

Eastern Lincoln Mobility Study Kickoff



Wayne Howard
News Journalist

The kickoff meeting for the Eastern Lincoln County Mobility Study was held Thursday evening (May 30th) at the East Lincoln Community Center. It was also a special meeting for Lincoln County Commissioners.

The study, talked about for months and authorized by Commissioners May 6th, was actually already underway. Traffic counts were collected the week of May 13th to ensure capturing school traffic, and Kimley-Horn, the planning and design engineering consultants with offices coast to coast, whose Charlotte office is handling this study, had already begun collecting crash data from 29 intersections that are part of the study.

Jonathan Whitehurst, Project Manager and a Denver resident, gave those attending an overview of the study.

Jonathan Guy, the engineer on the project, handed out a questionnaire, asking the audience to list three objectives for the study and asking them to rank the importance of considerations including safety, school peak periods, morning & afternoon peak periods, biking and walking conditions, economic development, use of the NC16-bypass, connectivity issues, ease of implementation, impact on private property and cost. The questionnaire also asked what stakeholders need to be involved and how to get the public more involved.

Commission Chairman Carrol Mitchem lamented that most of the audience of about 50 people were senior citizens. "We need to get the younger people involved," he said. Several of the commissioners urged those present to talk with their neighbors asking them to attend the second community meeting set for July 23rd, also 7 - 8:30 PM at the East Lincoln Community Center.

Several of those attending questioned the need for the study and what-if any-impact it might have. "I've been to several of these," one man said, "and nothing gets done." Another suggested that the study was focusing too much on transportation needs in the future: "We need things done within five years, not fifteen or twenty."

Former Commissioner Martin Oakes offered that when he had represented the County on the Gaston-Cleveland-Lincoln MPO (Metropolitan Planning Organization), which makes recommendations on highway projects to the Dept. of Transportation, the city of Belmont had submitted a plan and got fairly quick action. "They had a plan," he said he was told when he questioned how they got it done so quickly.

County Planning Director Andrew Bryant said the County is both too late and 'right on time.' "The DOT already has its tentative plan for the next couple of years," Bryant said. They'll finalize that plan later this Summer. We're too late for this study to have any impact on those plans--but we're right on time for the next STIP (State Transportation Improvement Program)



Jonathan Whitehurst, Project Manager



Jonathan Guy



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(State Transportation Improvement Program).

While traffic problems have been often discussed in various meetings, this is the first study of its kind undertaken by Lincoln County.

Whitehurst said it's important that those involved in the study will include the Dept. of Transportation and the GCLMPO. "We also need the public to be involved. This is your opportunity to have input on the plan that is developed."