



US Army Corps
of Engineers
Wilmington District

TRIANGLE EXPRESSWAY (COMPLETE 540), SOUTHEAST EXTENSION TOLL HIGHWAY, WAKE COUNTY, NC (Regulatory)

- **Project proposal to extend I-540 as a toll highway in southern and eastern Wake County, NC (now known as Complete 540)**
 - **Corps concerns related to evaluating alternatives that would have more home/business relocations and less stream/wetland impacts have been addressed by NCDOT by adding reasonable and feasible alternatives (including the Red Alternative) to be studied in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)**
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CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS: NC-04 and NC-13

DATE: 6 February 2014

1. PURPOSE:

To provide information regarding the proposed construction of NC DOT's Triangle Expressway (I-540), Southeast Extension, toll road, (now known as Complete 540) in southern and eastern Wake County, North Carolina.

2. BACKGROUND:

a. The NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT – formerly NC Turnpike Authority) started planning studies and coordination with environmental review agencies in late 2009 on the Triangle Expressway Southeast Extension, which will extend the tolled Triangle Expressway, that was recently completed in western Wake County, approximately 28 miles through southern and eastern Wake County, to connect to existing non-tolled I-540 in Knightdale and thereby complete the I-540 Raleigh Outer Loop.

b. NCDOT is developing a draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The Southeast Extension is divided into two sets of alternatives to be studied: 1) Alternatives that start at the tolled Triangle Expressway in western Wake County and go east to I-40 ('West Alternatives'), and 2) Alternatives that connect to the West Alternatives near I-40 and continue east to connect to non-tolled I-540 in eastern Wake County ('East Alternatives'). There are three East Alternative corridors still under consideration.

c. In November 2010, NCDOT showed three basic sets of West Alternatives: 1) The Red Alternative, which goes north of Lake Benson and through incorporated Garner in the northern portion of the study area; 2) The Orange Alternative, which follows the protected corridor south of Lake Benson in the central portion of the study area; and 3) three other West Alternatives that follow the southern portion of the study area.

PROJECT INFORMATION – Triangle Expressway (Complete 540), Southeast Extension Toll Highway, Wake County, NC (Regulatory) – Continued

d. In January 2011, NCDOT proposed dropping the Red Alternative, as well as the three West Alternatives that follow the southern portion of the study area, from further consideration, based on the number of relocations and widespread opposition in the Town of Garner. The Red Alternative has substantially fewer wetland and stream impacts, but also has a substantially higher number of relocations than the other build alternatives still being considered, based on the available information at this time. The Corps immediately sent a letter advising our concern with dropping the Red Alternative at this time in the planning process. The Corps has emphasized that we do not favor any alternative over another.

e. In March 2011, the NC General Assembly passed legislation requiring NCDOT to cease considering the Red Alternative.

f. In December 2012, in response to NCDOT's proposed Project Advancement Plan, the Corps and FHWA sent NCDOT a joint letter. Both the FHWA and Corps stated that including local plan support as a primary National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) project purpose may inappropriately limit the study of a full range of Detailed Study Alternatives. The Corps also concluded that the Red Alternative appears to be a less environmentally damaging alternative, and should be included as an alternative to be studied in the DEIS. FHWA also concluded that the North Carolina legislation restricts the location of alternative corridors prior to the engineering and environmental analysis required by NEPA, so the project process cannot satisfy all Federal environmental requirements, and FHWA intends to withdraw the Notice of Intent (NOI), meaning FHWA will no longer continue to develop the environmental impact statement and federally fund the project. FHWA also stated that NCDOT may restart the project at any time by requesting a new NOI with sufficient support that all constraints have been relieved to allow compliance with NEPA.

3. **CURRENT STATUS:**

a. The Corps completed field reviews of the detailed stream and wetland delineations done by NCDOT's consultant in September 2011 for the Orange alternative and the Eastern alternatives.

b. In June 2013, the NC General Assembly repealed the legislation requiring NCDOT to cease considering the Red Alternative.

c. In a December 2013 Agency Coordination meeting, the environmental review agencies, including the Corps, concurred with NCDOT's proposal to include ten unique corridors, including the Red alternative corridor, that can be combined to form 17 unique end-to-end alternatives, to be detailed study alternatives in the Draft EIS.

d. The Corps has completed field reviews of the detailed stream and wetland delineations done by NCDOT's consultant in January 2014, for all the remaining alternatives to be studied in detail in the Draft EIS.