

McCrorry discusses bond plan, W-S I-74 construction

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

DURHAM — On Wednesday, June 17, on the campus of North Carolina Central University, Gov. Pat McCrorry sat down to discuss a bond proposal that would fund a \$1.417 billion highway to be built in Winston-Salem.

The highway is expected to begin at U.S. 158 southwest of Winston-Salem and end at U.S. 311 southeast of the city. The total length of the project is 34.2 miles, and portions of the beltway are already under construction.

According to the N.C. Department of Transportation, the Northern Beltway (I-74), would help alleviate congestion and enhance safety on U.S. 421/Business 40 and U.S. 52 in Forsyth County.

The project is part of Connect NC, two bond proposals of about 1.5 billion each that will be used to make improvements across the state. One is for roads and one is for education and infrastructure.

The projects in the bonds are intended to connect sites by building roads, upgrading technology and constructing education facilities.

In a roundtable discussion with Secretary of Transportation Tony Tata, McCrorry said, "the state has not approved a bond of this magnitude in 15 years and that North Carolina has to prepare for the growth of the next generation, and the generation after that."

"The longer we wait, the more expensive the improvements will be," McCrorry said.

"If we wait, it's only going to get more expensive. We're going to continue to grow, so we either deal with it today or deal with it tomorrow."

Since the year 2000, the state has added 2 million people.

According to Tony

Tata, if the bond plan is not approved later this year, the project for the highway in Winston-Salem will not be done.

"The major projects in the Piedmont Region will fall off without the bond money," said Tata. "When you talk to General Assembly members, press upon them the importance of these bonds."

The multiple highway construction projects listed in the proposal, expands across the state and are prioritized based upon their ability to reduce congestion, the ability to reduce travel time and increase safety.

Tata also discussed the number of jobs the project would bring to the state. Connect NC is expected to create 12,751 short-term jobs and 4,316 long-term jobs.

"This is a jobs program and an economic program more than anything else," Tata said.

Lee Roberts, who has been the budget director for the state since September 2014, seemed confident the bond would get approved.

"Polls have been showing a 60 percent approval rating," Roberts said. "Our numbers are showing the high 60s around a 67 percent approval rating."

The Connect NC bond proposal will also fund construction of a new science building at Winston-Salem-Sate University, and a new medical examiners office building in Forsyth County.

"This is about if we're going to be competitive or not," McCrorry said. "N.C. is the ninth most populous state in the country, and we have to prepare for the next generation."

According to McCrorry, the project would not result in a tax increase.

For more information on Connect NC or to view a map of other bond projects, go to connect.nc.gov.



Photo by Tevin Stinson

Lee Roberts, N.C. budget director, left, and N.C. Secretary of Transportation Tony Tata, right, listen as Gov. Pat McCrorry discusses his bond proposal at North Carolina Central University in Durham on June 17.

Scholarship program hopes to promote diversity within Winston-Salem police force

BY TEVIN STINSON
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In an effort to increase the number of minority officers, the Winston-Salem Police Department (WSPD) has established the Bonner-Redd-Surrat-Davis Scholarship program.

The program is named after four former chiefs and is an ongoing effort to promote diversity within the department. The WSPD has teamed up with Winston-Salem State University and other historic black colleges and universities (HBCUs) to offer the scholarships to minority students. The department is offering money for college and a job upon graduation.

The scholarship covers tuition, book costs and all other fees at public HBCUs. At private HBCUs, the program provides an amount based on the average cost of public HBCUs.

Officer Randall White, a graduate of Winston-Salem State University, participated in the program and said he became interested in it after seeing fliers posted around the campus. He decided to ask one of his professors about it, and the rest is history.

"I knew it was what I wanted to do after graduating, so I looked more into it after talking to my professor," said White.

White said knowing the program would help him financially was another

reason he decided to go through with the program.

The program is open to sophomores, juniors and seniors of all majors. To qualify for the scholarship, students must maintain a 3.0 GPA, pass a mini-background check and initial eligibility testing. Scholarship recipients must also complete a summer internship with the WSPD.

After graduation, scholarship recipients have a three-year service commitment with the department.

Lt. Danny Watts, who oversees the WSPD Recruiting unit, said the department has made it a priority to make sure the police department reflects the population of the community.

"We are using some of the newest techniques available to us to recruit minority applicants," Watts said. "We have purchased ads on Youtube, Facebook, Twitter and Pandora that target African-American and Latino applicants."

Watts said that 127 applicants have applied. "Of those 127 applicants, 37 were African-American and 15 were Hispanic," Watts said.

For more information on the recruiting efforts of the Winston-Salem Police Department or the Bonner-Redd-Surrat-Davis Scholarship Program, call 336-773-7856 or visit www.cityofws.org/departments/police and click the employment link.

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