

ORANGE COUNTY PLANNING & INSPECTIONS DEPARTMENT

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Marc L. Hamel, Rail Environmental Manager
NC DOT Rail Division
Environmental and Planning Branch
1553 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1553

Subject: Additional scoping comments related to the proposed private crossing closures with the North Carolina Railroad (NCRN)/Norfolk Southern (NS) Railway at Gordon Thomas Drive (TIP No. P-44051), Greenbriar Drive (TIP No. P-4405J), and Byrdsville Road (TIP No. P-4405K) in Orange County

Dear Mr. Hamel:

Thank you for your reply letter of December 20, 2012 on Orange County's scoping comments on NCDOT Rail Division's three proposed private crossing closures with the NCRN/NS Railway referenced above. After reviewing your reply letter, reviewing the revised project study area maps, and considering the public comments provided in response to the associated Citizen Informational Workshops, we offer the following additional comments.

IN GENERAL:

1. There is confusion as to whether and/or which improvements will be public or private. The Project Study Maps do not adequately indicate which will be private drives and which will be public roads to NCDOT standards. Can this be clarified on the Study Maps?
2. At the Citizen Informational Workshops there was some confusion and varying comments from DOT staff and consultants concerning NCDOT construction standards (right-of-way width, pavement width, drainage ditches, etc.). For example, there was mention of right-of-way widths possibly being 50 feet rather than 60 feet, and citizens' understanding of pavement widths varied as well. Recognizing that the projects are still in their conceptual stages, please clarify to the best of your ability the construction standards for these three projects.

3. For purposes of applying zoning setbacks, the Orange County UDO would treat lots with two street frontages as double frontage lots.
4. Proposed roadway should comply with local, state and federal standards for flood damage prevention, stream buffers, storm water management and erosion control as well as impervious surface limits.
5. What are the standards for determining when side drainage ditches will be incorporated into a roadway design? When will it be known if side drainage ditches will be part of a particular roadway design?
6. Some of the suggested reroutes (such as the case with Byrdsville) are more circuitous and increase the commute times to Durham.
7. When available, please provide the anticipated schedule for required right-of-way acquisition, relocation of property structures and buildings where necessary, and construction dates.
8. Please keep Orange County Planning staff informed of and copied on revisions to Project Study Maps, as well as more detailed design drawings as your analysis progresses.

CROSSING #735 199Y/MP H 48.49/Gordon Thomas Drive (P-4405I)

NCDOT DESCRIBED IMPROVEMENTS

This crossing provides access to Old NC 10 (SR 1710) for six properties located south of the NCRR. The crossing occurs in an area where NS operates one mainline track and a passing siding. While the track section is straight at this location, it quickly enters a curved section both east and west of the crossing. The sight distance for train crews on either approach to the crossing is limited by heavy foliage on both sides of the track. The crossing is vertically humped and is protected by crossbucks. Much of the property surrounding the six parcels is owned by Duke University and is part of its School of Forestry. Alternative access to these properties will be considered using Paschall Drive west of Gordon Thomas Drive. From there, drivers will be able to access Old NC 10 via Dove Creek Road (SR 115) or Murphy School Road (SR 1714).



COMMENTS

No additional comments.

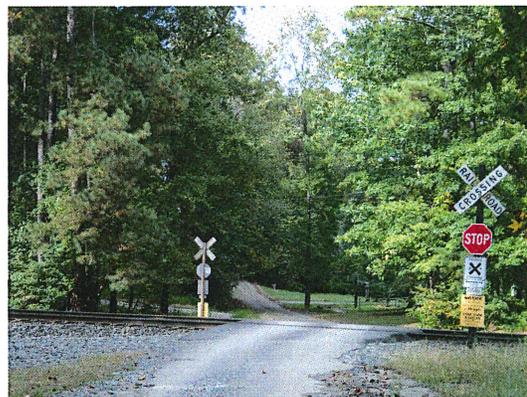


Revised Gordon Thomas Drive Project Study Area

CROSSING #726 305F/MP H 47.62/Greenbriar Drive (P-4405J)

NCDOT DESCRIBED IMPROVEMENTS

This crossing serves eight residential parcels located north of the railroad and provides access to Old NC 10 (SR 1710). It is located along a straight section of track. There is heavy foliage on all four approaches to the crossing. The roadway approaches are gravel, and the southbound approach is slightly humped. The crossing is protected by crossbucks. The railroad overpasses Old NC 10 approximately 550 feet east of the crossing. The Greenbrier subdivision abuts the Whispering Pines subdivision immediately to the east which has direct access to Old NC 10 without crossing the railroad. Alternative access is being considered parallel to the track to connect Greenbriar Drive to Spruce Pine Trail in the Whispering Pines subdivision. A new roadway will be studied in two locations: One will be from Greenbriar Drive approximately 400 feet north of the railroad crossing to Spruce Pine Trail approximately 450 feet north of Old NC 10. The other will be from the northern end of Greenbriar Drive to Spruce Pine Trail where Spruce Pine Trail turns to the east.





Revised Greenbriar Drive Project Study Area Map

COMMENTS

1. Orange County Planning staff favors Proposed Access Road Corridor Alternative no.2. This alternative is less intrusive on the existing Greenbriar Drive residential neighborhood, and also is in a preferred location for future connectivity with properties to the north upon redevelopment in accordance with the adopted Future Land Use Map of the Orange County Comprehensive Plan.
2. Planning staff continues to strongly encourage an alternative road network that purposely coordinates well with the proposed interchange redesign to the north and enhancement of proposed access road connections for adjoining nonresidential development, in that the constructed road network will readily facilitate the larger context of the area's access issues and needs.

CROSSING #735 189T/MP H 43.89/Byrdsville Road (P-4405K)

NCDOT DESCRIBED IMPROVEMENTS

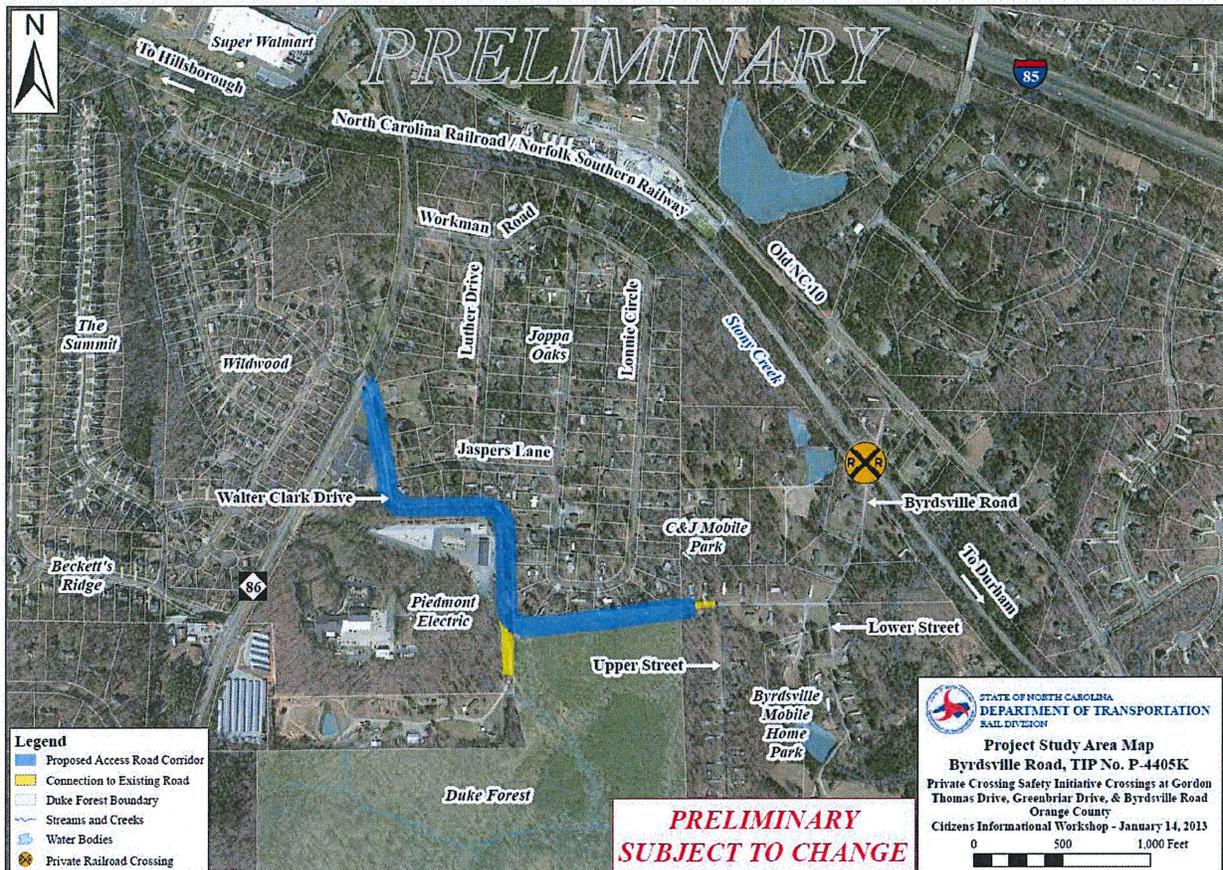
This crossing serves a large subdivision of permanent and mobile homes. The crossing is protected by automatic warning devices. The approach roadway is paved and is approximately 16 feet wide. The westbound approach is curved. The crossing is slightly humped and there is heavy foliage on three of the four approaches. Approximately 70 homes are served by this crossing. Residential areas south of Byrdsville Road are surrounded on three sides by



Duke University property (Duke Forest) which will most likely remain undeveloped. Alternatives will be considered for Byrdsville Road to have access to NC 86 to the west. A new roadway is proposed to connect Byrdsville Road to Walter Clark Drive. From there, drivers can follow 'Walter Clark Drive' north to NC 86. Driveway improvements will also be considered in two locations to maintain connectivity to residential areas north of Byrdsville Road.

COMMENTS

1. Property owners north of the Byrdsville Mobile Home Park do not have right of access through the proposed private drive exit through the Mobile Home Park. Alternative access for these northern property owners should be considered to the west through the Joppa Oaks development, or improving the private drive and adding it to the state secondary road system. Alternative access through the Joppa Oaks development would also have the benefit of dispersing traffic to multiple connections with NC 86 if the non-authorized earthen barricade at the end of Japers Lane were removed.
2. Children in the Byrdsville Mobile Home Park currently walk north, across the rail line, and catch the bus at the intersection of Byrdsville Road and Old NC 10. Alternative school bus routes and pick-up location(s) will need to be considered as part of the alternative road plans.



Revised Byrdsville Road Project Study Area Map

Please advise me as to the schedule for the project environmental studies, as well as the anticipated completion date for initial design work.

I invite you to contact me, and/or Tom Altieri and Abigaile Pittman of my staff regarding any comments in this letter.

Sincerely,

Craig Benedict, AICP
 Director of Planning and Inspections