

## **P. PREFACE**



*This Preface lists the lead agencies and their contact information, provides background on the National Environmental Policy Act, explains how the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be used, and describes the organization of this Final EIS. A brief history of the project is included along with an update on activities since the Draft EIS.*

### **P.1 LEAD AGENCIES, COOPERATING AGENCIES, AND PARTICIPATING AGENCIES**

The lead agencies for this project are the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the North Carolina Turnpike Authority (NCTA). In the Draft EIS, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) also was listed as a lead agency. On July 27, 2009, Session Law 2009-343 was signed, transferring the functions and funds of the NCTA to the NCDOT, and the NCTA became a division of NCDOT.

The following individuals may be contacted for additional information concerning this Final EIS. Comments and questions may also be sent to the project's email address: [monroe@ncturnpike.org](mailto:monroe@ncturnpike.org).

#### **Federal Highway Administration**

Mr. John F. Sullivan, III, PE  
Federal Highway Administration  
310 New Bern Avenue, Suite 410  
Raleigh, NC 27601

Telephone: (919) 856-4346

#### **North Carolina Turnpike Authority (a Division of NCDOT)**

Ms. Jennifer Harris, PE  
North Carolina Turnpike Authority  
5400 Glenwood Avenue, Suite 400  
Raleigh, NC 27612

Telephone: (919) 571-3000

The US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is a cooperating agency. The following agencies are participating agencies:

- US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)
- US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources Division of Water Quality (NCDENR-DWQ)
- NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC)

- NC Department of Cultural Resources State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
- Mecklenburg-Union Metropolitan Planning Organization (MUMPO)

The cooperating and participating agencies are identified in the *Monroe Connector/Bypass Section 6002 Coordination Plan* (NCTA, October 2007), prepared in accordance with Section 6002 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). The *Section 6002 Coordination Plan*, included in Appendix A-5 of the Draft EIS, describes agency roles and public and agency participation in the planning process.

SAFETEA-LU promotes more efficient and effective Federal surface transportation programs by focusing on transportation issues of national significance, while giving State and local transportation decision makers more flexibility for solving transportation problems in their communities (FHWA Web site: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/safetealu/summary.htm>). Section 6002 of SAFETEA-LU provides provisions affecting the timely delivery of the environmental review process and the completion of environmental impact statements (FHWA Web site: [http://environment.fhwa.dot.gov/wizard/wiz\\_provisions.asp](http://environment.fhwa.dot.gov/wizard/wiz_provisions.asp)).

## P.2 HOW THIS FINAL EIS WILL BE USED

This document will be used by FHWA as the basis for the Record of Decision (ROD), which is the final document prepared under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. The Record of Decision (ROD) identifies the Selected Alternative corridor and presents the basis for the decision. It should be noted that the ROD identifies a corridor, not a specific design. The functional design for the Preferred Alternative presented in this Final EIS may change during final design activities occurring after the ROD, provided the modifications are within the Selected Alternative corridor.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, requires federal agencies to consider the potential environmental consequences of their proposals, document their analyses, and make this information available to the public for comment prior to project or program implementation (FHWA Web site: <http://environment.fhwa.dot.gov/projdev/index.asp>).

The FHWA NEPA process allows transportation officials to make project decisions that balance engineering and transportation needs with social, economic, and natural environmental factors. During the process, a wide range of partners (including the public, businesses, interest groups, and agencies at all levels of government) provides input into project and environmental decisions (FHWA Web site: <http://environment.fhwa.dot.gov/projdev/pd3tdm.asp>).

## P.3 ORGANIZATION OF THIS FINAL EIS

This Final EIS has a “condensed” format, as described in FHWA’s Technical Advisory T6640.8A, *Guidance for Preparing and Processing Environmental and Section 4(f) Documents* (FHWA Web site: <http://environment.fhwa.dot.gov/projdev/impTA6640.asp>). This approach avoids repetition of material from the Draft EIS by incorporating by reference the Draft EIS, and instead allows the focus of the Final EIS to be on important changes that have occurred since the Draft EIS, comments received on the Draft EIS and responses to those comments, and new information that has been considered.

As described in the Technical Advisory, the “crux of this approach is to briefly reference and summarize information from the draft EIS which has not changed and to focus the final EIS discussion on changes in the project, its setting, impacts, technical analysis, and mitigation that have occurred since the draft EIS was circulated.” The Draft EIS, incorporated by reference, is

available for download on the NCTA Web site ([www.ncturnpike.org/projects/monroe](http://www.ncturnpike.org/projects/monroe)) and is included on a CD with all hard copies of the Final EIS.

This Final EIS is divided into eight sections, as described briefly below:

- **Section P** is this Preface.
- **Section PC** lists the special project commitments that NCTA has agreed to implement for the Preferred Alternative.
- **Section 1** provides a summary of information presented in the *Monroe Connector/Bypass Administrative Action Draft Environmental Impact Statement* (March 2009), including the purpose and need and the alternatives considered. This section also contains minor corrections (errata) (a list of all errata is included in **Appendix A**), clarifications, and updates to information in the Draft EIS not specific to the Preferred Alternative. These include, but are not limited to, updates to the existing environment, such as an updated soil survey, and an update to background information on mobile source air toxics.
- **Section 2** describes the Preferred Alternative and the reasons it was selected. This section also describes additional design work, other studies conducted for the Preferred Alternative, and updates to impacts associated with the Preferred Alternative that have been developed since the Draft EIS was prepared.
- **Section 3** details continued coordination efforts with the public, as well as federal, state, and local agencies, since the Draft EIS was issued for public review. Substantive comments on the Draft EIS and responses to those comments are also included. All comments and responses are included in **Appendix B**.
- **Section 4** lists the principal participants in the preparation of this Final EIS.
- **Section 5** contains the distribution list for this Final EIS.
- **Section 6** includes the references and supporting documentation used in the preparation of this Final EIS. **Section 6** also includes a list of acronyms used in this Final EIS.

The Final EIS also includes appendices that are referenced throughout the document. The Final EIS, including figures and appendices, is available for download on the NCTA Web site ([www.ncturnpike.org](http://www.ncturnpike.org)). The supporting documentation listed in **Section 6** is comprised of technical memoranda and reports incorporated by reference into the Final EIS. This reference material is available for review upon request, with most documents also available on the NCTA Web site.

Note that throughout the Final EIS, references to sections, tables, figures, and appendices included in the Final EIS are in bold text, while references to these elements from the Draft EIS are not in bold text.

## P.4 HISTORY OF PROJECT

NCDOT previously studied two projects in this area—the Monroe Bypass (North Carolina State Transportation Improvement Program [STIP] Project R-2559) and the Monroe Connector (STIP Project R-3329). They are now being advanced by NCTA as a single project, which was the subject of the Draft EIS (March 2009) and now this Final EIS. Previous studies are summarized below.

### P.4.1 PREVIOUS STUDIES OF MONROE BYPASS

The Monroe Bypass project was the first of the two projects studied by NCDOT. The western terminus of this project was US 74 near Rocky River Road (Secondary Road [SR] 1514). From there, the project extended east around the north side of Monroe, and connected to US 74 between the towns of Wingate and Marshville.

NCDOT completed the original planning and environmental process for the Monroe Bypass in 1997. The process included an Environmental Assessment (EA) issued on March 14, 1996, and a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) issued on June 20, 1997. The process resulted in the selection of a Preferred Alternative. **Figure P-1** shows the previous Monroe Bypass Detailed Study Alternatives (DSAs) and the Preferred Alternative that was identified in the 1997 FONSI.

For right-of-way acquisition and construction purposes, the Monroe Bypass project was divided into three sections (**Figure P-1**):

- Section A from US 74 near Rocky River Road (SR 1514) east to US 601
- Section B from US 601 to just east of Walkup Avenue (SR 1751)
- Section C from just east of Walkup Avenue and connecting with US 74 west of Marshville

In May 1997, a Public Hearing was held to present final designs for Sections B and C. It was determined that Section A would be replaced by NCDOT's Monroe Connector project; therefore, Section A was temporarily suspended at that time while feasibility studies for the Monroe Connector were initiated by NCDOT. In 2000 and 2001, right of way was purchased for Sections B and C. However, during the environmental permitting process (prior to construction), issues arose regarding the federally-endangered Carolina heelsplitter mussel, and construction was postponed.

### P.4.2 PREVIOUS STUDIES OF MONROE CONNECTOR

NCDOT began the planning process for the Monroe Connector in 1999. As the name suggests, the Monroe Connector was intended to “connect” the Monroe Bypass (Sections B and C) from US 601 west to I-485. **Figure P-2** shows the Preliminary Study Corridors and DSAs for NCDOT's Monroe Connector project. A Draft EIS for the Monroe Connector was issued on October 17, 2003, and released for review and comment by the public and environmental resource and regulatory agencies in November 2003. However, a Public Hearing was not held following completion of the Draft EIS. The process was suspended in order to consider the project in relation to issues associated with the Monroe Bypass.

The 2003 Draft EIS for the Monroe Connector was rescinded on January 30, 2006, by notice in the Federal Register (Vol. 71, No. 19, page 4958). The notice stated: *“Based on the comments received from various Federal and state agencies and the public and a recent decision to change the eastern terminus of the project from US 601 to the proposed Monroe Bypass, the FHWA and NCDOT have agreed not to prepare a Final EIS for the proposed US 74 improvements from I-485 to US 601. FHWA, NCDOT, and the North Carolina Turnpike Authority (NCTA) plan to prepare a new Draft EIS for the proposed project. A notice of intent to prepare the EIS will be issued subsequent to this rescinding notice. The new Draft EIS will include a toll alternative among the full range of alternatives that will be analyzed as well as a change in the location of the eastern terminus.”*

### P.4.3 MONROE BYPASS AND MONROE CONNECTOR COMBINED

In February 2005, at the request of the MUMPO, NCTA adopted the Monroe Connector as a candidate toll facility. At that time, the *2005–2011 STIP* included funding for construction of Sections B and C of the Monroe Bypass and NCDOT was moving forward with the Monroe Bypass as a separate project. However, due to the age of the original EA/FONSI for the Monroe Bypass (approximately 10 years), a reevaluation of the document was required by FHWA prior to the start of any construction. All sections of the Monroe Bypass (A, B, and C) needed to be considered in the reevaluation because they provide the logical endpoints for the project, enabling it to function as a stand-alone bypass.

During the course of the reevaluation, it was discovered that the MUMPO *2030 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)* did not include Section A of the Monroe Bypass; it included the Monroe Connector instead. A project must be in the LRTP in order for it to receive FHWA approval and funding. As originally envisioned, the Monroe Connector was meant to function as a replacement for Section A of the Monroe Bypass. Without the Monroe Bypass Sections B and C, the Monroe Connector did not have a logical eastern terminus. Likewise, without Section A (or the Monroe Connector serving as a replacement for Section A), Sections B and C of the Monroe Bypass did not have a logical western terminus and could not serve as a stand-alone bypass.

On September 20, 2006, MUMPO adopted a resolution recommending that the Monroe Bypass and Monroe Connector be combined into a single environmental study under the administration of NCTA, and NCDOT's reevaluation process for the Monroe Bypass was then discontinued. On January 19, 2007, FHWA issued a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register announcing its intention to prepare this Draft EIS for the combined Monroe Connector/Bypass project (Federal Register, Vol. 72, No. 12, page 2582 to 2583).

### P.4.4 ACTIVITIES SINCE THE DRAFT EIS

The *Monroe Connector/Bypass Administrative Action Draft Environmental Impact Statement* was signed on March 31, 2009 and made available for public and agency review on April 2, 2009 on NCTA's Web site. Copies of the document were distributed to public review locations and agencies on April 17, 2009. The public comment period for the Draft EIS ended on June 15, 2009.

**Public and Agency Coordination.** Four Pre-Hearing Open Houses, two of which were followed by Combined Corridor Design Public Hearings, were held in May 2009. Comment sheets were made available at all Pre-Hearing Open Houses and Public Hearings and through the project Web site ([www.ncturnpike.org/projects/monroe](http://www.ncturnpike.org/projects/monroe)).

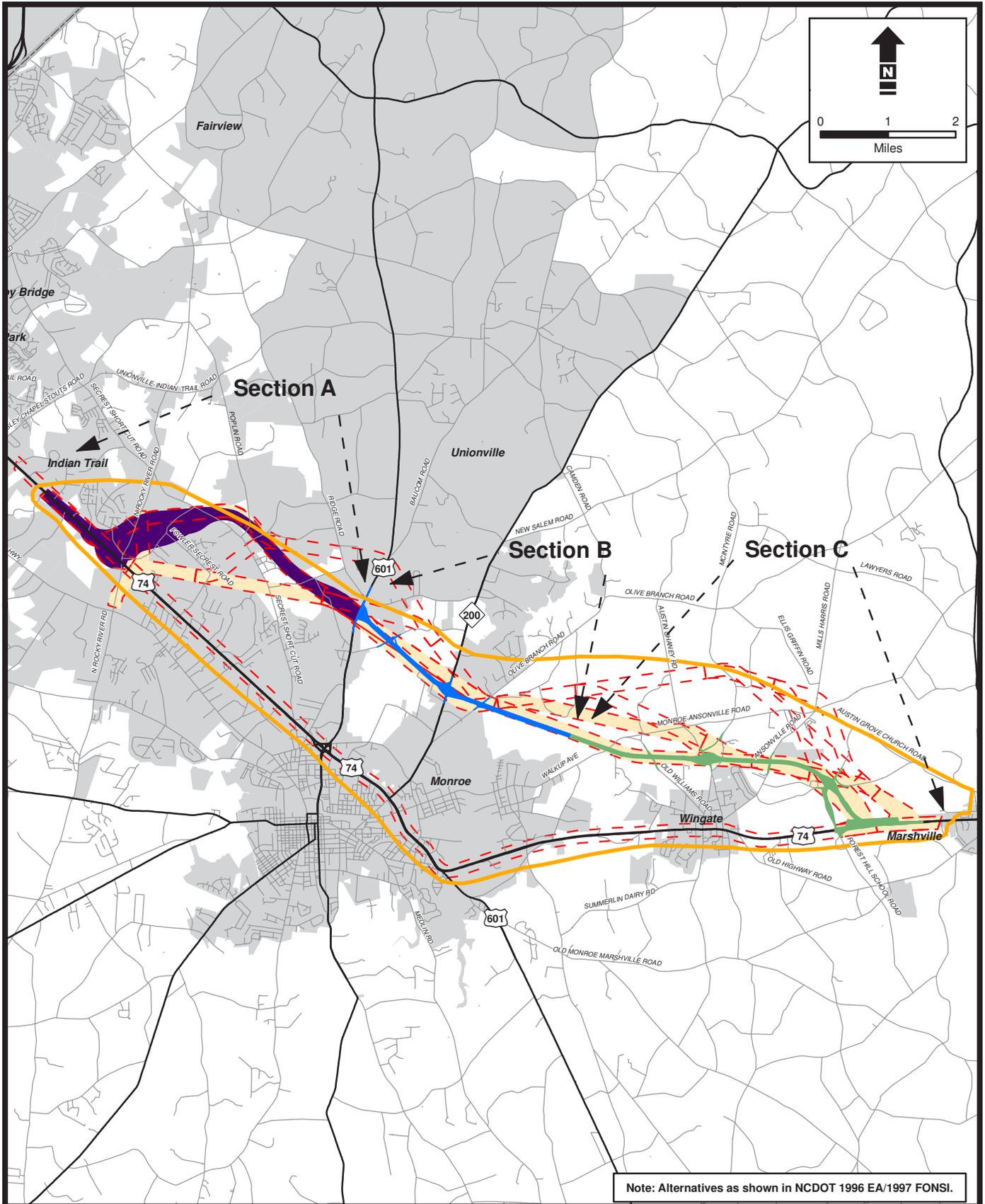
The NCTA conducted regularly scheduled agency coordination meetings throughout the project development process. These Turnpike Environmental Agency Coordination (TEAC) meetings were held to review the status of current NCTA projects, to discuss and agree upon study methodologies, and to discuss and resolve environmental concerns and adherence to permitting requirements. TEAC meetings held since the Draft EIS included discussions on the selection of the Preferred Alternative for the Monroe Connector/Bypass project.

Additional information on continued coordination efforts with the public, as well as federal, state, and local agencies, since the Draft EIS was prepared is included in **Section 3**.

**Updates and Refinements to the Preferred Alternative.** Refinements were made to the functional design of the Preferred Alternative based on input received from state and federal

agencies and the public. Refinements include changes to interchange configurations and further consideration of potential service road locations. These are described in **Section 2.3**.

Additional studies prepared for the Preferred Alternative include updated traffic forecasts (**Section 2.3.5**), an updated traffic noise study (**Section 2.5.2.1**), an assessment of critical habitat and preparation of Biological Evaluations for federally protected species (**Section 2.5.4.4**), and a quantitative indirect and cumulative effects analysis, which includes water quality analysis (**Section 2.5.5**).

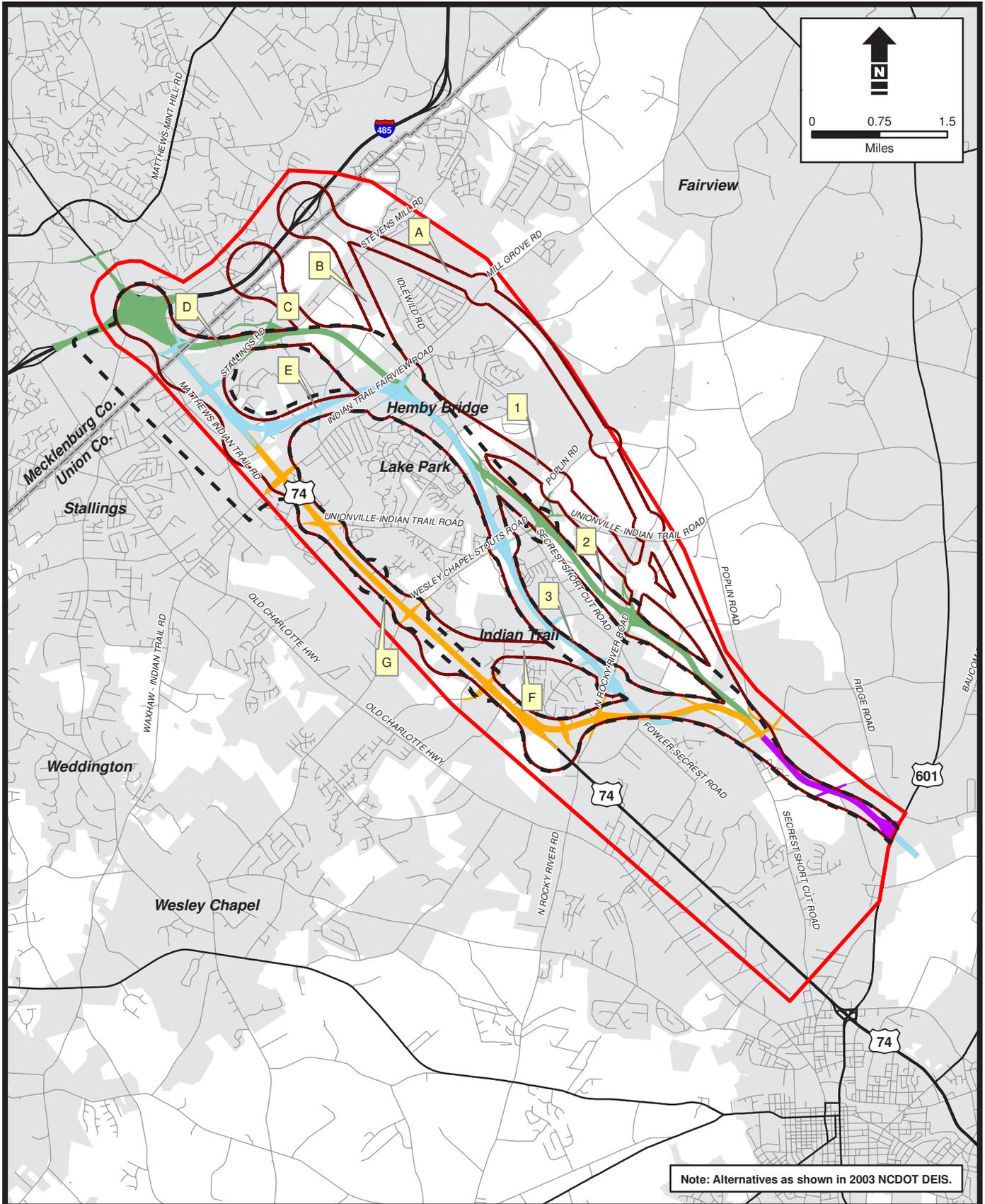


Note: Alternatives as shown in NCDOT 1996 EA/1997 FONSI.

**NORTH CAROLINA Turnpike Authority**  
**MONROE CONNECTOR / BYPASS**  
 STIP PROJECT NO. R-3329 / R-2559  
 Mecklenburg County and Union County

- Legend**
- Preferred Alternative - Project R-2559 (Section A)
  - Preferred Alternative and Final Design - Project R-2559 (Section B)
  - Preferred Alternative and Final Design - Project R-2559 (Section C)
  - Monroe Bypass Detailed Study Alternatives
  - Preliminary Study Area - Project R-2559
  - Preliminary Study Corridor Boundaries - Project R-2559

**MONROE BYPASS DETAILED STUDY ALTERNATIVES and PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE**  
**Figure P-1**



PN\_Monroe\_Conn\_DSA\_Prelim\_Corr\_Combos.mxd 11-06-08

**NORTH CAROLINA Turnpike Authority**  
**MONROE CONNECTOR / BYPASS**  
 STIP PROJECT NO. R-3329 / R-2559  
 Mecklenburg County and Union County

- Legend**
- Preliminary Designs Within the Detailed Study Corridors - Project R-3329
  - Preliminary Study Corridor Boundary - Project R-3329
  - Monroe Connector Preliminary Corridor - Project R-3329
  - Detailed Study Alternative Corridor Boundary - Project R-3329
  - Segment Identification

**MONROE CONNECTOR  
 PRELIMINARY CORRIDORS and  
 DETAILED STUDY ALTERNATIVES**

**Figure P-2**