PRELIMINARY PROJECT NEED AND PURPOSE

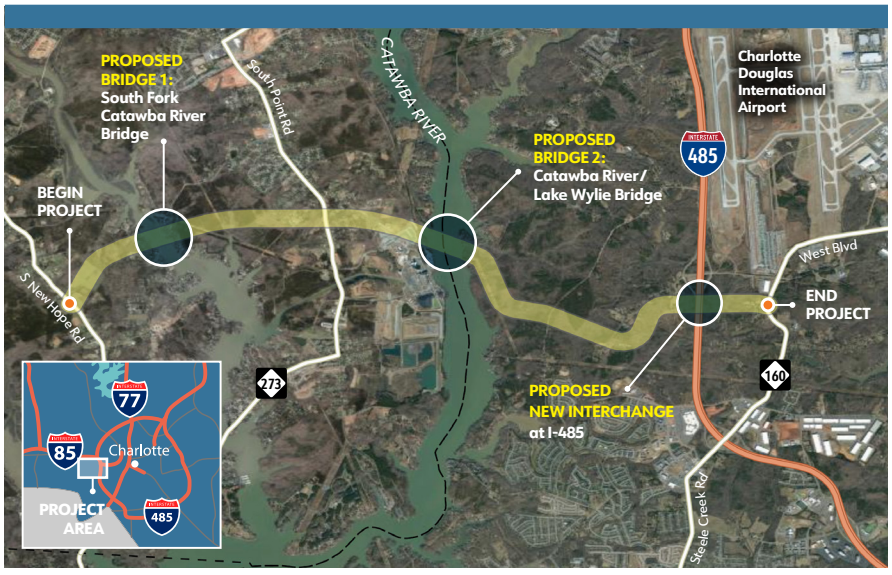
The Catawba River creates a barrier between western Mecklenburg County (NC), southeastern Gaston County (NC) and northeastern York County (SC). Considering the existing transportation deficiencies and the amount of future development planned in the region, there is a significant need to address congestion, increase mobility options, improve the vitality and resiliency of the regional transportation network, and enhance quality of life standards (e.g., reduced travel time).

The purpose of Catawba Crossings is to improve mobility within and between Gaston, Mecklenburg, and York counties by providing an additional connection over the Catawba River in an environmentally sensitive manner that establishes direct access to other regional transportation facilities, including the Charlotte Douglas (CLT) International Airport.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Catawba Crossings Project proposes a new alignment roadway between NC 279 (S. New Hope Road) in southeastern Gaston County to NC 160 (Steele Creek Road) in western Mecklenburg County. The proposed roadway would include new bridges over the South Fork Catawba River and the Catawba River. The proposed project would also include an interchange with I-485 south of the existing West Boulevard interchange in Mecklenburg County.

Project sponsors are conducting a study to evaluate the feasibility of the proposed roadway. This feasibility study is an early planning tool to generate cost estimates, identify constraints and opportunities, and evaluate permitting needs. It is not an exhaustive planning and design study. The Gaston-Cleveland-Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization (GCLMPO) is the lead planning agency producing this study. Based on the traffic analysis conducted to support this feasibility study, Catawba Crossings is recommended as a four-lane boulevard except for the Catawba River bridge, which is recommended to be six lanes to accommodate future projected traffic volumes. A boulevard typically includes a median, trees and vegetation along the roadway as well as bicycle and pedestrian accommodations (see Typical Sections on the following pages).



PUBLIC INPUT

The GCLMPO collected over 500 written comments and received nearly 1,200 responses through an online survey as part of the Virtual Public Comment Opportunity between January 6 and February 4, 2021.

The survey gathered feedback about current conditions, traveler behavior and experiences, transportation needs, and potential amenities to be considered as part of the project. Based on the survey, the top three transportation priorities are:

1. Reduced traffic congestion
2. Improved connectivity
3. More reliable travel times

Each comment was reviewed and six major themes were identified:

- Project Need
- Transportation Modes (i.e. commuter, bicycle and pedestrian, transit)
- Potential Impacts
- Design Considerations
- Improve Existing
- Schedule

Review the "Virtual Public Comment Opportunity Summary and Comment Responses" **here**.

Catawba Crossings Corridor Alignment

The Catawba Crossings alignment is the product of decades of local, regional, and state transportation planning efforts. The roughly 6.5-mile Project Study Corridor is based on the former Gaston East-West Connector Preferred Alternative (i.e., Detailed Study Alternative 9) and other more recent NCDOT feasibility studies. The Catawba Crossings Feasibility Study will not evaluate a new alignment or improve existing alternatives. However, it is likely that a comprehensive alternatives analysis will be required later as part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process as the Catawba Crossings Project progresses.

Review the project "Alternative Analysis Memo" **here**.

CONTACT US!

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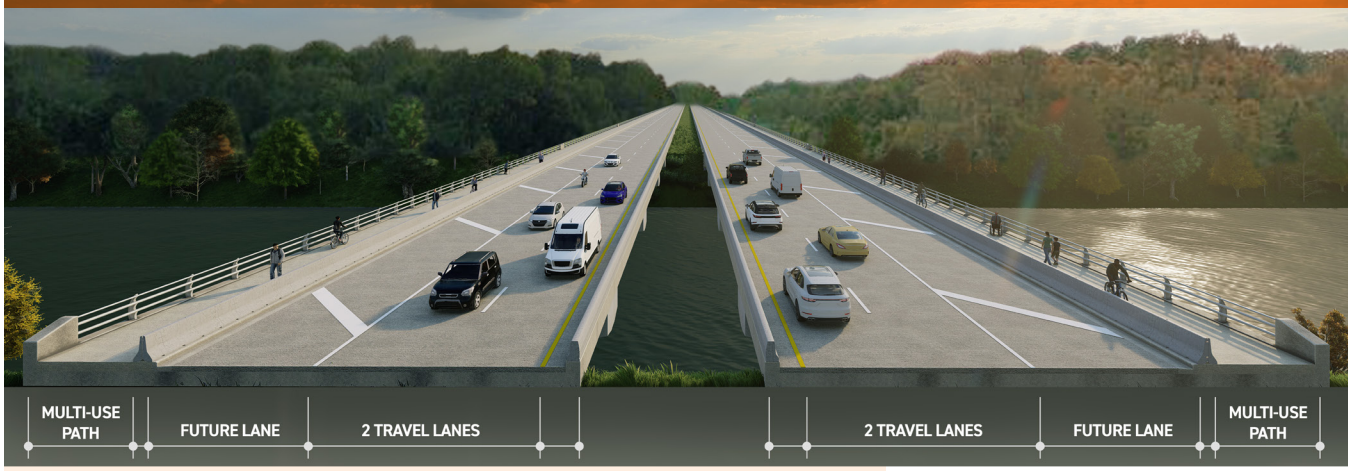
PROPOSED FUTURE SIX-LANE CATAWBA RIVER BRIDGE TYPICAL SECTION



TRAFFIC ANALYSIS

Traffic capacity analyses were performed to compare future year (2045) traffic scenarios, one in which the Catawba Crossings Project is built (Build Scenario) and one in which it is not built (No-Build Scenario). Based on these analyses, by providing an additional Catawba River crossing between NC 279 in Gaston County and NC 160 in Mecklenburg County, the project is expected to:

- **Reduce travel time** for commuters traveling between southern Gaston County, northern York County, and I-485 in Mecklenburg County during AM and PM peak hours. Based on the traffic analyses for this project, commuters traveling between NC 279 and I-485 could save up to 24 minutes with the project in place in the future year (2045).
- **Improve resiliency of the US 29/74 corridor** within the study area by decreasing traffic volumes and improving traffic operations along the corridor.
- **Reduce congestion** within the study area by reducing delay at study area intersections along US 29/74, NC 160, N Main Street, and NC 273 north of the Catawba Crossings corridor.
- **Increase mobility options** by providing an alternate route between southern Gaston, northern York County and Mecklenburg County.
- **Reduce the frequency of crashes** by reducing traffic volumes along portions of US 29/74, I-85, and NC 273 north of the Catawba Crossings corridor.

Review the project "Transportation Technical Memo" **here**.

Benefit-Cost Analysis

A Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA) was prepared for the Catawba Crossings Project that is consistent with the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) guidelines for applications to federal funding programs. The BCA generated a benefit-cost ratio (BCR) that can be used to measure the expected impact that could result from the infrastructure investment. The BCR is calculated by dividing the total project benefits by the costs. Another measure used to understand overall return on investment is the net present value (NPV), which is calculated by subtracting the present value of all costs from the present value of all benefits. For this feasibility study, the costs and benefits are discounted to compare with a common base-year measurement. In general, a BCR greater than 1.0 and an NPV greater than $0 means the project benefits outweigh the project costs. The larger the BCR and NPV, the greater the expected benefits of a project. As demonstrated by the BCA (see summary table on next page), **the project will contribute substantial benefits to the region**.

Review the detailed BCA **here**.

BENEFIT-COST RATIO AND NET PRESENT VALUE SUMMARY		
	Undiscounted	7% Discount
Benefits	$1,340,371,857	$412,952,408
Costs	-$296,712,837	-$172,757.901
BCR	4.52	2.39
Net Present Value	$1,043,659,020	$240,194,508

Environmental Screening

Potential environmental impacts were reviewed for the project corridor and conceptual design footprint to determine probable permitting requirements and evaluate whether there are any known environmental issues requiring special attention. This screening relied on desktop analysis and input from the public, stakeholders, and resource and regulatory agencies. Major environmental considerations include stream and wetland impacts, impacts to air and water quality, flood hazard areas, and potential relocations. As project design progresses, impacts will be further analyzed through the NEPA process in consultation with appropriate resource and regulatory agencies.

Review the project "Environmental Screening" in more detail **here**.

We Want Your Feedback!

This study is carefully considering transportation needs in the context of local and regional goals and priorities. Your insights into the short- and long-term transportation needs of the local community are invaluable, and we welcome your thoughts. The project team will carefully consider all comments received and evaluate whether they can be incorporated into the conceptual design of the project.

STAY CONNECTED

The project team will make announcements about the project and public engagement events via social media and the project website:
www.catawbacrossings.com

Join the Catawba Crossings email list to receive updates from the project team in your inbox:
info@catawbacrossings.com

NEXT STEPS

The Catawba Crossings Feasibility Study is expected to be complete in the summer of 2022. Following approval, the GCLMPO will decide whether Catawba Crossings would be submitted to NCDOT through the Prioritization process–the process by which NCDOT evaluates proposed projects across the state to determine which to include in the 10-year State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The next opportunity for Prioritization is expected to begin in 2023.

If Catawba Crossings scores well in the prioritization process, it could be programmed in the 2026-2035 STIP. The project would be fully evaluated in accordance with NEPA and all applicable regulations during preliminary engineering. Generally, new projects added to the STIP are programmed toward the end of the planning horizon–in this case closer to 2035. In such a scenario, if construction funding were authorized in fiscal year 2035, an approximate three-year construction duration would result in the project opening to traffic in 2038. (*This is a hypothetical schedule to illustrate one potential delivery scenario.*)

The GCLMPO is evaluating other potential funding options as well, including federal transportation grants, local legislative funding options, and non-traditional funding options.

Learn more about the project "Funding Evaluation" **here**.

CATAWBA CROSSINGS PROJECT LIFE CYCLE