

Transportation Staff Meeting

June 16, 2010

2:00 PM

Room 601

AGENDA

1. Sugar Creek Road Grade Separation, TIP #U-5008 (Gibbs)

Description:

NCDOT has issued a Start of Study memorandum for this project. Comments on potential concerns are requested by July 9. A copy of the memorandum is attached.

2. NCDOT's Complete Streets Policy (Newsome)

Description:

An update on the work of NCDOT's Complete Streets Advisory Group will be provided.

3. I-77 HOT Lanes (Coxe/Gibbs/Steinman)

Description:

Following up on a discussion at a meeting of Charlotte City Council's Transportation & Planning Committee, this agenda item will focus on future HOT lanes management issues.

Access number: 1-888-776-3766

Meeting number: *4211498*

**Don't forget to dial the asterisk before
and after the number**



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

BEVERLY EAVES PERDUE
GOVERNOR

EUGENE A. CONTI, JR.
SECRETARY

June 9, 2010

MEMORANDUM

FROM: Colista Freeman, PE
Rail Environmental Planning Engineer
NCDOT Rail Division, Environmental and Planning Branch

SUBJECT: Start of Study for the **Proposed Grade Separation of Sugar Creek Road (SR 2975) and the North Carolina Railroad Company (NCR)/Norfolk Southern Railway (NS) in Charlotte.** Crossing No. 715 352H. NS Mile Post 374.02. Mecklenburg County, NC. TIP Project No. U-5008. State WBS Project No. 42848.

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Rail Division has retained the firm of Stantec Consulting Services Inc. to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) for a proposed grade separation of Sugar Creek Road (SR 2975) and the NCR/NS line in Charlotte. The project is identified as Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Project No. U-5008.

The purpose of this letter is to provide notification of the start of study and to solicit comments regarding potential concerns or data within the project study area. Please submit written comments to Ms. Colista Freeman at the address below or at csfreeman@ncdot.gov by July 9, 2010. If you have any questions, please contact me at 733-7245.

The following paragraphs provide a description of the project, the purpose and need for the project, plus the general characteristics and natural resources of the project study area.

Project Description

The proposed project would provide a grade separation at the Sugar Creek Road (SR 2975) crossing of the NCR/NS rail line (Crossing No. 715 352H, NS Mile Post 374.02) by depressing Sugar Creek Road under the railroad, with re-surfacing and grading work beginning just north of intersection of Sugar Creek Road and The Plaza, extending under the railroad, and ending just south of the Sugar Creek Road and North Tryon Road intersection.

MAILING ADDRESS:
NC DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
RAIL DIVISION
1553 MAIL SERVICE CENTER
RALEIGH NC 27699-1553

TELEPHONE: 919-733-4713
FAX: 919-715-6580
WEBSITE: WWW.BYTRAIN.ORG

LOCATION:
TRANSPORTATION BUILDING
1 SOUTH WILMINGTON STREET
RALEIGH NC

The proposed cross-section for Sugar Creek Road would include wide outside lanes to accommodate bicycle traffic and a sidewalk on each side; however, this cross-section may be modified to avoid impacts to historic properties along the roadway on the north side of the railroad. The proposed project is approximately 0.75-mile in length. The project location is shown in the attached exhibit.

Purpose and Need

The need for this grade separation was established in the late 1990's and is based on existing and projected rail and vehicular traffic volumes. The current freight train count is 30 trains a day, although up to 60 freight trains a day may pass through this rail corridor (NCR, 2008). This section of rail line also hosts six daily Amtrak passenger trains. This rail line is also part of the federally-designated Southeast High Speed Rail (SEHSR) corridor. In addition, traffic volumes on Sugar Creek Road are projected to reach 37,600 vehicles per day by 2030, making this one of the busiest crossings in the Charlotte area.

The purpose of this project is to create a safe crossing of the NCR/NS rail at Sugar Creek Road. Separating the grades at this location would provide safe passage for vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic. It would also eliminate idling vehicles at the crossing, which would help improve Mecklenburg County's air quality. This project will also provide a suitable location for future high-speed rail service, plus any additional transit tracks that may be developed in the vicinity.

General Characteristics of the Project Study Area

The project study area is located along Sugar Creek Road in northeast Charlotte in Mecklenburg County.

Land Use – Land use within the project study area is a mix of industrial, commercial, and residential uses. As shown in the attached exhibit, a large neighborhood is located in the eastern and southeastern portions of the study area.

Socio-economic Characteristics – A preliminary review of 2000 US Census data indicates that the neighborhood located within the study area has notable minority and low-income populations.

Natural Resources – The project study area is in the Lower Catawba River Basin (USGS Hydrologic Unit 03050103) (DWQ Subbasin 03-08-34), within the Sugar Creek watershed. Sugar Creek is classified as an impaired Class C water. A preliminary review of the USGS topographic quadrangles for the project study area did not reveal any waterbodies along Sugar Creek Road within the project study area; however, a formal natural resource investigation will be completed during the course of the study.

A review of the National Wetland Inventory (NWI) mapping inventory did not reveal any wetlands within the project study area. Formal wetland delineations will be conducted during the course of the study.

In accordance with provisions of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, the project study area will be evaluated for protected species habitat. The threatened and endangered species listed for Mecklenburg County include the Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) which is protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGPA) and the following endangered [E] species: Carolina heelsplitter (*Lasmigona decorata*), Schweinitz's sunflower (*Helianthus schweinitzii*), smooth coneflower (*Echinacea laevigata*), and Michaux's sumac (*Rhus michauxii*). The Georgia aster (*Symphyotrichum georgianum*) is classified as a Candidate [C] species. Federal Species of Concern [FSC] for Mecklenburg County include the American eel (*Anguilla rostrata*), Carolina darter (*Etheostoma collis collis*), Carolina creekshell (*Villosa vaughaniana*), Dwarf aster (*Eurybia mirabilis*), Shoals spiderlily (*Hymenocallis coronaria*), Tall larkspur (*Delphinium exaltatum*), and Prairie birdsfoot-trefoil (*Lotus unifoliolatus var helleri*).

Potential habitat for Michaux's sumac, Schweinitz's sunflower and Georgia aster may exist along the railroad corridor, Sugar Creek Road, and in clear-cut areas. Surveys will be conducted during the plants' flowering and/or fruiting seasons to identify any species in the project area.

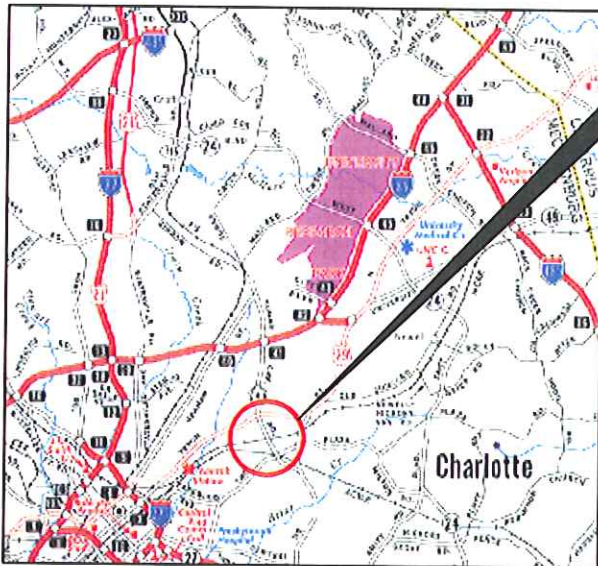
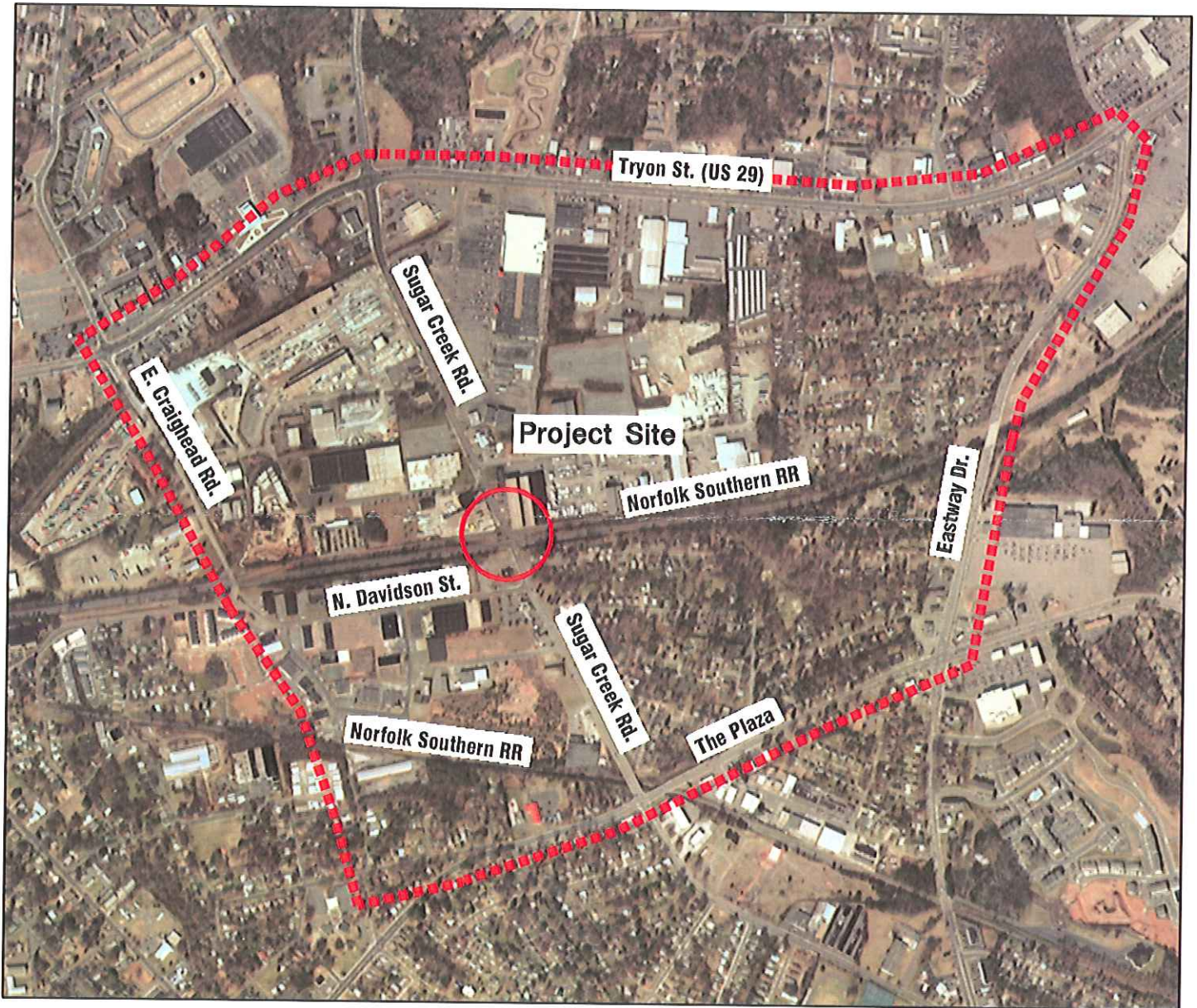
Archeological and Historic Architectural Properties – Along Sugar Creek Road north of the railroad, there are two properties eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (Republic Steel Corporation Plant on the east and the Standard Chemical Products Plant on the west). A historic architecture field survey will be conducted during the course of the study.

A formal archaeological investigation is not anticipated; however, NCDOT awaits comments from the State Office of Archaeology regarding the level of investigation required for this project.

CF/acs

Attachment

cc: File

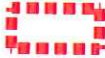


Project Location



Mecklenburg County

Legend

 Study Area



Sugar Creek Road Grade Separation
 TIP No. U-5008
 Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

Project Location
 and Study Area Map
 Not To Scale
 Exhibit 1.1