

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, August 20, 2019 at 4:30 p.m. for their regular workshop session in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville, NC. All board was present. The board agreed to meet at 4:30 p.m. instead of 5:00 p.m. to allow Stecoah residents to give their concerns on the S2 Proposed Route of Corridor K.

1. Chairman Wiggins called the workshop session to order.
2. Chairman Wiggins thanked the residents from Stecoah for coming to speak with the board and stated that our NC Highway Commissioner Dirk Cody and Representatives with NCDOT were also present. Chairman Wiggins asks Brian Burch, Division Engineer with NCDOT in Sylva who represents (10) counties to introduce the Representatives. Mr. Burch introduced Wanda Austin, Project Development Engineer, who deals with the projects every day and Rose Bauguess, Transportation Planner with Southwest Commission who assists NCDOT in delivering the projects. Chairman Wiggins stated that the board has set aside one (1) hour for discussion.
3. Mr. Leroy Walden stated that he appreciated the county manager speaking with him on the issue of Corridor K and thanked the board for their time. Mr. Walden stated that he purchased property in Stecoah Heights seven to eight years ago because he is a fan of sports cars and he fell in love with this area after traveling here. Mr. Walden stated that they are opposing the proposed S2 Route of the Corridor K project. Mr. Walden stated that other than a few, this road will affect everyone attending this meeting and some have lived here from fifteen years to forty years. Mr. Walden asks that the commissioners consider the impact that this S2 Route would do to their homes and to their lives. Mr. Walden stated that he hopes that they will get a definite answer so that this can be settled finally. Mr. Walden stated that he understands the need for improved roads but surely, there are other alternatives than through Stecoah Valley. Mr. Walden stated that twenty to twenty-five of their homes would be taken to upgrade a single lane road and this is not a service to the people. Mr. Walden stated that their water supply is also on the upper end of the property. Mr. Walden stated that the homeowners got together with WaySouth Millie Mays for assistance and stated that they are great people and are focused on conservation and preservation. Mr. Walden asks David Bacon to present an alternative to the road. Mr. Bacon stated that he was a traffic engineer and has worked in Georgia on many road projects. Mr. Bacon stated that they are a grassroots organization who assists concerned citizens with county commissioners and NCDOT. Mr. Bacon presented an idea that is different from the S2 Route and gave the board a copy to review. Mr. Bacon stated that he has worked on transportation projects for over 50 years in Georgia and Florida and have assisted in over 100 projects. Mr. Bacon stated that he worked with the property in Stecoah to design an Intersection at Hwy 28 and Hwy 143 Intersection. Mr. Bacon explained the design to the board and felt that this is a better alternative and it recognizes areas that are environmentally sensitive. Mr. Bacon stated that the design is more cost savings and the traffic is not there to warrant a four-lane road.
4. Stecoah Resident Kyle Norcross stated that he has 100 acres of land in Stecoah and around 74 of those acres are in the S2 project. Mr. Norcross stated that he is not opposed to a road but feels that conversations need to be made with the people in the Valley, study the existing routes and vamp them up. Mr. Norcross stated that if all we are doing is fixing the road to Robbinsville and not to Andrews then he is against that type of road. Mr. Norcross stated that in his opinion, the most dangerous part of the road is from Topton Bridge to Andrews and the State needed to fix the most dangerous part first. Mr. Norcross stated that DOT needed to improve the road that we have.
5. Stecoah Resident Craig Kallmayer stated that he lives in Stecoah Heights. Mr. Kallmayer stated that he came here to rest and relax and the proposed road S2 would affect their lives as well as affect their water supply. Mr. Kallmayer stated that S2 would have a negative impact on the businesses located in the Stecoah area and asks that they look for an alternative that does not affect so many homes. Mr. Kallmayer stated that he did not want a road next to his property and agrees with Kyle Norcross that NCDOT needed to think smart and do right by the people here.
6. Bill Pickett stated that he has had a home on Mission Mountain for forty years and the proposed road would take over 60 acres on Stecoah Heights to build a grand highway to Robbinsville and then to Andrews. Mr. Pickett felt that a two-lane road with improvements is better and the board needed to spare residents the heartache of losing their homes. Mr. Pickett stated that we needed to take care of our existing road and the impact of the proposed road would affect the

homeowner's water supply. Mr. Pickett stated that it would please everyone to improve the road that we now have because he loves this area and it needs to be preserved.

7. Chairman Wiggins stated that NCDOT has been working on a solution for fifty plus years and highway construction is painful and losing any homes from our tax scroll would be painful as well because we need all the revenue that we can get.
8. Brian Burch, NCDOT thanked everyone for their comments and stated that he would let Ms. Austin answer some of the concerns. Ms. Austin stated that this project began in 1965 and NCDOT is the closest it has ever been to delivering a road. Ms. Austin stated that it has taken a lot of work with partners and advocates and NCDOT used a software system to find the best solution for the road. Ms. Austin stated that NCDOT has considered improving the existing road and this is being evaluated as well as the number of lanes needed which will come by traffic forecast. Ms. Austin stated that there have not been many complaints through the Stecoah area and most of the problem areas occur toward Topton. Ms. Austin stated that they have considered all consequences and they will go with the road that is the least environmental damaging as well as protecting endangered species with other factors of well but NCDOT will have alternatives. Ms. Austin stated that Mr. Bacon's proposal shows a nice view but NCDOT has to do what is best for the natural environment. Ms. Austin stated that she could not promise residents will get what they want but NCDOT will provide what is needed and by law, they have to deliver. Ms. Austin stated that anyone can present alternatives and these will be considered. Ms. Austin stated that they have worked with WaySouth and others on all alternatives as well as the Appalachian Trail representatives because this does affect the hikers on an economic development side as well as a safety side and have to take into consideration what the hiker sees as they pass through.
9. Mr. Walden thanked everyone for allowing them to talk about this issue and stated that the S2 route is too close to their homes and they are weary of living under the shadow of this proposed road for over fifty years.
10. Ms. Austin stated that the target date to present a plan to the Board of Commissioners is October. Ms. Austin stated that they will continue to work with all stakeholders and will listen.
11. Kyle Norcross asks if a local citizen could be on the board during these proposals. Chairman Wiggins stated that Commissioner Nelms, Commissioner Eller and Manager Garland are our citizens that have been attending the meetings, taking the calls and working on routes. Chairman Wiggins stated that the road serves the people, the people do not serve the roads and this is why we are looking at all alternatives.
12. Brian Burch stated that NCDOT would deliver a citizen project that will benefit Graham County, Cherokee County and Swain County and will serve everyone regardless of their interests.
13. Chairman Wiggins thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the workshop session.

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Dale Wiggins, Chairman, Graham County Board of Commissioners

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Lynn Cody, Vice-Chairman, Graham County Board of Commissioners

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Keith Eller, Member, Graham County Board of Commissioners

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Jacob Nelms, Member, Graham County Board of Commissioners

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Connie Orr, Member, Graham County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

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Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board