social difficulty in eastern North Carolina due to the lack of economic opportunity that safe and adequate highways provide; and

**WHEREAS**, an improved US 17 will enable eastern North Carolina to recruit and retain industrial jobs whose companies require access to four lane highways that will link products and services to eastern US markets; and

**WHEREAS**, an improved US 17 will enable the tourism industry to showcase the wonderful recreational, environmental and heritage tourist destinations found in eastern North Carolina, that other states can promote because of access to the Interstate System; and

**WHEREAS**, an improved US 17 will greatly enhance the ability of North Carolina's ocean ports at Wilmington and Morehead City to move goods in and out of those facilities and link the ports to markets across the country; and

**WHEREAS**, some of the most strategically important military bases in the United States are found in eastern North Carolina, and whose growth is negatively impacted by an unsafe, inadequate two lane US 17; and

**WHEREAS**, the true benefit of US 17 as a fully improved, four lane coastal corridor cannot be known definitively unless a comprehensive economic impact analysis is conducted; and

**WHEREAS**, such an economic impact study for the US 17 corridor will encourage the North Carolina Department of Transportation to fully fund the improvements to the highway and accelerate the planning, design, permitting, right of way and construction processes; and

**WHEREAS**, such a study will provide reliable facts and data and insightful analysis that will greatly benefit counties, municipalities and regional economic partnerships in their business recruitment and development activities.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE PENDER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS DOES HEREBY JOIN WITH ITS NEIGHBORS ON THE US 17 CORRIDOR IN REQUESTING THAT FUNDS IN THE AMOUNT OF AT LEAST \$250,000 BE APPROPRIATED, GRANTED OR OTHERWISE PROVIDED TO ENABLE THE COMPLETION OF A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY TO DEMONSTRATE THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF A FOUR LANE CORRIDOR FOR EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA.**

This 7<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2010.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jimmy T. Tate, Chairman

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Rick Benton, Clerk to the Board



P.O. Box 1673 • New Bern, NC 28563  
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August 2, 2010

Dear Local Government leader:

For over a year the Highway 17 Association has been planning to begin an economic impact study for the US 17 corridor in eastern North Carolina. This effort has taken two parallel paths: to find a partner that can perform the work and begin to scope the details of the research; and to find funding to pay for the study.

We believe we have found the right partner for the study; the well respected Transportation Policy Department at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Dr. Edd Hauser will lead a terrific team of researchers with diverse backgrounds in the elements of study we expect to undertake. Now we need to actively pursue the funding necessary to conduct the research; publish and distribute the study; and make the data and conclusions available and functional for all of our stakeholders in the US 17 corridor.

We know instinctively that completing a fully improved Highway 17 through eastern North Carolina will improve safety and mobility for drivers, and will provide the kind of transportation facility essential to fostering economic growth in the region. Tourism, industrial development, our state ports and the military will all benefit from the completion of US 17, as well as general improvements in commercial and residential development. This will mean expanding tax bases for the counties and municipalities of the corridor and enhancements to existing property values, which extrapolates into more and better government services and private sector opportunities for our citizens and an enhanced quality of life.

But while we know all these things instinctively we need reliable facts and data to certify that they are true. We also need meaningful research and reasoned conclusions so that counties and municipalities in the corridor can use the study for their own purposes as well as for the benefit of the entire eastern North Carolina region.

We are exploring every potential appropriation, grant, agency and foundation in order to secure funding in the amount of at least \$250,000. We are respectfully asking our local government and regional economic development partners to pass resolutions of support for our efforts. We understand without doubt that funders will appreciate, acknowledge and respect support for this effort from all of eastern North Carolina. It is truly a regional project, but with the benefit of also having specific, local value too.

Please take this resolution to your local governing bodies at your earliest opportunity and stand with us in support of this economic impact study for Highway 17. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marc Finlayson', is written over a faint, circular official stamp.

Marc Finlayson  
Executive Director