OFFICIAL PUBLIC HEARING TRANSCRIPT
Formal Public Hearing for the Replacement of
The Herbert C. Bonner Bridge (Bridge No. 11)
On NC 12 over Oregon Inlet
Cape Hatteras Elementary School, Buxton, NC
July 8, 2010
B-2500

(Recording did not start at the beginning of the hearing, so transcript begins here.)

This is our NCDOT Public Involvement staff. These are my right hand folks. Tonight I am sort of a figure head around here. They're the folks that do all the work, Ed Lewis, Jamille Robbins and Paul Cameron who has been assisting us. And, I have a couple of folks back at the office who weren't able to come tonight that made this possible as well. From Parson's Brickerhoff, the consulting firm that is working with our staff and they are helping us on this project, John Page, Roland Robinson, and Bobby Norburn are here and their staff. From our Federal Highway Administration partners, Ron Lucas. Then the rest of our DOT staff we have Virginia Mabry, the Project Executive. I think I've covered all the DOT folks.

While I'm thanking folks, I would like to thank Ray Gray who is the Principal here and all his staff for allowing us to use this wonderful facility and the assistance in putting everything together tonight. I do appreciate that. We appreciate that.

The next thing I want to talk about real quickly is sort of the format of what we're going to do tonight. I'm going to start off with a presentation and we'll go through some of the information in the handout. I will go through the maps here of the changes on the project in the last couple of years. Then it will be your turn. For the most important part, or the main reason that we're out here tonight which is to hear your comments on the project, that's really why we're here. That's the most important reason for us to be here tonight and we'll ask each speaker to come up and speak. I hope that opportunity on the sign in sheet if you would like to speak we'll go down in order of folks as they signed up. I will ask that you limit your comments to about 3 minutes as a courtesy so that we can give everyone an opportunity to speak. What we'll do is we'll go through everybody who is on the list who signed up. If the mood strikes you and you suddenly decide that yes I want to speak too, or you didn't a chance to sign up, once we go through the list, I will open it up to the floor and anyone else who wants to speak will be given an opportunity. Then once everyone has had an opportunity to speak, or someone wants an additional 3 minutes or have some additional comments to make, then you can come up for a second time to give us additional comments. So, I want to make sure that everyone has an opportunity to speak this evening.

So, let's get started here. Again, this is a public hearing for the Bonner Bridge Replacement Project. The Department of Transportation, the North Carolina Department of Transportation, is proposing to construct a bridge to replace the existing Bonner Bridge, demolish and remove the existing Bonner Bridge and improve NC 12 between

….*(someone's phone rings*) … See I told you people. I'm not going to embarrass anyone … and to improve NC 12 between the community of Rodanthe and the Oregon Inlet.

So why are we here? Again, the main reason that we are here today is to hear from you. We're going to pass along some information about what's been going on with the project for the last couple of years but we really do want to hear from you tonight. But really, why are we here? Now we want to hear from you but why are we here, why are we back out here after a couple of years for another public hearing? We're here today to talk about what's been going on the last couple of years and the changes that we've had to the projects. Since the last environmental report was done in 2008, the hearing was in 2008, there have been four key changes to the project that I want to make note of. I'll run through them real quickly here and then we will go into a little bit more detail as we go through the presentation. The four key changes to the project are first, we're not going to build a long bridge. The long bridge has been eliminated from consideration. It is too expensive to build at one time to be useful it would have to be built all at once. We can't phase it.

The second key change that we've had on the project over the last couple of years is there has been a slight change to the southern end of the Bonner Bridge itself. The recommendation that we had a couple of years ago, have a bridge, the new bridge connecting in the same point where the existing bridge is. It would require us to build a temporary bridge as part of this. What we've done is we've moved the new bridge a little further west on NC 12 to connect there so that you can use the existing bridge until a new bridge is built and then move traffic over and then demolish the old bridge.

The third change that we've made is that on all of the options that went into Rodanthe, the historic district there, the Rodanthe Historic District, several of the options went into the historic district. We redesigned the options that go into Rodanthe so that the all end before they get to the historic district. That's another, the third key change.

Now the fourth key change or most importantly is that we have a new preferred option for the project, it is the preferred alternative for the project. The key things to remember about this new preferred is that rather than selecting an alternative and making a decision, rather than making a decision on this entire project area we are going to make a decision on phase 1, phase 1 will be to build the bridge, then we will use these later phases as part of a management plan. We are going to do a monitoring plan looking at the remainder of the project area as needed, as wanted, as money becomes available; we'll work on pieces and parts of it.

So the five remaining alternatives, that we talked about in our Final Environmental Impact Statement, those last options, those five alternatives are still on the table for south of the new Bonner Bridge, the new bridge. I'll go into more detail on that in a little while.

So, another thing to make note of it, the maps that you saw when you came to the open house, the maps that we had before these here and the Environmental Assessment which this one or two documents that covers all the changes that have happened over the last

two years, they will be on display on the location that is listed in your handout as well as on our website that is listed down there, www.ncdot.org/projects/bonnerbridgerepairs . Also we have the location listed there.

So, again, the most important reason that we're here is to hear from you. So, how do you give us your comments? I mentioned one of the ways is for you to speak tonight. For those who are not comfortable speaking, I know it is kind of a lot to get up in front of a lot of folks and speak. I understand that. We have other options. You can send it in to me. My email address is down there. If you flip to the back of your handout, the comment sheet, rip off that comment sheet, fill that out and leave it up here with us today. Or, you go home, think through it, fill it out and mail that to the address when you get home. There's also a fax number there if you want to fax it. There's multiple ways for you to get information to us. I've noticed some other folks that have sent comments in other ways and manners. You don't have to fill the comments on this sheet. You can write it on whatever you want to as long as you get the comments to us is fine. And emails would be a form as well so that would be fine too. We want to make sure everyone has an opportunity to do that.

So what do we do with the input? We actually do listen to you. One thing to make note of is that all the comments weigh the same. We take them all into consideration. So if you come up here to speak, that's good, but the comments that we receive in the mail or via email; they all weighed the same. We take a look at all the comments. That take us to what is done with the input. We would like all comments in by August 9th. That is the deadline for comments for this public hearing. We do… the project team gets together afterwards and we do look at all the comments. We go through and address them. We make changes to the project that are appropriate based on what we hear from you. I know people think the Department of Transportation doesn't listen but we actually do. We look at all comments and we do address those and make changes to the project as necessary.

This project team meets at what is called a Post Hearing Meeting. If anybody is interested in how we address these comments and what we do with the comments that we've got, we do have minutes from that meeting that will be available. If you are interested in them, send me an email, let us know on the comment sheet that you would like a copy of those minutes and we would be glad to get those to you.

So what happens next? What's the next steps of the project? At the end, will have the Post Hearing Meeting, we talked about that a little bit before. One of the big things that we have to look at here, this environmental assessment covers this document that I talked to you about is it looks at all the changes that have been made over the last couple of years. What we're trying to determine right now is are any of the changes that have been made to the project significant? Are there any new or significant changes that we haven't covered in our Final Environmental Impact Statement or an earlier document? Are there any significant impacts? If there are then we will need to do a Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement. However, if there are no new significant impacts, then we will work to complete a Record of Decision and that's the final planning document, that's it, the planning documents will be finished. So that would be the next

step. So, we're either going to do an additional document if we feel like there are no new significant impacts, either way, we would do a Record of Decision after that. Then we'll contract out for the final design construction of the project. We'll do that with a single group or firm and we'll work together to do the final design for Phase I then start construction on the project. Those are the next steps. So once the final design is complete, we'll apply for the permits and then hopefully we will get the permits and then we'll begin construction. Once the final plans are complete, we talked about this monitoring program that we are going to have put in place as part of this alternative and then we'll start looking at what/s next, what we need to be focusing on. What areas do we need to work on next between Rodanthe and Oregon Inlet.

The project is funded; this is a Federal Aid project which means that 80% of the funding we'll get is Federal and 20% is State matching funds.

We talked about sort of what the next steps are. The best case scenario that we have right now is that we will award this design and it will be called a design build contract this time next year. So the best case scenario at this time next year is they will begin the design of the project and then the year after that they will begin construction. So the best case scenario is that 2 years from now we begin construction on the project.

So the purpose and need of the project; I'm going to run through this real quickly. The reason and the purpose of the project is to provide a new means of access from Bodie Island to Hatteras Island for its residents, businesses, services, and tourists prior to the end of Bonner Bridge's service life; to provide a replacement crossing that takes into account natural channel migration expected trough year 2050 and provides the flexibility to let the channel move: and to provide a replacement crossing that will not be endangered by shoreline movement through the year 2050.

So, I'll go through real quickly a little more detail on the Preferred Alternative. Sorry about that. This is the first time I've used this particular one and you always run into that sort of situation. Okay, there you go, no, that's not going to work. I'm going to back this up. I think I've figured this out. (Inaudible…) So this is our New Preferred Alternative. As mentioned before, it's NC 12 Transportation Management Plan Alternative. It involves construction of Phase I, which is the Bonner Bridge, as soon as possible. And it leaves open the remaining portion of the project area. What we have in place are five different alternatives that we'll cover, which I'll go over in just a second, five different options or alternatives that are still available for us from south of Oregon Inlet to Rodanthe. Again, I mentioned the coastal monitoring program that we're going to start looking into that. Actually, I've talked about that several times already. These are the other options that are still on the table. These are the ones that we looked at in the Final Environmental Impact Statement. There are no new ones mentioned here. These are the same options that you looked at with tweaks that I mentioned earlier. It's the Nourishment Alternative, Road North-Bridge South, the All Bridge, the Phased Approach for a Connected Bridge, and the Phased Approach Rodanthe Nourishment. So you got several options that are left for south of existing Bonner Bridge. We don't have to take any particular one of them, we can take pieces and parts of them. So we could decide that for instances that the S-curve near Rodanthe we're going to build a

replacement bridge at the Sound in that area that bypasses the entire area. Then from the north we may decide each nourishment is a better option per area further north. That may be the decision for that particular area. We can mix and match and pick different pieces depending what those are. The important thing to consider here is, to understand is, that you'll have another opportunity to give us your opinion on those decisions before we ever make decisions on the other pieces. As part of this Coastal Monitoring Program, we will have additional opportunities for you comment. The other one of the key messages that I want to give you tonight is that the Long Bridge has been dropped due to its high cost. Again, we cannot afford to build the entire long bridge at one time and that's what we need to do. We're able to phase the option that we have here to where we can fund the replacement of the Bonner Bridge and then find funding for the rest of the pieces and still have Bonner Bridge be a useful piece of the alterative where the alternate is, we'll have an option. The other reason for dropping it is the public's access to Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge would be limited to one location at the southern end.

So the other key change is the design change that as I mentioned earlier is the design change to the new Oregon Inlet Bridge, the Bonner Bridge, that we'll move the location south. The existing bridge is here in the white and this sort of orange is the new bridge. The alternative that we showed a couple of years ago, connected in sort of where the existing bridge ends and we would have had to build a new temporary bridge. This way we worked with the Fish and Wildlife Services to move the end of the proposed bridge where it connects further west. So, it's a little longer that it connects further west and allows you continuing use of existing Bonner Bridge until the new one is built and then we will move traffic over and remove the old bridge.

The fourth key point is that we changed three alternatives, the Road North/ South Alternative, the All Bridge Alternative, and the Phased Approach/ Rodanthe Bridge Alternative. We've moved where the new bridge on those alternatives would connect into NC 12 so that it does not impact the, or actually does not go inside the Rodanthe Historic District. You can kind of see that there. So real quickly, you've probably seen some of these throughout the course of the project but the current bridge or the proposed bridge characteristics we're looking at two 12-foot lanes with 8-foot shoulders and bicycle safe rails for the bicycles. We are going to maintain access to recreational facilities at both north and south ends of the bridge. This is something that is a little bit new, we are committing to provisions for fishing at the Oregon Inlet Bridge. We don't know what that's going to be at this point. We are actually looking for info on that so we are committing to putting those provisions in place but we haven't made a decision on that so certainly tonight would be a good opportunity or the 30-day comment period would be a good opportunity to comment on that. Then the other piece of this is the navigation height of 75 feet is open for a distance of 3300 feet.

Project costs. On page 16 of your handout there is a figure. I will do you the honor of not reading through all of that. I apologize because we had some printer error. It was actually supposed to be rotated so that it would be big enough for somebody like me to actually read it. It's a little small. If anybody has any issues with that, you can let me know and we can send you a bigger copy of it if you have trouble reading it. But, those

are the project costs, the project cost estimates. For the Bonner Bridge Phase I itself, we are looking at a range of $216 to $315 million. On these two tables here, we have kind of a low and high cost. What that does is that takes in account some of the items that we are not 100% sure of right now. There's a lot of variability out there. For instance, the rate of erosion for nourishment sand we can't guaranteed what that's going to be, what final dredging needs are going to be, what the construction material cost and availability… there is some variability in that … permit conditions, there's some variability in here. So what we've done is kind of got a low and a high cost and quickly it will fall somewhere in between there with some of the various options. The Preferred Alternative which, the official name is the Parallel Bridge Corridor with NC 12 Transportation Management Plan Alternative which is why I keep saying the preferred alternative, because it's a lot shorter and easier is consistent with the Dare County Land Use Plan and local zoning.

I'll talk a little about right of way. This is a legal requirement, so I'm going to run through this, but I will let you know for Bonner Bridge itself, we will not require purchase of land from any private property owners for that project. So, this, that I'm getting ready to go through will basically cover any of the new alternatives or any of the alternatives that are chosen south of existing Bonner Bridge, depending on which one we choose. So if your property happens to be in one of the other alternatives, then this will cover that. After the final design of any future phase is complete, the proposed right of way limits will be staked on the ground. If you are an affected property owner, a Right of Way agent will contact you and arrange a meeting. The agent will explain the plans and advise you as to how the project will affect you. The agent will inform you of your rights as a property owner. If a permanent right-of-way is required, professionals who are familiar with real estate will evaluate or appraise your property. The evaluations or appraisals will be reviewed for completeness and accuracy; then, the Right-of-Way Agent will make a written offer to you. The current market value of the property at its highest and best use when appraised will be offered as compensation. The Department of Transportation must: 1) treat all owners and tenants equally; 2) fully explain the owner's rights; 3) pay just compensation in exchange for property rights; and 4) furnish relocation advisory assistance. We do have Right-of-Way Agents available tonight if anyone has questions or we can get that contact information for you.

If you are a relocatee, that is, if your residence or business is to be acquired as part of the project, and that would be for part of the future phases, additional assistance in the form of advice and compensation is available. You will be provided with assistance on locations of comparable housing and/or commercial establishments, moving procedures, and moving aid. Moving expenses may be paid to you. Additional monetary compensation is available to help homeowners cope with mortgage increases, increased value of comparable homes, closing cots, etc. A similar program is available to assist business owners. The Right-of-Way Agent will explain this assistance in greater detail.

If you need additional information, my contact information is in here. Again, we talked about the project website. It has a wealth of information up there. We also have a Project Hotline with an 800 number that you can call and ask for John Page or Bobby Norburn and just mention the Bonner Bridge Replacement Project.

The next couple of pages, page 12, 13, 14, and 15, list the impacts to both the human environment which is y'all and the natural environment for both the Oregon Inlet Bridge and… the Oregon Inlet Bridge is page 12 and 13… and for the Rodanthe area which is pages 14 and 15. I won't go through all this in detail, but if you have any questions certainly see me or contact us and we'll be glad to go through any of the questions you may have. What it actually shows is a comparison of the Preferred Alternative that was in the FEIS in 2008 and the Environmental Assessment that is out here right now. So you can kind of see those and compare it to all of the changes that have been shown.

I also have a "Frequently Asked Questions" sheet which is actually four pages in here attached to this. Again, I won't go through that, I'll let you read. But that covers some of the frequently asked questions so you're welcome to look through that and let us know if you have any questions.

The next sheet, just before our Comment Sheet, is called a Title VI Public Involvement Form. If you don't mind filling that out for us before you head out today. This is voluntary. We do ask for you zip code and street name, if you don't mind giving it. But you can certainly just give us the zip code because we're trying to get some demographics information that will help us with our Title VI compliance. Again, this is completely voluntary but this would be helpful to us so I would appreciate that if you would fill that out.

Okay, so this is where it gets really interesting because I'm going mobile. I'm going to hit the highlights on our maps here. Okay. We have a couple of maps here and as I mentioned before, we have made changes to a couple of the alternatives and it comes with the maps. What I'm showing today are the three maps in which there were changes that we've seen since the completion of the Final Environmental Impact Statement. I'm going to run through those and rather than going through all the other maps, if you would like to see them, they are still posted in the hall out here for all the other pieces and parts of the alternatives and options that we have for further phases of the project. None of those maps have changed since the Final Environmental Impact Statement was completed. If you came to the earlier hearing, what you'll see on those maps is the same thing. But certainly those are available for you to look at and available online. If you have any questions, please let us know.

Real quickly, the way the maps are put together, we have several colors on here and I'm just going to run quickly through them. Buildings are brown. Existing right-of-way, which is property that DOT already owns, is dark green. Light green is proposed right-of-way; that's right-of-way that we need to acquire for the project. The light green with slashes in it are easements that we would buy both temporary and permanent. The existing roadway is in gray with slashes through it; that's roadway that we're going to remove as part of this project. Orange is roadway that we're going to resurface as part of the project. Yellow is proposed roadway, this is proposed new roadway that we have as part of the project. Red are proposed structures, essentially bridges for this project. Existing bridges that will be eliminated, or will be retained, excuse me, are candy cane striped. It's basically red and white striped. Red and black stripe are structures/the bridge that we will be removing as part of this project. Blue is lakes, rivers, streams, and

oceans. The utility easements are purple. The cemeteries are purple with slashes. Historic property boundaries are red dashed and property lines are black dashed. The proposed right-of-way line for the project is a black straight line with RW sort of in a circle. So that's what we've got on this. I'm not going to go into a whole lot of detail on these maps but this does show, this particular map shows the changes that we've made on the southern end of the proposed southern end of the new Bonner Bridge. Again, we can leave the existing Bonner Bridge in place until the new one is constructed. Traffic can stay on that one. Once the new bridge is constructed, we can move traffic on to the new one and demolish and remove the existing bridge. That's what's shown on this one.

The next map here shows both the Parallel Bridge Corridor, Road North/Bridge South and the All Bridge Alternative. Both of those two alternatives, again, these would be options for later phases of the project. We talked about before where it's going to connect. The new bridge proposed in those two alternatives is going to connect to the north of the Rodanthe Historic District with a new connection there. That's basically the change that we've made on this particular one since the Final Environmental Impact Statement was completed in 2008.

Okay, now that I've put all of y'all to sleep, we come to the most important part of why we are here tonight. That is, to hear from you. There are a couple of ground rules that we have here tonight. The ways it's going to happen tonight is that I'm going to call your name in the order we have here to speak. It looks like we've got a good number of folks. I'm going to need you to keep things rolling, so I'll call out the first name and I'll call out the second name so you're sort of on deck and you know you're next., so you'll be prepared to jump up. So the next time we'll keep things flowing as we have speakers in the order to speak tonight.

The other thing that we want to do in order to keep things and to give everyone an opportunity to be heard tonight, is we do ask everyone to speak for a maximum of 3 minutes. We have Ed Lewis who is here sort of helping us out and he'll be keeping time on it. When you have a minute left, he'll give you the "1 minute remaining" sign to let you know to kind of start wrapping things up. When your 3 minutes are up, he'll show you the "time expired" so you'll need to stop. I'm not an evil person so I'm not going to be getting my whip out but I would appreciate it for everyone to get an opportunity. Then again, once we're finished going through the list, we'll give everyone else an opportunity that didn't sign up (Inaudible…) and let anyone else come up and speak up. Once everyone has had one opportunity to speak, I'll let people come up for a second time or whatever to get additional time.

The other sort of things to remember, people have different opinions and we want to respect everyone's opinions. So, if someone comes up here and says something completely opposite of what you feel, passionately and deeply in your heart you disagree with them, please give them the courtesy that you would want them to give you. Allow them to speak. You'll have your opportunity to speak so I would ask you to please be respectful of everyone and allow them the opportunity to speak. You can berate them afterwards in the hall if you like, but for the purposes of this, please be respectful.

The other thing is, this is not a vote, this is not a popular referendum, we're not voting on anything tonight so we want to hear your comments. We'll certainly listen to your comments and we'll address them but this is not a vote.

Okay, I think that's got us covered. When you do come up, please state your name and address for the record. I did mention before that these proceedings are being recorded for the public records. Please do speak in the microphone so that everyone here can hear you as well as we do have an opportunity to record it and do a written transcript for the records so that we'll have the written comments because I really can't remember what everyone says so it's best to have it for the record.

So the first speaker we'll have tonight is Warren Judge and then the next speaker is Jim Kinghorn.

Warren Judge: Good evening. Thank you Drew. Good evening everyone. Thanks for coming out. I'm glad that you're here. I'm Warren Judge and I'm Chairman of the Dare County Board of Commissioners. I'm here tonight to speak on behalf of our Board to speak for you're the 33,000 people who live in Dare County and the over 6 million people who visit Dare County each year. Approximately 2 million of them have traveled across this wonderful island alone.

A Draft Environmental Impact Statement, a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement , a supplement to the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement, a Final Environmental Impact Statement , and then an Environmental Assessment and now after all this instruction of special interest groups want a new Environmental Impact Statement. It's time for this insanity to end. Gentlemen, there's been enough study on this project over the last 8 years that everyone in this room could have a 4 year degree from the school of their choice in Carolina.

A bridge – What does that bridge mean to us? We use it to go to work every day. Our children travel to events with their school be it an educational contest, band contest, choral contest, or a sporting event, our children use that bridge. All commerce, all services, both State and County services use that bridge. North Carolina DOT, North Carolina Emergency Management, Dare County and the people of Hatteras Village learned first hand in September of 2003 when Hurricane Isabel ripped the Inlet through the Island and left Hatteras Village isolated as and island all to itself. We learned very quickly the simplest of services became a monumental task because they lost their road and they had no bridge. The time to build the bridge is now.

In December of 2001, this project was to begin construction the following April, that was April of 2002. But guess what happened in April of 2002? The local Refuge Manager told DOT that he would not issue a permit to build a bridge. And thus, this eight-year process ensued. The problem today is the special interests groups who are nothing more than obstructionists and they call themselves environmentalists. How dare they sit in their offices in Raleigh and Wilmington, Chapel Hill and D. C., and do the things that affect the safety and welfare of the good people of Hatteras Island. These groups care nothing for the life, liberty and pursuit of happiness of these people. Why do

they discriminate against us? Why don't they take on corporate America? They want to pick on us who are spending our time every day to make a living and we don't have time to challenge them and we search hard to find the money to live daily.

To North Carolina DOT, Dare County wants to thank you for all you do for us. You keep this vital link open in all kinds of ways under all kinds of conditions. We're very thankful for that. I want y'all to look at these people in this room tonight. Look in their eyes and their faces. These are the real environmentalists. These people care about this land. They care about Hatteras Island. They care about each other. They need the bridge. Not those hired guns that are so out of control that their voices should no longer be heard. Tell these people it's time to step aside and let this bridge be built.

On Tuesday night, I told y'all some basic economic facts. I want to repeat those tonight what Hatteras Island means to Dare County and the state of North Carolina. This island generates 25% of the tax revenue stream off of the commerce of tourism in Dare County. It represents approximately 20% of the property tax revenues to the government. Dare County is a donor county to the state of North Carolina. You all know that. There's a handful of counties in this state, out of 100 counties, there's a handful that are actually donor counties. That means we send more money to Raleigh than Raleigh sends back to us. Sales tax that you collect in your stores is re-apportioned, collected by the State and re-apportioned per capita. So you see we're behind the eight-ball with 138, 000 people. We're building projects all over this state. We're helping poor counties build schools. We're providing employees, state employees services and jobs all over this state. All that we're asking for gentlemen is a bridge. Please build our bridge.

Listen tonight to these people. These people are going to talk from their heart. They're not going to pull out their text books. They're going to talk from the heart. There is something though, when you look at these people tonight, Drew and everybody, when you look at these fine folks, there's something you're not going to see. You're not going to see this big set of hands but they are invisible, wrapped around the throats of each one of the people here and they're choking the life out of them. Those hands belong to the Southern Environmental Law Center; they belong to the North Carolina International Audubon; and they belong the Defenders of Wildlife. Southern Environmental Law Center has tried to run the death mode on this island for year. They tried to stop the water system. They tried to stop recreational ball fields for the Cape Hatteras Secondary Schools. They're closing our beaches and now they don't want to have a bridge. Defenders of Wildlife have said in meetings, I've heard it, 'Don't build a bridge. The State needs to buy out everyone on Hatteras Island and turn it into one big refuge.' This is harsh language for land where this country began.

Hundreds of years ago, most of the people in this room traced their family tree back three, four, five hundred years. Ship-wrecked, people just barely made it. When their ship wrecked, they made it to the shores. They founded not only Hatteras Island but Dare County in the state of North Carolina, but the United States of America.

I ask you to make sure that Governor Perdue and Secretary Conti get the record tonight and that they get the testimony that you tonight are hearing. You are our

government, you are our people. We need you to stand up for us. You all have hundreds of meetings have caught on this fight, hundreds of meetings. We have former Commissioner John Hooper in the audience tonight who served on the Outer Banks Task Force. Former Commissioner Chairman Stan White is in the audience who served on this. I mean, this has been a life for most of us. This has been a life project for most of us. It is time for to replace the bridge.

Now you may be here, there may be someone here who will speak from one of these groups, I don't know. You're certainly going to get written comments and their going to quote chapter and verse of congressional actions. They're going to interpret rules and regulations of their way, of course they are. They're hired guns. I often wonder, it's a shame Stan, and John, and Allen, why we didn't hire Derrick Carr 30 years ago? He could be working for us instead of against us. They're hired guns so of course they're going to say what they say. Let's talk about their character. Let's talk about the character of these groups. Let's talk about Audubon Society. The Slick family gave them a track of land in Currituck County years ago for preservation and conservation to be held in perpetuity. They're selling that land, they're selling that land probably to raise the money to sue North Carolina DOT on the Bonner Bridge Project. They're selling that land. When questioned, their answer was, well there is a development to the north and there's a development to the south so this land is not all that valuable to us. Well folks the Slick family gave that land to our great developers. It wasn't that they were anti-development and my comments are not meant to be anti-development, quite the contrary. But, these people are not trustworthy. Yet, they still have a seat at the table.

So again, please, please represent the people of Hatteras Island, the people of Dare County. Please stand up for us. You've got the studies. You've got the plans. Enough is enough. Replace our bridge now. Thank you.

Moderator: Thank you Mr. Judge. The next speaker is Jim Kinghorn. Then he'll be followed by Kevin McCabe.

Jim Kinghorn: Thank you. Good evening. I'm Jim Kinghorn and I live in Avon which many of you know. I'm here representing Cape Hatteras Electric Cooperative.

I want to address my comments, obviously, to the past five issues that surrounded it. First we'll address the official duties. Electric power gets to you …

Moderator: Push it back a little bit.

Jim Kinghorn: Electric power gets to you on Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands by cables on the existing bridge and hopefully on the new bridge in the future. I do want to take this opportunity to thank the Department of Transportation for involving us early on in this project. We've been working with them to develop the lowest possible way to get those cables on the new bridge. That's a benefit to you. Currently, it's going to take been 7 and 10 million dollars for us to replace cables on the bridge. The reason for these rates is that you have heard that it is going to be a design build project. The design group

has the option of several different types of bridge structures. We given information based on both of those types of structures.

Let me give you in perspective a concern we have. Any major problem on Oregon Inlet Bridge could result in extended disruption of electric power on Hatteras Island. Not just the transportation from here back and forth, but the electric power provides services that you need. Just to make it clear, we do have access to a small power plan on the island. It was designed as a picking plant and not a fine service plant. The capacity of that, to give you an idea, is/was enough today to handle Avon Village or Rodanthe Road south, or Buxton to Frisco and on and on, but not all of those at the same time. So, it's vitally important that we get the cables in place.

Again, I do thank DOT for their cooperation in helping us. I strongly encourage that the bridge be replaced before something happens and creates multiple problems for others.

Moderator: Thank you Mr. Kinghorn. Next will be Kevin McCabe and then after him will be Anthony Fletcher.

Kevin McCabe: Basically Warren stole my speech, but that's okay.

Two quick items: One – I would personally like to thank the N.C. Department of Transportation in our times of need – the Pea Island s-curves, when we were under water and you were out there fixing the roads, I'd like to give everyone (In audible…) Two – back in the days when America had some common sense and wasn't run by environmental terrorists like the Audubon, Defenders of Wildlife, and the Southern Environmental Law Center things used to happen like this. How many people in this room would like to see that bridge built in a year or two, raise their hand? How many wouldn't? That's for the record.

Moderator: Thank you Mr. McCabe. Anthony Fletcher and then he will be followed by Allen Burris.

Anthony Fletcher: Good evening. My name is Anthony Fletcher and I live in Buxton.

I'm here speaking today on behalf of Midgett Realty (Inaudible…). Our family business begin in 1938 with the island's first and only transportation the Hatteras/ Manteo Bus Line. We served the traveling public for 35 years. The family business has grown throughout the years and we now have three generations of families working in the business. We own and operate the largest vacation rental company on the island. We have a real estate sales division, motel, construction department, two marinas and a restaurant. Securing our life line, namely a new structure sound (Inaudible…) hurts the (Inaudible …) of our businesses, our family's way of life and the 250 plus employees that live and work on Hatteras Island and within our companies. There seems to be some confusion within the ranks of the Department of Interior as to the history of transportation on Hatteras Island. I'm here to correct the record on the issue. I'm submitting on behalf

of my grandfather-in-law, Anderson Midgett, who is here tonight, and his brother Stockton Midgett. Sworn statements and a photographic history that attest to the fact that they along with their brother Harold operated the Hatteras/Manteo Bus Line. Their father franchised the business in 1938 because he saw the opportunity for a viable business with the amount of vehicular traffic that was traveling from the (Inaudible…) ferry running to Oregon Inlet. For 13 years prior to the creation of the refuge, the land at Pea Island was used for transportation both for islanders and merchants and businesses alike. I'm proud that our family provided this valuable service to our Island and has stood for 35 years. The buses traveled up and down the island from 1938 to 1965 with a rapid schedule. Continuous every month, day in and day out, season after season along with providing the public transportation to deliver US mail to each of these villages and the Coast Guard Stations and delivered the newspaper, the Daily Pilot. In spite of the Department is trying to allege in this Environmental Assessment, the public thoroughfare definitely existed from 1938 to what later became the refuge area and continued, the access continued right up until the paved road was formed. The Hatteras/Manteo Bus Line and the traveling public, openly used the road throughout the refuge without restrictions, many times even making their own roads, and improvements were made by the government to accommodate the ease and use of these non-paved roads. Not only was the Federal Government agencies on the Island aware of this public transportation corridor between the refuge, they openly used it to transport their own workers to deliver the US mail to our facilities.

The bridge replacement project is just that, it's a replacement. We're not asking for more than what we already had for 46 years a bridge that is accessed through the Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge. We clearly see that the activist's objectives of these special interests groups oppose most of this practical plan. The facts just don't support it. Contrary to the facts, shows just the opposite. The Refuge is a healthy ecosystem as well as being home to 300 identified species of birds, flowers and wildlife that have co-existed in harmony for decades. The new short bridge will now cause any deterioration of the environment. It's clear to the islanders and our visitors that these special interests groups promote their activist's positions at the expense of safety of the residents of Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands and the millions of visitors who visit the seashore while risking to the lifeline to the economy of Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands.

Moderator: Allen Burris is next followed by Robin Mann.

Allen Burris: I'm Allen Burris. I live in Hatteras Village. Thank y'all for coming tonight. We appreciate it.

We've been working on a replacement bridge for quite a while, 17 years exactly. I appreciate those at DOT who have worked that hard and that long. But, I've got to tell you that's enough. We don't need any more studies. We're the most studied bridge in the history of this county according to what (Inaudible…) tells us. You can get it and look at it if you believe the computer. The biggest thing is we looked at 16 years of impacts one way or another, stalling tactics of the opposition in other ways, and we don't need to continue that process. I'm not going to bore you with one of those long

speeches. I'm just going to say build the bridge and build it now. No more studies. Just get it done.

Moderator: Robin Mann. Thank you Mr. Burris. Next is Robin Mann, followed by Rick Albaugh.

Robin Mann: Good evening. Thank you Drew. My name is Robin Mann, as Drew stated.

I have been a resident of Dare County for over 24 years. At one time during 1989 – 1990, I actually lived in Waves, Waves was my home. Over the last 13 years, I've been a resident of Mann's Harbour. But, I am fully aware of what the access to Hatteras Island means to me as a Dare County resident, no matter where I live.

The ways of life and lives have been at risk, while the replacement of the critical paved transportation has been discussed, studied, analyzed and virtually picked apart for over 20years, as Warren stated, a very painful and fearful 20 years. The Herbert C. Bonner Bridge over Oregon Inlet has continued costs for ongoing repairs amounting at an alarming rate. The bridge over Oregon Inlet built in 1963, with a 30 year life span, has more than exceeded its time. The citizens of Dare County have been … excuse me… There has been more time and money studying this replacement bridge only to have achieved no new bridge. Please move forward at a rapid pace. We urge you to keep the replacement of Bonner Bridge your top priority. The residents of Dare County are aware of the vital part of the economic engine of the bridge is to Dare, Currituck and Hyde counties. One only has to look back to 1989 when the barge hit the bridge. Businesses in Dare County and on Hatteras Island took a definite impact. Businesses in Hatteras Island were literally closed.

A ferry system will not support life as we know it on Hatteras Island. We all agree on the importance of continuing the traffic flow of over the bridge. Something everyone may not have considered is that our economy depends on what goes under the bridge and the safe navigation of the inlet. With the shrinking Federal dredging budget, we are hopeful a new bridge will access with the cost savings on the continuing dredge of our existing channel. We appreciate that the Army Corps of Engineers has been working with DOT to ensure its design of the new span will meet the ongoing navigational needs of the commercial and recreational boating in our region.

I'm also here on behalf of the Dare County Marine Industry Association. We are fully aware of how important that channel is and how much it moves. According to the 2006 economic analysis conducted by Moffitt Nichol for Dare County on the benefits of safe navigation through Oregon Inlet and its effect on Dare County and the surrounding region, the inlet provided a total provided total annual economic benefit of $682.7 million to our county and the surrounding region. We cannot and should not risk our livelihood and the lives our loved ones any longer. Replace the bridge as soon as possible as and as fast as possible as you can. Thank you.

Moderator: Thank you Ms. Mann. Rick Albaugh, I guess I may have mispronounced it there, and Beth Midgett will follow.

Rick Albaugh: I'm Rick Albaugh from Avon. But don't hold that against me.

I want to bring up the point of this bridge … You know, I've been following and followed it real closely ten years ago. I've been banging my head and scratching my head and I can't believe it. You know government is supposed to be for the people. When I see the situation with the bridge and the canal area and the s-curves, I see all these problems with providing for the safety of the citizens of this county. That should be the number one priority. It should be burden of the total … you know it should be the safety of our citizens. I mean, that's what government is supposed to be there for. You know Warren touch on about the impact of the county, the dollar amount to the county. We've been hearing about beach nourishment for well over 10 years and how we need to spend a lot of money for it.

You know that being said, the only time I hear about the bridge is right before an election. You know when you talk about the impact and the ferry can only supply let's say 20% of the traffic for Hatteras Island if that bridge were destroyed or you weren't able to travel across it for a time period. You're talking about the impact to Dare County being 20%. That means people up in Manteo and Kill Devil Hills will be loosing their jobs and not to mention the devastation to Hatteras Island would be so tremendous. I mean, I know probably just about every party here will be impacted through mortgage payments or those business loans, just trying to operate their businesses to keep their doors open. Not to mention, how that is going to affect their houses. I just see that the politics has got to get out of it. I've seen so much politics. When you see something like this, this is basically the plan that I saw 10 years ago. I believe it was a little bit further along than it is right now and then all this was put aside. Mike Bryant told me 10 years ago that there was no way he was going to sign off on that bridge of for what that bridge was designed to be 10 years ago.

You know, I just would say that this has got to be done. We can't let anything else get in the way. This has got to be done. This has got to happen, not to mention we as citizens ought to stand up for this because it is so important. I mean there's other problems. We can't let our guard down just if we get the bridge built. We still got so much more to attend to. We've got the groin to make sure we protect, we got this area to protect. We can't move any where over on Pea Island because it's against their mission statement. So there's so much more that we go to stay working at. Not just. … Let's get the bridge done. Let's get politicians in there that aren't afraid of lawsuits from environmental wackos. Let's get it done. Let's elect people that will get this done for us. Stay on them.

Moderator: Thanks Mr. Albaugh. Next is Beth Midgett then followed by Rodney Midgett.

Beth Midgett: Good morning I have a map. My name is Beth Midgett. I live in Hatteras Village and I'm Chairman of the Citizens Action Committee to Replace Bonner Bridge Now.

We're calling for the immediate replacement of the old Bonner Bridge. We're committed to this as a matter of public safety. The bridge has served 17 years and counting past its projected service life in a very harsh environment with no replacement option yet chosen. The Bonner Repair Project currently underway, is from a repair list generated by engineers in the 2006 Special Structural Assessment done after the 2006 biannual inspection lowered its efficiency rating to 2 out of a 100. The goal of the structural assessment is chart actions that need to be taken to keep the bridge quote "open and functional for current design loads until the year 2016 with a 10 year service life".

Even if we get a Record of Decision this Fall, to my understanding we would be looking at the completed bridge, after an awarded contract, plans, bidding and construction, no earlier than the end of 2015, the beginning of 2016. Pushing the 2016 envelope is well beyond our comfort zone and that's only without any further delays. The Citizens Action Committee to Replace the Bridge Now supports NCDOT's New Preferred Alternative and Transportation Management Plan. It's a workable compromise to finding a clearer way to find immediate replacement with a parallel bridge. The best interest of the public is to move forward. No appreciable new (Inaudible…) …change that should delay the project any further into the future. There are no new significant impacts.

The course of action has been identified and researched. It's a workable compromise which means it's not 100% win for anybody. Hatteras Islanders as well may be facing the Transportation Management Plan (Inaudible…) and traditional landscaping plan for the north end of Rodanthe. Yet they will have their decaying bridge replaced. Islanders and millions of visitors to the National Seashore Recreational Area will be able to visit Pea Island on both trips on and off Hatteras Island. US Fish and Wildlife will not have the advantage of having North Carolina Highway 12 entirely off the island. They will have in later phases the opportunity for ocean tides to wash entirely over the island and help build the habitat they desire.

The dynamic nature of this project, demands a plan that is just as dynamic in the nature environment from which it is created. The preferred option takes into consideration the amicable funding yet leaves room for further room for correction and to help evaluate further alternatives for later phases of the plan.

You are here tonight to listen to the public's opinion about what should be your next step. The voices you should pay attention to are to those of the people who actually live here and visit the island we all love and cherish. We are the true stakeholders whose lives and futures depend on the Bonner Bridge. In just a few short weeks, our grassroots group of volunteers have hand collected the signatures of over 1600 people who support NCDOT's Preferred Alternative. They collected from you, the true voices of Hatteras, by speaking face to face at places like fish fry's, community events, church gatherings, grocery stores., local businesses and door-to-door. I'm

honored to present these hand signed statements in support of NCDOT's Preferred Alternative. In these written comments, let the people talk from the heart. Let them tell you why Bonner Bridge Replacement is important to each one of them. We, the people, are looking to you for immediate record of decision so construction can finally begin. Thank you.

Moderator: Thank you Ms. Midgett. Next is Rodney Midgett, followed by Tommy Fulcher.

Rodney Midgett: Thank you Drew. My name is Rodney Midgett , I'm a resident of the Colony and I'm Sheriff of Dare County.

While the economic security of Hatteras Island and Dare County are important issues to consider, public safety must be the primary concern when considering the plan to replace Bonner Bridge. As an elected public safety official, I believe this is the paramount issue. Bonner Bridge serves in the central role of providing emergency access EMS, fire service, and law enforcement agencies. It's also a vital resource for hurricanes and emergency evacuations. Motorists depend on Bonner Bridge for the safe access to and from the Hatteras Island. The commercial vehicles rely on it to deliver needed supplies.

Of course Bonner Bridge has been in service longer than the estimated life span. One consideration to extend the life would be to impose road limits or even one-way traffic. If these restrictions are needed in the future, because of the deteriorating condition of the bridge, I'm concerned that our already over-burdened Sherriff's Office will not be able to provide adequate staffing to police necessary restrictions on a 24-hour basis. Additional hurricane and emergency evacuation would be impaired.

As Dare County Sheriff, I'm deeply concerned about what would happen if there is a catastrophic failure of Bonner Bridge. The potential for loss of life is almost a certainty in the event one or more spans unexpectantly collapses. Power lines running underneath the Bonner Bridge provide the electrical service for all Hatteras Island. In the event of the bridge failure, these lines would be vulnerable. Any destruction of these services from Hatteras Island would have a direct impact on crime and public safety. Furthermore, it would impede business operations and have life threatening consequences for those with serious medical issues who are depended upon life supporting equipment.

Emergency ferry service in the aftermath of a bridge failure would not be capable of handling a large amount of essential EMS, fire service, and law enforcement traffic that will be needed. Furthermore, hurricane and other evacuations will be severely hampered. This proposes a significant threat to public safety since emergency ferry service would have to cease due to severe weather conditions, public safety would be further compromised. During such time residents and visitors would be helpless without any type of emergency transportation. In fact, that Bonner Bridge, the Sheriff's office and other public safety offices would face serious challenges maintaining adequate staff readiness on a continuous basis. Many public safety employees rely on the Bonner

Bridge to report for duty because they do not live on Hatteras Island. Without the bridge, personnel levels could become compromised and further threaten public safety.

As Dare County Sheriff, I support the new preferred alternative outlining the Environmental Assessment dated May 7, 2010. I endorse it because it provides for immediate replacement of the Bonner Bridge. This is a public safety necessity. In my professional opinion, it is imperative that the Bonner Bridge be replaced as quickly as possible and without further environmental studies or delay. Failure to replace the bridge in an expeditious manner further jeopardizes public safety. Thank you.

Moderator: Thank you sir. Next is Tommy Fulcher, followed by John Couch.

Tommy Fulcher: Good evening. My name is Tommy Fulcher and I'm First Vice-Chair of the Dare County Democratic Party and I'm representing the Party tonight. I'll say that we are in support of replacing the Bonner Bridge now. I live in Southern Shores.

We're the largest Party in Dare County with well over 10,000 registered democrats. We're organized in every precinct from Duck to Manns Harbor to Hatteras Village. We're also one of the few parties in the state of North Carolina that have a written, published, well circulated, party platform. Now a party platform, is basically a statement of beliefs or core values. It's what you stand for as a party. Our platform since it was first adopted in 2005, under the Economic Security Plan, has had a statement in there, in support of the Bonner Bridge replacement now. I want to tell you, it's a lot of hard work getting a platform approved and ratified because what you have is written statements and people from all over the county coming together to agree on a set of beliefs and it's hard to do. That's something we've done in three straight election cycles supporting the Bonner Bridge. With a party as diverse as ours, that could be a hard undertaking.

The point in my saying all this is this fact, support for the replacement of Bonner Bridge runs wide and deep in Dare County. It runs from Duck to Manns Harbor to Hatteras Village. The people of Dare County want the bridge replaced and they want it replaced now. Thank you.

Moderator: Thank you Mr. Fulcher. Next is John Couch, followed by Natalie Kavanaugh.

John Couch: Can you hear me now? My name is John Couch. I'm a resident of Buxton, North Carolina. I own the Lighthouse Service Center and Lighthouse Auto Parts up here at the Red Drum. For those of you who will leave tonight, it's a nice place to fill up with gas, as well as pushing the garage services, and (Inaudible...) and go in there and have a moon pie and RC cola.

I would like to thank Beth Midgett and the Replace the Bridge Committee. You have done a wonderful tireless job of trying to get us a safe and reliable bridge. I'd

like to give them a hand. I also would like to thank Dare County and Hyde County, and the Department of Transportation for their tireless efforts.

The Herbert Bonner Bridge stands tallest among the accesses used on the Outer Banks. While beach access, commercial fishing access or virtually very important, the cold fact remains that you have to get here safely and continually. It is time to build the bridge now. All the data is in and all of it has been reviewed. Nothing can come from the environmental group of nuts. They stand in the way of safety. They have stood up there for 16 years saying we need to settle it because we just don't know. Well they've done this, as Warren has pointed out, with virtually every public project down here. This is the same organization that stands in the way of reasonable beach access. It affects my business. I employ 10 people and I think I'm one of the smallest businesses down here. But, I work for them and they work for me. I care for them. They have families. They have to make a living. We all have to make a living. But if that bridge goes down, like it did several years ago, all business stops. Everybody suffers but it doesn't have to be that way.

These groups right here, just recently, when a poor turtle was run over down in Ocracoke. They went ahead and wrote a letter to Mike Murray and said let's lock down those beaches at night because a turtle had been run over and it was tragic and it was done by a criminal. But that is no reason to go ahead and lock down access. Herbert Bonner Bridge gets access here. It's time for Governor Perdue to say, 'Enough is enough', or somebody is going to get hurt. I pray to God that it's not one of my friends or somebody in my community.

You wanted to comment on access, fishing access, on the Oregon Inlet Bridge should be there. Well duh, yes it does. I remember when I was a young kid and I was up there and I'd fish at night and that's something that these environmentalists have taken away from everybody on this island is night fishing. It's time for these environmentalists to go and to give it a shot.

Moderator: Thank you Mr. Couch. A quick clarification, we are convening to maintain some sort of fishing access. The comments we want from you are what types of access. I just want to make sure everybody was clear.

John Couch: A nice restaurant on it.

Moderator: Natalie Kavanagh is next, followed by Don Bowers.

Natalie Kavanagh: My name is Natalie Kavanagh. I'm a resident of Frisco Village here on Hatteras Island. The 3 minutes always goes by faster than you think, I will start with this statement.

Begin building Bonner Bridge with the Preferred Alternative and implement the Transportation Plan at once. Enough studies have been done. Enough time has passed. Enough patience has been asked for. I was in high school when the replacement options began being accessed. I'm 35 now. It's time to start.

Several years ago, NCDOT held a public hearing which I attended and I spoke. I was confident that soon after we would see progress made, perhaps even construction begin. I almost forgot, I even made a joke or two in my public comments but tonight I find nothing funny to comment on. Tonight I want to press upon you that are patience is done and our aggravation is high.

Perhaps the difference that night several years ago to now is in that time I have become a mother. My son is 2 years old. If I need to take him to the doctor, to a fun class in Nags Head, or go shop for things he needs, we must drive over that bridge. That bridge is rated 4 out of 100 in safety. I feel like a terrible parent making that drive. My heart rate increases. My palms start to sweat. I feel sick on my stomach because what I am driving on is a bridge that is rated worse than the one that collapse in Minnesota a few years ago. One that their experts said was safe; one that they were doing maintenance on to buy a few more years; one whose collapse flashes in my mind the minute I drive my 2 year old baby from my house. I even have a little 'What If' plan that I run through my head when I drive with him over that bridge. What if this collapses while we're on it, if by some miracle we survive the fall? Can I get my seatbelt unbuckled and get to that back seat to him, get him unbuckled out of his car seat, get out of the vehicle and then hold on to him on one of the most treacherous inlets on the East Coast. It's not possible. We will not survive. Or even worse, if he didn't survive and I did, how could I live with that? You say this bridge is safe. I imagine you're rolling your eyes and saying, 'Well there's an over reacting and paranoid mother'. Perhaps I am, but I can't get that Minnesota bridge out of my mind. And while I do believe you when you say the bridge is safe now, what about next year? What about the time it takes to build the new bridge? Is the old one safe for 4 more years? 6? 10? If it is damaged or unsafe to drive on and actually falls into the inlet, for you guys at NCDOT, that's a very bad day at work. But for us here on Hatteras Island, it means our businesses failure and the ability to get supplies here, or worse the loss of a friend, family member or even my son's life. Are you willing to risk that because you need to begin building the new bridge now.

Moderator: Thank you Ms. Kavanagh. Don Bowers followed by Jack Painter.

Don Bowers: Hello, my name is Don Bowers and I've been a resident here for 44 years.

Tonight all I'm saying is it's taken 16 years of studies, but most of us remember it took less than 10 years to fly to the moon. So, first of all, keep the fishing on there and have a public access to and through there and it's not going to be subjected to closing at any time by any group or anything.

Second, the design and construction of the bridge, is it any different if the groin comes out or do you have to secure permits to get the groin in there to stay before you actually build it? For the past few years between here and (Inaudible…) it's been very educational and eye-opening for me. I've learned that the bridge is rated as low as a 2. The price of the bridge goes up by millions with each delay. Would you want to

build a bridge in Dare, a 3-mile bridge, that takes 16 years of environmental impacts? Would you want to build a 17-mile bridge with the blessing to so from the same group that is holding up the short bridge for study, after study, after study? The SELC, UFW, and North Carolina Audubon care about our safety but not our economy.

If you're any one of these groups, you can (Inaudible…) yourselves and call the rest science and do what you want to do. I'll turn to the gulf, you don't need environmental impacts to move thousands of turtle eggs; you don't need environmental impacts to receive money from the government to flood your land. It will call for wetland habitat and head off the birds before it gets to the oil. BP has been held accountable for their mistakes and it has cost them big. The government acknowledges with millions that it's shutting down fishing and beaches and it is an economic impact in the gulf, but not here.

So who should be accountable when the bridge falls in and we lose our tourism or somebody loses their life or all of us lose our livelihoods? I was there when the bridge sank a little bit in the early '80's and when the dredge hit it in the 90's. A 5 minute dentist visit in Nags Head would take 8 to 10 hours. The State has funded money and did their jobs, the DOT built a wonderful bridge in the '60's and it lasted over its life span and is waiting for the go ahead to build another. That leaves us with the same players that seem to compromise everything it touches with the best available science. They don't use the legal system for justice but they use it for power and money. Since they have (Inaudible) of money from (Inaudible) and other companies, maybe we should poney up and let them help pay for our economic impacts here.

For years we've been thrown under the environmental bus and it's time to stop. We've got good, hard working, tax paying people here and we say no more. Thank you for all your time and effort everybody.

Moderator: Thank you Mr. Bowers. The groin is going to stay with this particular design. Jack Painter is next.

Jack Painter: I'm Jack Painter and I live in Avon. The second smartest thing I ever did was marry a Hatteras girl and move here.

I got one on you guys and I speak from the heart because I'm a recovering bureaucrat. I said I like the public service and since I was 22 years old, I was a Federal officer, I was a teacher, I was a coach – I coached for my home state of Tennessee and here on this island. I want to talk about what is closest to my heart and that's the safety of our kids. It scares me to death every time I think about a school bus going across that bridge especially in March and February and January and one of these north easterners come and these kids are coming back from a long trip from Bear Creek, or Fairgrass or Columbia.

After liking this decision making process since I am a Federal bureaucrat, to what I learned as a Federal officer, what I learned in captain school, and that is commander of the ship, the captain of the ship, the commander, he is responsible for

everything that vessel does or fails to do. So, it's not about you guys at DOT. You're just doing your job. You need to address your remarks to the captain of the ship, 'Governor what are we going to do about this when that school bus goes down?' What are you going to do? How are you going to feel? Who do we talk to about that when somebody dies because the bridge is down and the medivac helicopter can't get to them because the winds (Inaudible…) Who do we go and see about that?

It just amazes me that the captain of our ship has allowed a bunch of environmental storm troopers to delay the progress of replacing that bridge one more second. If you're scared of a lawsuit, stand up and fight it. Do what's right. It's pretty simple, all you've got to do is do what's right. In fact, you have the Constitution of the State of North Carolina and you have the Constitution of United States of America behind you. It says right in the State Constitution's Preamble. If you don't know what the preamble is, look it up. 'The existence of our civic, civil and political, and religious liberties' … We the people of the State of North Carolina are entitled to what's in that right here. In section one it says, 'We hope to be self evidence that all persons are created equal and they are endowed by their Creator with certain alienable rights. Among these' … That's plagiarized from the Declaration by the way. 'Among these are life, liberty and the enjoyment of the fruits of their labor'. When did the fruits of our labor get protected by the Commander? 'Every citizen', in section five, 'Every citizen of this State of paramount and legions to Constitution of the Government of the United States'. That constitution says that, 'We the People of the United States of America in order to form a more perfect union, provide for the common defense and promote the general efforts of our welfare'. Who's taking care of our efforts? Who's taking care of the welfare of our children on that bridge over there?

It's amazing to me that we can figure out the simplest things that the Government of the State of North Carolina and the Department of Transportation are protected by law by the highest law of the land, the Constitution of the United States of America in doing the right thing. That's all we're asking is that you do the right thing. Everybody has been saying build it now. Build it 10 years ago. Duh.

Moderator: Next is Frank Folb, followed by Al Hodges.

Frank Folb: A lot's been said that I would have liked to have said, and I'm not going to go through all that again. As Anderson Midgett and Stockton Midgett, and I rode their bus up that beach and Pea Island. We rode through the ponds and that was probably some of the best travel on part of the island back then. It was good hard ground and you climb up to your speed better than anywhere else. To cross Oregon Inlet, we had a 7 car ferry and a 9 car ferry. We let the State take over and before you knew it they put a ramp there when you got off of it. Later on they developed the ferry like we have in Hatteras now.

The only thing that I see is these people should not be here tonight. We should all be at Oregon Inlet watching the first piling put in.

Moderator: Thank you Mr. Folb. Next is Al Hodges, followed by Christinia Hicks.

Al Hodges: Good evening, I'm Al Hodges and I'm a family physician and I live in Hatteras Village. I've been here for 18 years now.

We all know that this bridge is a lifeline that brings everything to us that we need. I want to tell you that this bridge is a lifeline to help with emergency medical services evacuating people from this island in a timely fashion. We all been through it when the bridge went out in '89 we lived through it and we knew what it was like. We have functional closures when the road is out. A helicopter can't fly all the time. If this bridge goes out, lives will be impacted dramatically and lives will be lost. I can guarantee it. They might not be lost from bridge collapses but they'll be lost in delayed transport for timely medical services at a level superior to what can be provided on this island. You need to figure that into your liabilities that are going to occur.

Moderator: Thank you Mr. Hicks. Christinia Hicks, followed by Ray Gray.

Christinia Hicks: Good evening. My name is Christinia Hicks. I'm a resident of Hatteras Village and a recent graduate of NC State College of Veterinary Medicine.

I moved back to Hatteras to pursue my dreams of living in Hatteras Village and being a veterinarian on the Outer Banks. As a veterinarian living on Hatteras Island it's very likely that I will have to commute to the beach and we knew I would have to drive the Bonner Bridge twice a day. To be honest with you, driving over a bridge that rated 4 out of 100 scares me. I may not have children yet, but like Natalie, my heart rate increases, my palm starts to sweat and I just say a prayer that I make it to the other side. I don't want to feel afraid driving to and from work. As others have stated, having a bridge with this terrifying rating is a public safety concern, not only from the standpoint of a possible accident or collapse, but also from the standpoint that this is one of Hatteras Islands quickest connections to a hospital and major medical care. If this bridge were for whatever reason to become impassible, people's lives and animals' lives could be at stake, if there were a sudden need to leave the island, to seek major medical attention, especially if the weather were to inhibit your transport.

In addition, without the bridge to provide rapid access to northern most Dare County area, those of us who live on the Island and work at the beach will most likely have to relocate. As we all know Hatteras Island depends on the tourist economy. If the Bonner Bridge suddenly becomes impassible, there's no doubt that the number of visitors would decline drastically. Countless businesses would be affected for some unknown period of time, until adequate transportation could be absorbed. With our current economic state, this is a hit that most businesses could not afford. My husband works on a boat in Hatteras' Charter Fishing Fleet. If visitors are not able to get to Hatteras easy, there is no doubt that the business will suffer and he may have to look for work elsewhere.

In conclusion, it is crucial that the Bonner Bridge be replaced without further delay. This bridge has been studied enough and it is time to stop playing Russian Roulette with people's lives and their livelihood. Thank you.

Moderator: Thank you Ms. Hicks. Ray Gray is next followed by Stocky Midgett.

Ray Gray: I think it's all been said so I'm going to be very brief. I want you to raise your hands if you do not want to be able to afford to feed your children and your grandchildren. You don't see many hands up do you?

I remember when the bridge fell. I was living here off and on before we even had a bridge and was riding the ferries every day. Sometimes you would wait in line for 8 hours. Sometimes the wait in line was longer. It was most likely due to the economy at that time. (Inaudible…)

I know you want to be able to feed your children. Let me give you a fact right here. Two years ago, the percentage of children in Currituck and Dare County who were receiving free and reduced lunch was less than 20%. This year it is 49%. Almost 50% of the kids because already special interest groups have hampered the economy of the island. There is honestly no doubt that we are obviously under siege. We are under siege by a Federal bureaucracy whether it be under siege by the State people for not doing the right thing, or we're under siege by special interest groups.

I don't know about the rest of you, but I'm mad as hell. It's time we all stood up and said no more and we're not going to take it any more. Okay, thank you.

Moderator: Thank you Mr. Gray. Stocky Midgett is next followed by Wayne Mathis.

Stocky Midgett: I'm sorry. You can tell I'm retarded - I can't even find the mic. Anyway, I have lived in Hatteras for 82 years. I've probably traveled through it, my brother and myself, as many as anybody in Hatteras, maybe a couple of times more. But anyway, after hearing what everybody has said there's not much else I can say. I stamp everything that Warren Judge said. I really admire him and I appreciate everything that he said, but I'd like to thank everybody for coming out. So what I'm going to say is let's quit having meeting, going here and there, arguing back and forth. Go ahead and build the bridge.

Moderator: Next is Wayne Mathis, followed by Bill Foster.

Wayne Mathis: Good evening. My name is Wayne Mathis and I'm a retired military officer and a professional engineer. I'm a resident of Buxton, North Carolina where I retired by choice.

I've had the privilege of wearing three separate uniforms as a military commissioned officer for over 39 years. I've spent 20 of those years in the USEPA detail

as an enforcement officer, enforcing environmental regulations. I had at that time, the privilege of becoming acquainted with environmental interveners, the equivalent of ambulance chasing lawyers. I know how they can obstruct, confiscate and delay necessary public works. You all are seeing that process here.

All reasonable persons and agencies who are familiar with the Bonner Bridge Replacement Project, are in general agreement on the following facts. First, the existing Bonner Bridge has aged well beyond its designed life. It has deteriorated significantly and despite its repair work, it currently has a safety factor or safety evaluation rating of less than 5 on a scale of 100. This indicates a significant potential for imminent or catastrophic failures.

Second, failure of Bonner Bridge would result in effectively isolating Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands and the residents and occupants of those islands declines. In those 8 villages on the islands, from essential medical emergency services, mail service, logistical and supply support, and the interruption of the reliable commercial electrical power. These conditions would create an imminent and substantial endangerment to public health, safety and welfare. That's a term to watch, but it's interesting. It would also had a significant adverse affect on the tourism based economy of these island villages and on the revenue streams from Dare and Hyde counties and for the State of North Carolina.

Third, the Bonner Bridge and Route 12 is the essential transportation link between these two islands and the mainland. Numerous alternatives to maintain that Route 12 have been intensely studied in great detail over 15 years or more for all the practical solution involving the replacement of Bonner Bridge. More funding is and has been available for this essential replacement but the construction has been needlessly delayed by the posturing and legal manipulations of these scurrilous self-serving third-party interveners.

Fourth, a committee of the concerned Federal agencies who must approve this thing have designated the Preferred Alternative Short Bridge as the least environmentally damaging practical alternative. That's another term to watch.

Fifth and finally, minor changes to the locations of the bridge landings at Hatteras Island and its schedule to maintain Route 12 have been composed and necessitated in lieu of the environmental assessment statements. None of the changes significantly affect the continued designation of the Preferred Alternative of the Short Bridge as the least environmentally damaging practical alternative.

In light and consideration of these facts, and the potential imminent threat to public health and safety proposed by the current conditions, I strongly urge that NCDOT and the other agencies and entities having decision authority take the four following actions. First, dismiss any motions or requests for further delay or redundant studies about conditions on the bridge - dismiss them summarily and with prejudice. Second, formalize and approve a record of decision supporting the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative and the current proposals for maintenance of NC Route

12 in Hatteras Island. Third, proceed with the design build process that will result in the immediate construction of the parallel bridge or short bridge as the replacement for the unreliable potentially dangerous Bonner Bridge. Finally, utilize portions of the existing Bonner Bridge and the (Inaudible) parking lots and existing roadway to facilitate recreational fishing access to Oregon Inlet.

I want to thank DOT for their time and I apologize for running a little long here. I want to thank my fellow citizens for coming out and voicing their opinions to the public. I want to thank our elected officials, particularly Warren Judge, Allen Burris from down in Hatteras. I want to mention Marc Basnight who has communicated the urgency of this thing and has hand delivered letters to the President who has been totally unresponsive to our needs down here. I think it is a travesty that the government cannot respond to urgent, pressing, safety-related needs. Thank you.

Moderator: Next is Bill Foster, followed by Stewart Couch.

Bill Foster: I'm Bill Foster. I've been a resident of Hatteras Village for 45 years. I want to thank NCDOT for bringing us one alternative not a bunch of alternatives but one, and I support that alternative.

I would like to make a couple of comments. Bonner Bridge has fishing catwalks on both ends of the bridge. We're all familiar with the one on the south end looking out but there's also one on the north end. My concern is that in the 45 years that bridge has been there, the distance that sound has marched south in 45 years compared to the proposed 50 year life span of the proposed new bridge. There's not that much room down here for 50 years of sand movement, which means it's going to have to be continually dredged. Every time they dredge it with (Inaudible…) for dredging, that sand is lost at sea. It contributes to more erosion down the beach, Pea Island and Rodanthe and eventually right on down the beach. One of the things that needs to be addressed is a permanent sand movement across that inlet. It's something that can be taken into consideration later but it is going to have to be addressed.

The other thing I'd like to address because you asked what we could do about fishing access, to me the most reasonable thing to do is to leave part of the Bonner Bridge on that south end. It's already there. If you take the traffic off of it, it's plenty wide and you can roll a shopping cart out on it, beef it up because you're going to take the other bridge out. Salvage some of the pilings out of that bridge, reset them beside every other piling that in on that section and leave as much as possible out there. I understand DOT has a problem with liability. Hopefully, Dare County can work with DOT and figure out how to overcome that problem and we would have one of the finest fishing places on the whole east coast. That really wouldn't cost anything. Right now we have a critical need for access for people to come here and fish on the Sound side. You really can't do it in the park. With access being threatened all the time at the beach, we really need that access and that would be a simple way of doing it. Thank you.

Moderator: Next is Stewart Couch, followed by Pat Weston.

Stewart Couch: My name is Stewart Couch and I'm a resident of Buxton.

I own the Red Drum (inaudible…). I might be mistaken, but I think I'm the largest employer on this island or I was before I started taking Nutrisystem (Inaudible…) asked me how many people worked for me and I said about half of them. But I think I have 235 people on our payroll and they look to me for their money.

There are two types of people who are affected here. One is locals, and that's us, the local people who live here. Then the other one is, and no one is speaking for them, is the 300 million Americans, not that I can speak for them. I would like to take 3 minutes for each of those 300 million people. But, we get about 2 million – 2 ½ - 3 million people that come down here and they live on the Island that we live time and time again for 2 weeks a year, I live it when I'm in Hatteras. I know Stocky is hurt. Stocky sold his soul to the weekend Gods 8 years ago, and my father Ray Couch, the boys, John and I sold our souls to the weekend Gods. Danny kind of got a free ride.

Those people that own this National Park, they have to get here and they want to get here. Allowing different groups to say that we're going to dictate a policy of no growth and nobody is going to come down here, that's just wrong. I beseech that North Carolina DOT and the Governor put some hair on their chest. You've got to do the right thing. These people are obstructing and your job, in my opinion, is to get someone somewhere safe from A to B and do it economically. That should be your function and incorporate any of this. I don't want to step on any toes here and do that. This is time to put your foot down and say, 'We're not going to take any more of this, we're going to build it now'. Thank you.

Moderator: Next is Pat Weston.

Pat Weston: Hi, I'm Pat Weston and I live in Avon, North Carolina.

Moderator: Hold on just a second.

Unidentified Male: Give her a stool.

Pat Weston: Sorry. My name is Pat Weston and I live in Avon, North Carolina for 17 years.

Is this a bridge too far, too far fetched for the special interest groups on their stall tactics? I think it just needs to be a bridge far enough, far enough to get us where we need to go. I don't care what they say or what anybody says, it's still all about access.

I think I know the real reasons why the special interest groups would want a bridge instead of a short bridge, is with the construction specifications if you're read those, it calls for 8-foot shoulders on each side of the lanes. A short bridge would afford a fox a better opportunity to get to Hatteras Island to eat a bird. They would probably get hit if they take the long bridge route. The short bridge is only good and fair.

All kicks aside, what if? You know as everyone has said, this bridge is our lifeline. Special interest groups don't live here. They don't live here. They don't know us. They don't know our island life, the traditional, historical, and cultural aspects of this place where we live and what we call home. They don't feel our pain, and our fight, and our apprehension to daily cross this bridge with such a compromised structural state. Each time I get to the other side, I say, "Shew", and I take my finger off the unlock button of my Expedition and off the tailgate runners and I roll up the window again. I say, what's it going to take for everybody to wake up. We say, build the darn bridge now for safety sake. Thank you.

Moderator: Thank you Ms. Weston. That's everyone that had signed up to speak tonight. So now we're going to open it up to anyone else in the audience who has not spoken to please feel free to come up, and again, please state your name and address for the record if you would. So is there anyone? Yes ma'am.

Ann Lee(?): I certainly didn't plan on talking, but one thing I haven't heard mentioned…

Moderator: Your name?

Ann Lee(?): I'm sorry, Ann Lee. Excuse me, I'm nervous. My name is Ann Lee (Inaudible) and I'm a resident of Hatteras Village.

I have a special needs child and they have finally have a (Inaudible…) in Manteo. I can't get in there now, so can you imagine, not just me, but there are other kids on the island the same way. So that's just one thing to keep in mind. Our mental health, a new company has taken over, from Albemarle and they're talking about doing good things but they are also talking about having a traveling circuit. I don't know where Mary Helen is, but she know all about this. …Mary Helen, she knows all about this. What would that do if the Route was down here and they couldn't even get down here to help people with alcohol, drug and mental health issues? I thank you.

Moderator: Anyone else who would like to speak?

Alex Hodges: I'm Alex Hodges. I'm a resident of Hatteras. I'm partially up because my daughter Ashley doesn't want to come up.

First and foremost, I'm a mother of four. Like Natalie, my heart pounds. I have tool to break the window, cut the seatbelt, all of that. How in God's name am I going to get four kids out?

Secondly, those same children ride the school buses. Yep. You know they'll take their field trips and those kind of things but during the athletic season, you know basketball, baseball and all those things, those kids are on the buses, one night, two nights a week. Ashley puts the window down, what does that say?

Secondly, I'm a family nurse practitioner; I'm a business owner. Unlike you guys who have lots of employees, it's just myself and one other person. What about those lives that are on us? If that bridge is out, those patients don't get to the hospital. Thank you.

Moderator: Thank you. Is there anyone else that would like to speak? Is there anyone else that has not spoken who would like to speak? Okay, anyone who has spoken already? Okay. A good round 2.

Robin Mann: I'm Robin Mann, again, and I'm also representing the Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce and it's 1000+ members in Currituck, Hyde and Dare counties. We dearly support the replacement of this bridge.

I spoke the other night in Manteo. There are some of us here tonight that could not make it, but I did want the citizens here to know that the Chamber does support this bridge. Thank you.

Moderator: Thank you. Is there anyone else that would like to speak or like speak again? Okay.

Beth Midgett: I took my tag off so it's just my comments. And my shoes are off so you know that I'm serious. But I just have one question here, really.

Moderator: Okay, actually state your name for the record please.

Beth Midgett: Beth Midgett, Hatteras Village. If it's a failure, just to remind you as tourists, whether that failure is going to occur at 2am on February 9th, or noon on Memorial Day? That's the only question you need to decide. Build it now.

Moderator: Anyone else who would like to speak? If there are no further comments, then thank you for coming tonight. Have a good evening. Please drive safely on the way home.

Hearing Adjourned.

Drew Joyner, Moderator
Human Environment Unit
July 8, 2010

Typed by Demorris N. Hukins