

## **Call to Action**

### **Leicester, Sandy Mush, and Doggett Mountain Areas Threatened By Major Road Building Project**

During the 80's and 90's, before the ills that come with sprawl development were fully understood, and driven by the support of politically connected real estate developers, a proposal was advanced within the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NC DOT) for the widening of Leicester Highway (NC 63) to four lanes from Newfound Road (the end of the current widened section) to near the Madison County line. Project proponents cited the opportunity for development and needed improvements in road safety as reasons for the project. The project has been studied by DOT and our local Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The studies resulted in the project being designated low-priority and delayed for consideration well into the future.

In the winter of 2010, a group of citizens interested in real estate development approached the MPO and insisted on the acceleration and prioritization of the four-lane project, at a cost to taxpayers of \$24 million, in the coming 5-year update to the Long Range Transportation Plan for the region. MPO staff, taking into account data related to cost, demand, safety, environmental impact, etc., reviewed the project again and in May advanced a reasonable proposal that at a cost of \$10 million would provide limited intersection improvements, occasional turn lanes, signage and signals, etc., that would fully address safety concerns. The staff study suggested that this level of improvement would be adequate for current and future needs, and the MPO's Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) endorsed that position.

In May of 2010, the MPO's policy board, the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), made up of elected officials representing the counties and municipalities of the region, reviewed the project. Given a renewed push by politically-connected folks interested in real estate development in the area, the TAC extended consideration of the project to its next meeting on June 24. The vote that the TAC takes on June 24 will weigh heavily as to the future of the project.

Those who are concerned with sprawl development and the loss of our community's natural assets and farmland –especially those in the area that would be affected by the project - must let members of the MPO TAC know of their concerns.

---

#### **Key steps you can take:**

- Write or call members of the MPO Technical Advisory Committee particularly those that represent the Buncombe/Madison area (contact info below).

- Attend the MPO TAC meeting on Thursday, June 24, 12:30 PM, at Land of Sky regional Council, 339 New Leicester Hwy, and express your views.
- Spread the work among your contacts, especially those that live in the affected area.

**Key points to mention:**

- Overbuilt infrastructure like the proposed highway extending into remote rural areas is the greatest driver of sprawl development. Buncombe County and the State of North Carolina have spent millions acquiring conservation easements in the area served by Leicester Highway. The “Linking Lands and Communities” study, currently being finalized with the support of Land-of-Sky Regional Council, illustrates how critical it is to protect the subject area. Why extend infrastructure that would result in fragmentation and environmental harm in that area?
- We should focus transportation infrastructure dollars on improving development density in places best-suited for more development, and we should protect natural areas and farmland against sprawl by limiting infrastructure there.
- The staff proposed safety-oriented improvements are more than adequate to address realistic needs for the foreseeable future.
- The suggested 5-lane highway would likely not improve safety. While the frequency of accidents might be reduced, the severity of accidents would increase due to higher speeds that would come with the 5-lane configuration.

**Twitter-length blurb:**

We don't need a 5-lane highway to beyond Leicester. Speak out for sensible transportation choices at the MPO June 24 @ 12:30 @ Land-of-SkyRC

**Sample letter for resident of Leicester area:**

Dear MPO Representative,

I am a resident of the Leicester Community (be more specific if desired) and am concerned that it appears that the old plans to widen Leicester Highway to four lanes may be once again moving forward. I don't believe that the size of our rural community or the amount of traffic on the road justifies such a large investment or the environmental damage that would come with it.

Furthermore, widening our rural byway to a suburban style expressway would harm our sense of community and promote development that is inconsistent with Buncombe County policies and common sense. Buncombe County has spent several million taxpayer dollars purchasing conservation easements in the past few years to help preserve

the rural and agricultural character of our section of the county, and building an oversized highway to promote sprawl development would be in direct contradiction to those preservation efforts.

Residents of the Leicester community want Leicester Highway to be maintained at an appropriate scale for our community and to accommodate all travelers, including bicycles and pedestrians, as safely as possible. We do not want to see a "highway to nowhere" through the middle of our little town.

Sincerely,

(best to include your address)

-----

### **Sample Letter for Others**

Dear MPO Representative,

As a Buncombe County resident, I am concerned that the old plans to widen Leicester Highway to four lanes may be once again moving forward. I don't believe that the size of that rural community or the amount of traffic on the road justifies such a large investment or the environmental damage that would result.

Buncombe County has spent several million taxpayer dollars purchasing conservation easements in the past few years to help preserve the rural and agricultural character of portions of the county. The area served by Leicester Highway has deservedly been the focus of much of that funding given its outstanding natural attributes and predominance of farmland. Building an oversized highway whose main impact would be sprawl development would be in direct contradiction to those preservation efforts. We need to judiciously focus infrastructure funding in our region so that areas appropriate for intense development are supported and those areas not suitable for such development are protected.

Sincerely,

(best to include your address)

-----

### **Members of the MPO Technical Advisory Committee**

**Key Members to contact:**

**Buncombe County**

Holly Jones  
Commissioner  
[Holly.jones@buncombecounty.org](mailto:Holly.jones@buncombecounty.org)  
(828) 250-4001

Bill Stanley  
Commissioner  
[Bill.stanley@buncombecounty.org](mailto:Bill.stanley@buncombecounty.org)  
(828) 250-4001

**Asheville**

Jan Davis (Chair of MPO TAC)  
Councilmember- Chair  
[jandavis@main.nc.us](mailto:jandavis@main.nc.us)  
(828) 253-5634

Brownie Newman  
Councilmember  
[Newmanasheville@gmail.com](mailto:Newmanasheville@gmail.com)  
(828) 232-0544

**Weaverville**

Douglas Dearth  
[ddearth@weavervillenc.org](mailto:ddearth@weavervillenc.org)  
(828) 645-0823

**Woodfin**

Jerry VeHaun  
Mayor  
[Jerry.vehaun@buncombecounty.org](mailto:Jerry.vehaun@buncombecounty.org)  
(828) 255-5636

**Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)**

Loretta Barren  
Community Planner  
[Loretta.barren@fhwa.dot.gov](mailto:Loretta.barren@fhwa.dot.gov)  
(919) 747-7025

**NC Board of Transportation**

Wanda Proffitt  
NCBOT Division 13  
[wproffitt@ncdot.gov](mailto:wproffitt@ncdot.gov)  
(828) 682-6166

Conrad Burrell  
NCBOT Member Division 14  
[Cburrell151@verizon.net](mailto:Cburrell151@verizon.net)  
(828) 586-

**Other Members to contact as well:****Biltmore Forest**

Charles Grimes  
Commissioner  
[JOGRIMES@charter.net](mailto:JOGRIMES@charter.net)  
(828) 274-4839

**Black Mountain**

Carl Bartlett  
Mayor

[KCBART@aol.com](mailto:KCBART@aol.com)  
(828) 669-9104

**Canton**  
Eddie Underwood  
Alderman  
[jailcats@aol.com](mailto:jailcats@aol.com)  
(828) 648-2363

**Clyde**  
James Mashburn  
Alderman  
[jhmashburn@att.net](mailto:jhmashburn@att.net)  
(828) 627-8387

**Flat Rock**  
Don Farr  
Councilmember  
[donfarr@gmail.com](mailto:donfarr@gmail.com)  
(828) 697-0788

**Fletcher**  
Bob Davy  
Councilmember  
[Bobdavy78@mchsi.com](mailto:Bobdavy78@mchsi.com)  
(828) 687-0313

**Haywood County**  
Charles "Skeeter" Curtis  
Commissioner  
[curtisdawgs@bellsouth.net](mailto:curtisdawgs@bellsouth.net)  
(828) 648-2559

**Henderson County**  
Chuck McGrady- Chair  
Commissioner  
[cmcgrady@hendersoncountync.org](mailto:cmcgrady@hendersoncountync.org)  
(828) 697-4808

William Moyer  
Commissioner  
[wmoyer@hendersoncountync.org](mailto:wmoyer@hendersoncountync.org)  
(828) 697-4808

**Hendersonville**  
Steve Caraker  
Councilman  
[tdrake@cityofhendersonville.org](mailto:tdrake@cityofhendersonville.org)  
(828) 696-3615

**Laurel Park**  
Robert Vickery  
Councilmember  
[khensley@laurelpark.org](mailto:khensley@laurelpark.org)  
(828) 693-4840

**Maggie Valley**  
Collin Edwards  
Alderman  
[rockbuster@charter.net](mailto:rockbuster@charter.net)  
828-734-6177

**Mills River**

Roger Snyder

Mayor

[rsnyder@ioa.com](mailto:rsnyder@ioa.com)

(828) 890-2901

**Montreat**

Letta Jean Taylor

Mayor

[segobe@aol.com](mailto:segobe@aol.com)

(828) 669-2682

**Waynesville**

LeRoy Roberson

Alderman

[leroyforwaynesville@gmail.com](mailto:leroyforwaynesville@gmail.com)

(828) 456-8361