



News Release

For Immediate Release

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Sixteen New Projects to Enhance Transportation in Division 13

NCDOT highway projects added to STIP

ASHEVILLE – The N.C. Department of Transportation today unveiled its [draft 10-Year transportation plan](#) for 2020-2029 at the monthly Board of Transportation meeting in Raleigh.

The plan, called the Draft 2020-2029 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), includes 16 new highway projects in Division 13. The division consists of Buncombe, Burke, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Rutherford and Yancey counties.

The department's 10-year plan is updated every two years. Projects scheduled in the first five years of the plan are considered committed and were not re-evaluated when the new plan was developed. But projects in the final five years of each 10-year plan are prioritized again for consideration in the next plan. The Board of Transportation is expected to consider final approval of the draft plan this summer.

The 16 new projects for Division 13 include:

- Modernizing North Louisiana from Patton Avenue to Emma Road in Buncombe County with right of way acquisition starting in fiscal year 2025 and construction in 2026;
- Widening N.C. 226 from U.S. 221 to N.C. 226A in McDowell County with right of way acquisition starting in fiscal year 2029;
- Improving the intersection of U.S. 221 with Thunder Road and Coxe Road in Rutherford County with right of way acquisition starting in fiscal year 2024 and construction in 2025.

- Upgrade U.S. 25/70 from Tillery Branch Road to Monticello Road in Madison County with right of way acquisition starting in fiscal year 2029.

One project is being accelerated in the draft plan:

- Upgrading N.C. 81/Swannanoa River Road from U.S. 70/Tunnel Road to U.S. 74/South Tunnel Road. Right of way acquisition is accelerated by one year.

Projects with schedule adjustments include:

- Adjacent intersection improvements on Merrimon Avenue in Asheville to allow additional time to conduct a corridor study from I-240 to Beaverdam Road;
- Creating a new interchange at I-40 and Liberty Road in Buncombe County to assist with balancing funds. Construction is moved to fiscal year 2022;
- Building a new interchange at I-40 and Blue Ridge Road in Buncombe County to assist with balancing funds. Construction is moved to fiscal year 2022.

“The 2020-29 Draft STIP continues to show the desire for improved and safer transportation connections in western North Carolina,” Division 13 Engineer Mark Gibbs said. “We have developed and vetted a comprehensive list of projects that will enhance the lives of our citizens by working diligently with transportation partners and local governments.”

The draft STIP includes projects across all transportation modes and in all 100 counties in the state. The list includes 1,266 highway projects, 86 aviation, 235 bicycle and pedestrian, six ferry, 23 public transit and 47 rail projects selected on statewide, regional and division levels. The projects were prioritized based on technical data as well as input from local officials and residents.

The draft plan includes about 500 changes in major highway projects from the current STIP. Half of the changes include new road projects. Also, there were about 200 projects where a schedule was changed for planning or budgeting needs, and 10 projects whose schedules were accelerated. Another 24 projects on the current STIP didn't score high enough this time to remain in the new draft plan. A statewide list of these major highway changes can be found on the [NCDOT STIP](#) web page.

Projects that did not score high enough in the evaluation process to be funded at the statewide level rolled over to the regional level for consideration. Projects that were not funded at the regional level could still be considered at the division level. This cascading aspect of the process helps ensure that local input plays an

important role in prioritizing projects for funding. More information about the STIP and how transportation projects are funded is available on the [NCDOT website](#).

Division 13 will host an in-house public comment session from Feb. 25-March 1, during normal business hours. It will be a chance for interested residents to review maps and handouts about projects, ask questions of local staff, and submit comments. There will also be an opportunity for residents to submit comments online, with those details being announced later.

For real-time travel information, visit [DriveNC.gov](#) or [follow NCDOT on Twitter](#).

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