

Community Meeting Summary Draft

From Mon. March 7--Weds. March 9th, the Outer Banks Transportation Task Force conducted a series of five community meetings that were held throughout the Outer Banks in order to obtain community input on perceived transportation problems in the area. Approximately 100 people attended the meetings which were held in Southern Shores, Buxton, Manteo, Corolla and Nags Head. The meetings had two primary objectives: 1) to identify and rank key transportation problems on the Outer Banks; and, 2) to begin developing potential solutions.

To accomplish these objectives, a three step process was used at the meetings:

1. Participants were asked to describe transportation problems at the Outer Banks. The problems were listed on flip charts at the front of the room.
2. Participants were then asked to rank the problems using a multi-voting process. (Each participant was given five “sticky dots” to use in voting for what they considered to be the most important problems. A participant could cast all five votes for one problem, one vote for each of five problems, or some combination thereof). Not all problems listed received votes.
3. Finally, in the time remaining, participants were asked to brainstorm possible solutions to the top-ranked problems.

Problems

The following table summarizes the ranking of the problems:

| | So. Shores | Buxton | Manteo | Corolla | Nags Head | Total |
|---|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------|
| Problem Category | # Votes | # Votes | # Votes | # Votes | # Votes | # Votes |
| Highway design and congestion issues | 59 | 9 | 16 | 11 | 46 | 141 |
| More bicycle and pedestrian facilities are needed | 27 | 21 | 5 | 16 | 4 | 73 |
| Inadequate traffic signage and information | 15 | 8 | 0 | 2 | 16 | 41 |
| Local vs. through trips, speeding, shortcutting, lack of alternative routes | 21 | 5 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 37 |
| Lack of public transportation alternatives | 8 | 0 | 4 | 7 | 8 | 27 |
| Need for better maintenance of transportation facilities | 7 | 10 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 27 |
| Traffic signal problems | 5 | 0 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 20 |
| Workforce transportation problems | 5 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 16 |
| Truck-related problems | 9 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 15 |
| Misc. | 5 | 3 | 10 | 12 | 7 | 37 |

It should be noted that at the Southern Shores meeting more than 50 votes were received in favor of building the Mid-Currituck bridge. However, this particular transportation issue is the subject of another, more extensive study, not this one.

The problem categories are described in more detail below:

- *Highway design and congestion issues*--traffic congestion problems (esp. on Saturday in Currituck County); congestion and confusion at the intersection of NC 12/US 158 in Southern Shores; an excessive number of curb cuts (entrances/exits to the main roads); a need for traffic “calming” in towns from Whalebone to Hatteras on NC 12; the Midway intersection on Roanoke Island; the unsafe center turn lane on US 158; the need for additional left-turn lanes and right-turn deceleration lanes; and, the creeping width of some driveways.
- *More bicycle and pedestrian facilities are needed*—additional bicycle and pedestrian facilities are desired; also, the safety and maintenance of these facilities needs to be improved.
- *Inadequate traffic signage and information*--difficulty in “way finding”, esp. for first time visitors; a need for larger, more easily readable street signs; improved and additional mile-marker signs; more advance warning signs for major points of interest; better highway illumination.
- *Local vs. through trips, speeding, shortcutting, lack of alternative routes*--conflicts between local and through traffic; speeding through villages; use of local streets as shortcuts to avoid highway congestion; lack of alternative routes to some attractions/businesses.
- *Lack of public transportation alternatives to the use of private autos*--a lack of public transportation to locations on the island and to points on the mainland.
- *Need for better maintenance of transportation facilities*—improved highway drainage to avoid standing water after storms; better clearing of highways and shared-use bicycle and pedestrian paths after normal storms (vs. major storms such as hurricanes).
- *Traffic signal problems*—e.g., poor traffic signal coordination on US 158.
- *Workforce transportation*—many employees have difficulty reaching employment locations.
- *Truck-related problems*—speeding; use of left lanes at traffic lights on US 158 (slowing down all traffic accelerating from stop lights); conflicts and delays from service vehicles using or parking on or near roads during peak traffic times.

The *Miscellaneous* category includes such reported problems as:

- Long, narrow commercial strips that force people to drive more to reach stores, etc.

- Stoplight enforcement needs to be increased.
- Poor design of beach parking creates traffic problems.
- Lack of coordination between NC DOT and the U.S. Park Service regarding the repair of storm-related breaches in the dunes.
- “No planning.”
- Road flooding/overwash, esp. at Pea Island (where the road is below sea level).
- Lack of use of water transportation as a transportation resource (e.g. water taxis).
- Lack of dollars for needed transportation improvements.
- Lack of efforts to get people out of cars, e.g. through ridesharing.
- Development patterns (and the Outer Banks geography) encourage people to bring and drive cars. Development is continuing—residential, commercial and tourist attractions.
- Insufficient coordination between storm water and transportation planning.

Potential Solutions

Potential solutions brainstormed by the meeting participants are summarized below, grouped, to the extent possible, according to the major problem categories identified above. (In brainstorming, all ideas are listed. There is no attempt to evaluate them as either good, bad or indifferent.)

Highway design and congestion issues

Redesign 12/158 intersection (in Southern Shores)

- Signals at intersection should be rethought
- Extended left-turn lights for northeast-bound Southern Shores traffic (Hatteras Island traffic passing through Kitty Hawk tends to be west-bound until noon Saturdays—10AM checkout time—and east-bound thereafter)
- Dedicated turn lane with anti-swap barrier on Saturday afternoon and evening (lane swapping in the turn lane aggravates the congestion)
- Use of current left-turn lane on NC 12S as a through lane
- Left turn on NC 12 south for beach road narrows the road to one lane effectively
- Having 2 lanes south and 2 lanes to 158 west would help flow
- Eliminate NC 12 South connection to eliminate 2nd traffic light
- Change signage that is confusing
- Turn into Crown gas station blocks traffic—prohibit southbound traffic on NC 12 from turning left into Crown and onto beach road
- DOT is studying a grade separation/flyover

158 center lane problem

- Grass median with center turn lanes at strategic locations
- Median should include storm water swales (or drains underneath?)
- Dedicated left arrows for u-turns
- Roundabouts

158 deceleration lanes for right turns

- See hospital, OBX Mall for examples

- More important for intersections without traffic lights than intersections with them
- Villa Dunes is one location that needs one

158 curb cuts—too many

- Create a service road in right-of-way parallel to 158 (as in Virginia Beach)
- Reduce number, close some cuts
- Use 3/2 split in traffic—changeable direction for center lane
- No left turns (3 rights to make a left)

Midway Intersection (Roanoke Island)

- Lower speed limit to 45 (from 55)
- Lower speeds on Virginia Dare bridge, post warning on bridge re: Midway traffic light
- Roundabout study (“serious study”); study additional “calming” methods
- Cloverleaf (grade-separated)
- “Peel off lane” separation for right turn from Manteo (Bus 64E) to Mann’s Harbor (64 W)
- Better directional, informational signs in advance of intersection, e.g. alerting motorists of Manteo activities (esp. needed for CVS-related traffic)
- Right turn traffic into Manteo does not need to stop but often does; need signs to tell motorists to “keep moving”
- Move Twiford Rd. to align with Justice Center entrance; add new light

Rental turnover days create congestion (now about 65% on Sat., 34% on Sun., 1% on Friday)

- Change turnover dates (more on Fri/Sun, less on Sat) (this may create a staffing issue--hard to get cleaners to come on Friday when they have a weekday job, or on Sunday when they have church)
- Survey businesses re vacation schedules (i.e. find out how many businesses would allow a Friday vacation start)
- Shorter vacations?

Whalebone to Hatteras area

- Plan NC 12 for passing and turning traffic; need big picture, perhaps with outside expert assistance
- Define passing areas better in towns
- Offer incentives to developers to encourage cooperation
- Center turn lanes needed in villages at specific locations (e.g. Comfort Inn and Red Drum area in Buxton); could cause problems with businesses that have limited parking along roads
- Business parking should be outside of right-of-way
- Improve design standards to encourage good road behavior
- Organize community committee to promote implementation of design—there is power in numbers
- Traffic “calming”, e.g. “bulb-outs”, in appropriate areas, or narrowing the road visually to reduce speeds

Southern Shores to Corolla area

- More left turn lanes on NC 12--add left turn lanes, particularly in S. Shores where houses front on NC 12 (there are 492 left turn opportunities on 12 to the Currituck line)
- Limit left turns to certain hours
- Duck is 3 lanes—extend? (dangerous?)
- Rotaries to reverse direction
- Signs to encourage “better behavior”

More bicycle and pedestrian facilities are needed

- Build more facilities
- Identify them—routes not marked; need signs on Wright Brothers bikeway
- Provide bike maps
- Better, more durable surface—concrete, not asphalt
- Lights needed, perhaps solar powered—safety at night
- More bike paths in Colington area would help
- Get homeowners involved (perhaps with dollars from Homeowners Assocs.?)
- Scenic Byways group should get involved
- Need special tax—TIF district (Tax Increment Financing)
- Do before/after sketches to illustrate changes that could take place
- Ask planning board (Dare County) to include bicycle facility requirements in development plan approval process
- Establish bike routes (not just paths)—community transportation system; get concepts across to community and develop community spirit
- Paint bike symbol on bike route surface
- Address as part of storm water management actions; look at storm drains when investigating bike routes/paths
- Buxton and Hatteras Village need to deal with drainage before building bike path
- Develop new path on Airport Road (Roanoke Island), but off the road (utilizing private property as much as possible)
- “White” bikes (public bikes made available to the public)
- Lack of access to beach from Roanoke Island due to unsafe crossing of Baum Bridge
- Duck—relocate bike paths to Sound?
- No path in Corolla, other locations (6-mile gap in Corolla)
- Widen at specific locations in Duck area, add road crossings
- Separate bikes from pedestrians—a painted line to separate, or develop separate paths for bikes and pedestrians as in Minneapolis
- Recognize that avid cyclists ride prefer roads to paths and won’t change
- Pedestrian overpasses on 158
- Whalebone to Hatteras: develop bicycle/hiking paths through each town, connecting secondary roads by bike paths as a continuous trail separated from NC 12

Inadequate traffic signage and information

- ¼ mile markers
- Larger signs
- Better, more visible building addresses/numbers

- Big diagram/map of 12/158 options at end of bridge (Wright Memorial)
- Need some kind of warning sign or signal on the Wright Memorial Bridge to warn motorists that there is a traffic light about 200 hundred yards ahead
- Mile markers at every intersection (e.g. 6.2, 6.3)
- Make numbers, mile markers consistent at all locations (Kitty Hawk, KDH, Nags Head have common street numbering system; S. Shores not included)
- Message board on mainland side of Wright Memorial bridge to alert tourists to turn left at NC 12
- Bigger, better at intersections
- Mile markers at 1/10 mile intervals
- Consistency between mile markers on NC 12 and US 158
- Less sign clutter
- Overhead street names across 158 intersections (on traffic light booms) (could these also contain mile marker info?)

Note: According to a meeting participant, DOT has appropriated \$ for new mile marker signs on U.S. 158 and NC 12 from Wright Memorial Bridge to Whalebone—will be larger and more uniform re locations

Local vs. through trips, speeding, shortcutting, lack of alternative routes

Shortcutting on Dogwood (in Southern Shores)

- MapQuest directions suggest Dogwood shortcut—get them to change (attempts to work with MapQuest were said to have been unsuccessful--very difficult to contact them)
- Speed bumps
- Sat. only--no left turns from main roads onto Dogwood
- If 12/158 intersections were fixed, then traffic wouldn't use back roads
- Lights to north to control flow; sensors
- Close Dogwood to through traffic
- Have a police checkpoint on Dogwood (done a few times but blocks local traffic as well as short-cutters)
- Need new bridge

Speeding—Whalebone to Hatteras area

- Enforcement inconsistent—need more presence of state troopers
- Better warnings at entrance to towns, at speed changes
- Better town entry designs/signs—“history,” “welcome”
- Traffic calming in towns
- Have each subdivision put up a sign

Airport Road, etc (on Roanoke Island)

- Develop connecting road(s)—Etheridge Rd to connect 64 and airport; go around perimeter of airport from UPS to airport, use of property road (?)
- Create alternate “back routes” for local traffic, let tourists use 64
- Separate commercial connection from 64
- Educate public re: benefits of additional connections

- Expand use of road classification system (primary, secondary, etc.)
- Lower speed limit on Airport Road to 25 MPH on the curve approaching the Aquarium; erect a warning sign “Reduce Speed Ahead”

Buxton/Frisco area

- Develop, widen and signpost the Buxton back road as a bypass route for transit, ferry and EMT traffic with appropriate interchanges on NC 12.
- By 2020, develop an *Open Ponds Parkway* from the Lighthouse to Billy Mitchell airstrip on US land as an alternative, scenic bypass for traffic.

Lack of public transportation alternatives to the use of private autos

- Corolla-style small area systems seem to work well
- Make it easy with frequent, visible service
- Wright Bros. Centennial Celebration transportation worked well—analyze how that was done
- Well-designed stops with sidewalks, good access
- Transit is needed from this area to off the island
- Trolley system for local movement (trolleys must be accessible to disabled)
- Jitneys using 8-9 passenger vans—greater frequency
- Bus/public transportation to other destinations (Eliz. City, Columbia, Norfolk)
- Trolley with tour guide (“park your car and forget it”)
- Can Gray Line, etc. be induced to serve Outer Banks?
- Park-n-ride lots
- Routes short enough to keep on schedule; operate in loops
- What about bike and kayak racks on buses?

Need for better maintenance of transportation facilities

Whalebone to Hatteras area

- Use native plants/vegetation at side of roads that won’t die
- Lobby for additional \$ for storm maintenance from non-major storms (separate from regular maintenance budget)
- Use DOT road sweepers more regularly
- Better signs re: passing on right; also paint on road surface
- Include traffic rules, etc. in rental flyers (“rules of road”)
- Keep trash cans in correct locations—if left on shoulders they get blown around (realty companies should be responsible?)

Traffic signal problems

- Traffic lights need to be linked at all locations
- Create traffic control center that could override computer-controlled signals (from Arch St? to Whalebone, signals are interconnected and programmed by a controller in Raleigh)
- Longer greens for 158 side streets, esp. Colington/Ocean Bay Blvd.
- Provide a walk cycle to allow a longer time for pedestrians to get across 158 without getting trapped midway

- Grandy has two lights that create backups—these need to be better synchronized
- Need to get delay between red and green on cross-traffic signals

Workforce transportation problems

- Employers' bus service (looked at before, from Eliz. City, but employers balked at high costs)
- Provide public transportation, more bike paths

Truck-related problems

- Restrict trucks to right lanes only; consider fines
- Crack down on speeding trucks (sand trucks paid by the load; this encourages speeding) (Sand trucks primarily an off-season problem—will cease in April, resume in November)
- Designate and enforce truck routes
- Encourage night time vs. daytime deliveries
- Provide incentives to shift delivery times (Dare County has rescheduled garbage pickup on NC 12 to start shift at 3AM)
- Study/educate vendors to shift delivery schedules
- Stagger work hours, flex schedules

Misc.

Water Transportation

- Water taxi—Manteo to Kitty Hawk, Kill Devil Hills, Duck
- Also stops at Roanoke Island attractions—Festival Park, Gardens, etc.
- General use
- Floating stores
- Provision for putting bicycles on water taxis

Lack of Rideshare/Transportation Demand Management (TDM)

- Encourage/coordinate carpools (e.g. an Internet “ride board”)
- Rideshare service
- More vans—grant program to encourage formation
- Passenger ferries (businesses that were once surveyed were willing to furnish transportation between workplace and dock)

Continued Growth/Development:

- Better planning
- Reduce # of cars brought to area
- Limit parking, enforce rules (coordinate with rental industry)—will require changes to local ordinances (rental industry in Corolla area has voluntarily published guidelines for 1 car/bedroom with a max of 5 cars/building)
- Corolla has no on-street parking in most of community—has been a problem with parking of RVs overnight

Lack of Planning/Policy Development Coordination—NCDOT and Local Governments

- Public exposure of situation—report
- Task Force to request meeting with key actors/stakeholders
- Get DOT to change mindset, structure (DOT regards itself as the expert, is reluctant to work with locals)
- Better communication with DOT—get local input, share with locals
- Meet/communicate more with Stan White (Board of Transportation member)
- Get local governments to coordinate local plans and standards—common approach. Get on mayors', managers' agendas.
- Develop local public pressure; utilize the media
- Get local/DOT consensus on thoroughfare plan--last adopted/approved in 1972 (or 1974?)
- Provide matching \$ for plans/implementation (grants, etc.) in order to lure DOT to table
- Insist on DOT transparency
- Open books on all information

Other

- Get more info on \$--what's available, how to get it, etc.
- Think about intermodal ways to move people and do it in a fun way, e.g. Okracoke Ferry is unusual and part of the attraction of going there
- Bridge on 158 over intracoastal waterway in Currituck has reflectorized markings; Baum Bridge does not. Request has been made to NCDOT but to no avail.
- Better air service/linkage to airports (charter flights to Billy Mitchell, Manteo; vans to airport); have realty companies operate shuttles to major airports
- Local airports need runway expansion; upgrade Manteo airport and/or extend Billy Mitchell runway by 1000 feet to accommodate small commercial commuter planes and "sports charters"
- Education: use local cable TV/public access TV, radio, flyers in realty company materials
- Encourage more highway "adoptions" to improve cleanup
- Speed limit on 158--DOT won't lower; get DOT to stop considering it as a throughway
- Create remote parking on west end of Roanoke Island; provide EZ Pass/Trolley option--(require visitors to buy a \$50 EZ pass (a day?), or to park there and take trolley (free for residents))
- More education/outreach to public
- Dare/Currituck Counties to study/address public transportation (Currituck County has occupancy tax surplus that might be used for this?)
- Develop a free Rideshare/Saferide program for kids and pedestrians, especially for Avon, Waves-Salvo, with cooperation from bars, restaurants and entertainment providers (kids, cyclists and pedestrians on NC 12 snarl traffic and create safety problems, especially at dusk and after restaurants and evening entertainment ends)

3/23/05