



## MEMO

**TO:** Mayor and Town Council

**FROM:** Joseph A. Fivas, Town Manager

**DATE:** April 21, 2011

**SUBJECT:** US-74 Corridor Revitalization Plan

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Town staff has been approached by Union County staff to participate in a MUMPO grant proposal. The grant proposal would include possible participation from Union County, City of Monroe, Town of Stallings, and the Town of Indian Trail. This project is directly related to the building and future planning of the Monroe Bypass. The preliminary draft scope of this project is found in the attached document.

Union County and the City of Monroe have preliminarily pledged up to \$20,000.00 for possible required match funds for this grant. They have requested that the Town of Stallings and the Town of Indian Trail do a similar match. The overall project costs are expected to be \$250,000. This will be a discussion at the April 27<sup>th</sup> MUMPO meeting and a final discussion could be held at the May MUMPO meeting.

We are hoping for feedback, discussion, and guidance on this proposed project. Staff will be available for any further questions at the Council meeting.

## **The US-74 Corridor Revitalization Plan**

Development of the Monroe Connector/Bypass will divert much traffic from the current US-74 corridor and provide new opportunities for redevelopment along US-74. A joint planning effort between Union County, Stallings, Indian Trail, and Monroe proposes to identify a new vision for the US-74 corridor and ensure the development potential in this corridor is maximized. Due to the substantial undertaking of this plan as described below, Union County desires to complete the plan within a 2 year time period and, therefore, would seek funding from MUMPO for FY12 and FY13.

Currently, US-74 is a four to six lane divided arterial roadway with 26 at-grade signalized intersections, and many additional unsignalized intersections. It serves as an important commercial corridor for Union County residents and businesses, with numerous retail, commercial, and residential driveway connections along its 20 miles of roadway. In Union County, most employment is concentrated along existing US-74.

Due to its multiple jurisdictional zoning and land uses, the area along US-74 displays disparate development patterns with little to no transition among uses, limited transportation options, numerous safety issues, and poor aesthetics. This plan will focus on how these factors interact with travel in the corridor and provide solutions for better integrating transportation with land use. Coordinating plans and managing growth and development across jurisdictional boundaries will be crucial to addressing transportation and land use compatibility and ensuring the long-term viability of US-74.

An essential element of this plan is an analysis of existing and future land use patterns along the corridor. The identification of future land uses based on community wide goals is key in determining future traffic counts, where sidewalks should be located, access points, etc. Including a land use planning component as part of the US 74 Corridor Revitalization Plan presents an opportunity for all jurisdictions to jointly and comprehensively plan for future land use patterns along the corridor instead of the disjointed approach that has happened in the past.

Transportation is also an essential element to any revitalization plan. Once future land use patterns are identified, the transportation infrastructure needs to be analyzed to determine how the transportation system can help to ensure that the new vision for US-74 is achieved.

There is currently a lack of park-and-ride lots, commuter incentive programs, bike facilities, and sidewalks serving this corridor. A multimodal approach to include vehicular, transit, bicyclist and pedestrian will be taken into account when analyzing transportation alternatives. There will be a focus on access management, Intersection Improvements, traffic flow, safety, and

drainage facilities. For all areas of study short and long term improvements would be assessed along with different funding options and resources.

Access management improvements are needed along this corridor. Access management can be performed by the use of service roads, limiting driveways, safe turning lanes and increasing street connections around the highway on secondary roads. If used correctly access management can increase roadway capacity, reduce crashes and shorten travel time for motorists.

Existing intersections along the corridor would also be analyzed and studied for needed improvements. This analysis may include signal timing improvements, adding additional turn lanes, modified intersections and pedestrian/bicycle modifications.

In addition to access management and intersection improvements, improved mobility is needed on US-74. The existing traffic flow in the region is heavily congested. With this congestion comes increased traffic accidents and driver frustration. Improving traffic flow in the region would decrease travel time and improve mobility. To accomplish improved traffic flow the following items could be used: Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), the use of HOV/HOT lanes, fewer signals and the synchronizing of lights.

While implementing better access management practices and intersection designs aids in improving safety for the motorist, there needs to be a focus on improving safety for pedestrians and bicyclist in and around the project area. To improve safety for these users of the corridor, pedestrian and bicyclist facilities could be incorporated into the access management and intersection analysis.

Adequate drainage is also a safety issue. Areas prone to flooding, having significant drainage issues, or major hydroplaning should be identified. This information can then be used to plan for improvements such as upsizing pipes or stream crossings, having a central stormwater facility, adding additional drainage systems, ditch clean out, etc.

Finally, the US-74 Corridor Revitalization Plan would include the development of a corridor overlay that establishes similar aesthetic guidelines for the entire study area. These guidelines would focus on improving the streetscape of US-74 to include significant median landscaping, screening/buffers, and consistent building setbacks while balancing both sides of the street. Streetscape should also include lighting, signage, and other streetscape amenities for the area. By establishing similar criteria along the entire corridor, new development will not occur haphazardly as it did in the past and given time for new development to replace existing development a "look" will be established along the entire route.