



Date: March 8, 2011

To: Thomas J. Bonfield, City Manager
Through: Theodore L. Voorhees, Deputy City Manager
Mark D. Ahrendsen, Transportation Director
From: H. Wesley Parham, P.E., Assistant Transportation Director

Subject: Agenda Item – NCDOT Traffic Separation Study Agreement (P-3309 D)

Executive Summary

The N. C. Department of Transportation (NCDOT) has plans to eliminate redundant and/or unsafe highway/railroad at-grade crossings statewide in order to promote safer and more efficient traffic operations. As part of this statewide effort, NCDOT proposes to undertake a comprehensive Traffic Separation Study (TSS) and highway/railroad at-grade crossing analysis of the public crossings on the tracks of CSX Transportation and Norfolk Southern Railway along the North Carolina Railroad Company (NCR) corridor between E. Cornwallis Road and Neal Road in Durham. Due to the complexity of the corridor, NCDOT proposes a comprehensive study approach in partnership with the City of Durham, Norfolk Southern Railway (NS), and Triangle Transit (TTA). Extensive stakeholder and public involvement will be an essential component of the study process. NCDOT seeks the active participation of the study partners, including good faith efforts by all parties to implement the study’s mutually agreed upon recommendations. The estimated study cost is \$200,000, with NCDOT covering \$140,000 (70%) and the City of Durham, NS and TTA each covering \$20,000 (10% each).

Recommendation

The City Department of Transportation recommends that the City Council authorize the City Manager to execute a Traffic Separation Study Agreement (TIP#: P-3309 D) with the N. C. Department of Transportation, Norfolk Southern Railway Company, and Research Triangle Regional Public Transportation Authority at a cost of \$20,000.00; and to further authorize the City Manager to execute supplemental agreements, up to an additional City cost of \$10,000.00 (\$30,000.00 contract total), should the parties mutually agree additional study work would benefit the study process and recommendations.

Background

NCDOT has undertaken Traffic Separation Studies throughout the state in an effort to improve traffic operations and safety of at-grade railroad crossings. Each study considers the unique needs and circumstances of each rail crossing and depends upon the active engagement of local governments, rail operators, and the public. The study process is essential for identifying, recommending and prioritizing rail crossing improvements. Such studies are important steps in qualifying for safety improvement funds, including NCDOT’s Crossing Hazard Elimination Program. In August 2001, the City entered a two-party study

agreement with NCDOT; however, NCDOT did not proceed with the project study due to other priorities. With renewed focus and planning for High Speed Rail and Regional Rail Service in the NCR corridor, including on-going rail crossing safety concerns, NCDOT proposes a more comprehensive TSS with the addition of NS and TTA as project partners.

Issues and Analysis

The TSS will include a comprehensive evaluation of existing safety conditions at public highway/rail grade crossings between and including the Neal Road (SR 1314) and E. Cornwallis Road (SR 1121) crossings, along the NCR corridor operated by NS, and including the E. Pettigrew Street crossing, along that section of the corridor owned and operated by CSX Transportation. The study will determine the need for improvements to and/or elimination of public grade crossings. Due to rapid development and increasing pedestrian activity in downtown, the study scope will also include an evaluation of pedestrian safety and access needs along the corridor in the area between Chapel Hill Street and Roxboro Street.

The study process includes establishing a public involvement process and engaging stakeholders and community/focus groups through Corridor Visioning Public Workshops. Individuals, PACs, neighborhood associations and others registered on the City/County Planning Department's Organization Notification Directory and located within one mile of the corridor will be included in all project notices. Stakeholder meetings will be held after public workshops to discuss comments and evaluate initial recommendations. This will include a specific evaluation of pedestrian safety and access improvements between Roxboro Street and Chapel Hill Street.

The project study will document an engineering evaluation of the public highway/rail at-grade crossings and include recommended immediate, near term, and long term safety improvements including, but not limited to, crossing closures, grade separations, and roadway and traffic control devices. A compilation of comments received during the initial public meetings along with the study recommendations will be presented during an additional round of public meetings. The engineering evaluation and study will be conducted by Kimley-Horn and Associates under a separate agreement with NCDOT. The study is expected to take 18 months.

Alternatives

- Authorize the City Manager to execute a Traffic Separation Study Agreement (TIP#: P-3309 D) with the N. C. Department of Transportation, Norfolk Southern Railway Company, and Research Triangle Regional Public Transportation Authority at a cost of \$20,000; and to further authorize the City Manager to execute supplemental agreements, up to an additional City cost of \$10,000 (\$30,000 contract total), should the parties mutually agree additional study work would benefit the study process and recommendations.
- Do not authorize the execution of a TSS Agreement. The remaining study partners could proceed without the City's participation, but the interests of the City and local stakeholders will be less certain in the study's recommended implementation measures.

Financial Impact

The TSS cost to the City is \$20,000. Available funds have been identified in a non-departmental account.

SDBE Summary

Due to the nature of this item, an SBDE summary was not prepared.

Attachment