

ORANGE COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

ACTION AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT

Meeting Date: February 2, 2010

Action Agenda  
Item No. 6-d

**SUBJECT:** Orange County Comprehensive Transportation Plan Update - Options

**DEPARTMENT:** Planning and Inspections

**PUBLIC HEARING:** (Y/N)

**ATTACHMENT(S):**

- 1. Triangle Strategic Highway Corridors
- 2. Survey Results for Question 12

**INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Karen Lincoln, 245-2594  
Craig Benedict, 245-2592

**PURPOSE:** To consider continuing or discontinuing development of the Comprehensive Transportation Plan.

**BACKGROUND:** Orange County, in June 2009, approved a resolution endorsing a comprehensive transportation planning study for Orange County to be completed through coordination among the Orange Unified Transportation Board, the Triangle Area Rural Planning Organization and the North Carolina Department of Transportation. In September 2009, Transportation Planning staff with the North Carolina Department of Transportation gave an overview of the Comprehensive Transportation Plan process, in which the North Carolina Strategic Highway Corridors Vision Plan was introduced to the Board. Department of Transportation staff noted that NC 86 to US 70 Bypass West to the I-85/US 70 connector to I-84/I-40 in Orange County was identified as a North Carolina Strategic Highway Corridor (Attachment 1), with a future design of four lanes with a median. Orange County's Comprehensive Transportation Plan must be consistent with the Strategic Highway Corridors Vision Plan and show NC 86, or another existing or proposed corridor, through northern Orange County as having a future design of four lanes divided by a median in order to be approved by the Board of Transportation and recognized by the North Carolina Department of Transportation.

Some commissioners questioned the process the NC Department of Transportation used to develop the Strategic Highway Corridor Vision Plan and the lack of opportunity for Orange County to have input into designating NC 86 north of Hillsborough as a future four-lane divided facility, and noted the County's preference for such improvements to US 70.

At the September 2009 meeting, the Board approved release of a survey for public input, with amendments suggested by commissioners, to use in plan development, and directed staff to provide the BOCC with more information/background regarding the proposal for designating NC 86 as a Strategic Highway Corridor (Attachment 2).

The survey has been completed and North Carolina Transportation Planning staff is ready to begin the study for the deficiency analysis of the transportation network for future travel

demand. The North Carolina Department of Transportation has concerns that Orange County will not adopt a transportation plan that shows NC 86 as a future four-lane divided facility. Before committing staff resources to continue work on Orange County's Transportation Plan, North Carolina Transportation planning staff has suggested the following four options for the County to consider:

1. **Pursue removal of NC 86** or any corridor through northern Orange County from the North Carolina Strategic Highway Corridor Vision Plan;
2. **Show** the existing **NC 86** corridor or a proposed alignment for **NC 86 as an expressway**;
3. Show **NC 86** as an expressway on Comprehensive Transportation Plan highway map with a **phased implementation strategy** in the technical report; or
4. **Pursue a downgrade of facility type** for NC 86 (from an expressway to a boulevard).

### Explanation of Options and Implications

**Option1 - Pursue removal of NC 86 from Strategic Highway Corridor Vision Plan.** The Department of Transportation has a process to modify the Strategic Highway Corridors Vision Plan. Revision requests may fall in one of the following categories:

- Addition of a new Strategic Highway Corridor (Corridor);
- Modification of an existing Corridor;
- Partial or full deletion of an existing Corridor; or
- Changes to a proposed facility type.

The process to revise the Strategic Highway Corridor Vision Plan takes over six months and development of the County's Comprehensive Transportation Plan would not continue until the request had been resolved. There is no guarantee that the North Carolina Board of Transportation will approve the revision.

**Option 2 – Show NC 86 as a future expressway.** Work on Orange County's Comprehensive Transportation Plan would continue but the County would have no dialogue concerning facility type.

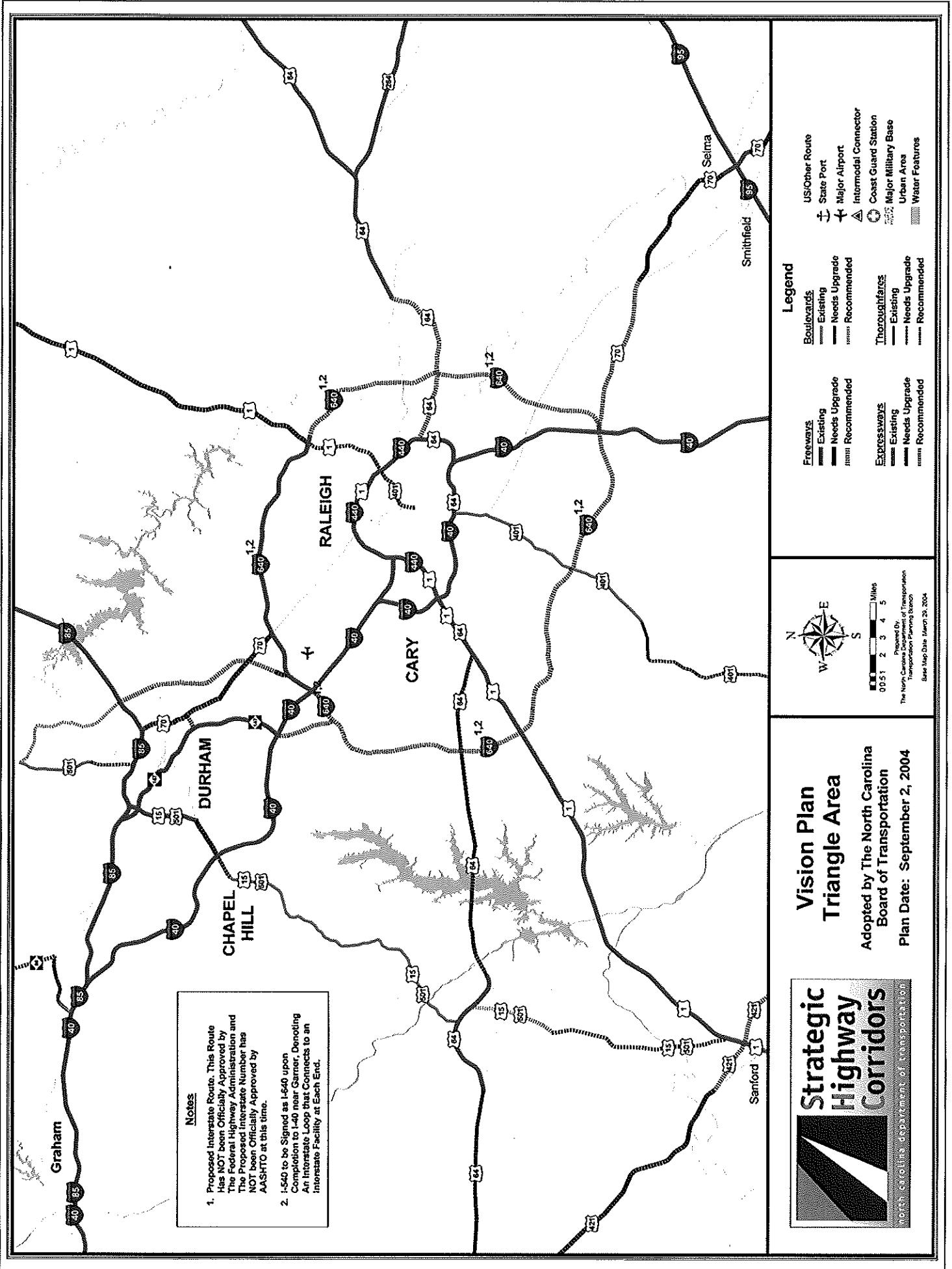
**Option 3 – Show NC 86 as a future expressway with a phased improvement plan in the technical report.** Work on Orange County's Comprehensive Transportation Plan would continue as planned. Survey question twelve offered seven options for designating a north-south corridor from Caswell County to US 70 Bypass as a four-lane divided expressway. Respondents could select more than one option. Of the 387 survey responses, **approximately 63% chose to use the existing NC 86 corridor** (with a narrow margin preferring a new western bypass of Hillsborough). Over twenty-one percent (**21.4%**) **chose “Do not improve NC 86 to an expressway”**. A change in facility type (Option 4), if desired, could be pursued after adoption of the Comprehensive Transportation Plan.

**Option 4 – Pursue a downgrade of facility type for NC 86.** The Department of Transportation has a process to modify the Strategic Highway Corridors Vision Plan to change a proposed facility type. NC 86 is classified as an arterial road. The Strategic Highway Corridor Facility Types also includes a Boulevard (minimum two-lane with median) design for an arterial road. Work on Orange County's Comprehensive Transportation Plan would not continue until the facility design for NC 86 had been resolved. The North Carolina Board of Transportation must approve the request for a change of facility type.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** The Comprehensive Transportation Plan will require planning staff resources, but can be completed with existing staff.

**RECOMMENDATION(S):** The Manager recommends the Board:


1. Receive the presentation; and
2. Endorse Option 3 to continue development of the Comprehensive Transportation Plan with a phased plan for improvements to NC 86.



**Notes**

1. Proposed Interstate Route. This Route Has NOT been Officially Approved by The Federal Highway Administration and The Proposed Interstate Number has NOT been Officially Approved by AASHTO at this time.
2. I-540 to be Signed as I-640 upon Completion to I-40 near Garner, Denoting An Interstate Loop that Connects to an Interstate Facility at Each End.

- Legend**
- |                    |                      |                       |
|--------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Freeways</b>    | <b>Boulevards</b>    | <b>US/Other Route</b> |
| — Existing         | — Existing           | State Port            |
| — Needs Upgrade    | — Needs Upgrade      | Major Airport         |
| — Recommended      | — Recommended        | Intermodal Connector  |
| <b>Expressways</b> | <b>Thoroughfares</b> | Coast Guard Station   |
| — Existing         | — Existing           | Major Military Base   |
| — Needs Upgrade    | — Needs Upgrade      | Urban Area            |
| — Recommended      | — Recommended        | Water Features        |


  
 Prepared By: The North Carolina Board of Transportation  
 Transportation Planning Bureau  
 Scale Map Date: March 20, 2004

**Vision Plan Triangle Area**  
 Adopted by The North Carolina Board of Transportation  
 Plan Date: September 2, 2004



The Strategic Highway Corridors Initiative of NCDOT states that the long-range vision (in 25-30 years) for the NC 86 corridor in Orange County (from Hillsborough to the North) is an Expressway. The goal of Strategic Highway Corridors is to maintain mobility and connectivity throughout North Carolina on core highway corridors, and NC 86 serves as a primary connector from Danville, VA to the Triangle area. An Expressway is a median divided facility, usually with 4 lanes. The speed limit is 45-60 mph with no traffic signals. Connections are made at interchanges, public roads, and right-in/right-out driveways. Which of the following would you suggest for a north-south corridor to achieve this goal? (Please check any you would support.) (Please refer to the map below for the current alignment of the NC 86 corridor from Hillsborough to the North [dashed line] in Orange County, and refer to the image below for an Expressway examples. Visit [www.ncdot.org/deh/preconstruct/tbp/SHC/](http://www.ncdot.org/deh/preconstruct/tbp/SHC/) for more information on Strategic Highway Corridors.)

Answer Options	TOTAL RESPONSES			CEDAR GROVE TOWNSHIP			LITTLE RIVER TOWNSHIP			CHEEKS TOWNSHIP		
	Response Percent	Response Count		Response Percent	Response Count		Response Percent	Response Count		Response Percent	Response Count	
Keep/use existing NC 86 corridor	29.2%	116		23.1%	6		45.5%	5		47.4%	9	
Re-route the north-south corridor to other roads (specify roads below)	3.5%	14		0.0%	0		0.0%	0		0.0%	0	
Construct a completely new north-south corridor	10.1%	40		19.2%	5		0.0%	0		15.8%	3	
Keep/use existing NC 86 corridor with a new western bypass of Hillsborough	40.3%	160		38.5%	10		63.6%	7		21.1%	4	
Keep/use existing NC 86 corridor with a new eastern bypass of Hillsborough	32.7%	130		19.2%	5		45.5%	5		26.3%	5	
Do not improve NC 86 to an expressway to provide north-south access	21.4%	85		34.6%	9		18.2%	2		15.8%	3	
Other (specify below)	2.0%	8		3.8%	1		0.0%	0		0.0%	0	
Please elaborate on above choices:		96			3			5			19	
<i>answered question</i>		397			94			11			19	
<i>skipped question</i>											3	

Answer Options	HILLSBOROUGH TOWNSHIP			ENO TOWNSHIP			BINGHAM TOWNSHIP			CHAPEL HILL TOWNSHIP		
	Response Percent	Response Count		Response Percent	Response Count		Response Percent	Response Count		Response Percent	Response Count	
Keep/use existing NC 86 corridor	34.2%	27		27.8%	5		31.3%	5		26.9%	7	
Re-route the north-south corridor to other roads (specify roads below)	6.3%	5		0.0%	0		6.3%	1		3.8%	1	
Construct a completely new north-south corridor	8.9%	7		0.0%	0		0.0%	0		0.0%	0	
Keep/use existing NC 86 corridor with a new western bypass of Hillsborough	39.2%	31		55.6%	10		50.0%	8		46.2%	12	
Keep/use existing NC 86 corridor with a new eastern bypass of Hillsborough	39.2%	31		55.6%	10		12.5%	2		34.6%	9	
Do not improve NC 86 to an expressway to provide north-south access	15.2%	12		11.1%	2		18.8%	3		19.2%	5	
Other (specify below)	1.3%	1		0.0%	0		6.3%	1		0.0%	0	
Please elaborate on above choices:		19			5			5			13	
<i>answered question</i>		79			18			16			26	
<i>skipped question</i>					3			3			5	

Answer Options	TOWN OF HILLSBOROUGH			CITY OF DURHAM			CITY OF MEBANE			TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL		
	Response Percent	Response Count		Response Percent	Response Count		Response Percent	Response Count		Response Percent	Response Count	
Keep/use existing NC 86 corridor	24.6%	14		38.5%	5		16.7%	1		22.4%	11	
Re-route the north-south corridor to other roads (specify roads below)	1.8%	1		7.7%	1		0.0%	0		4.1%	2	
Construct a completely new north-south corridor	12.3%	7		7.7%	1		50.0%	3		12.2%	6	
Keep/use existing NC 86 corridor with a new western bypass of Hillsborough	54.4%	31		38.5%	5		33.3%	2		26.5%	13	
Keep/use existing NC 86 corridor with a new eastern bypass of Hillsborough	28.1%	16		15.4%	2		33.3%	2		24.5%	12	
Do not improve NC 86 to an expressway to provide north-south access	29.8%	17		7.7%	1		0.0%	0		30.6%	15	
Other (specify below)	0.0%	0		0.0%	0		0.0%	0		10.2%	5	
Please elaborate on above choices:		14			3			0			14	
<i>answered question</i>		57			13			6			49	
<i>skipped question</i>					4			3			20	