

# Bypass Road Interchange To Oust Station, Apartment Building

BY SUSAN USHER

An interchange that will route U.S. 17 bypass traffic over Whiteville Road will displace a service station and an apartment building, according to plans on display at the N.C. Department of Transportation's Charlotte Maintenance Office on Mulberry Street.

A public hearing on those plans will be held at Charlotte Town Hall at 7:30 p.m. July 22.

The state DOT proposes to replace the grade-level signalized intersection with a partial cloverleaf interchange, with construction to begin in fall 1994. The partial cloverleaf would consist of two ramp/loop combinations, one in the northeast quadrant, the other in the southwest, with a bridge to carry traffic over the three lanes of N.C. 130, also called Whiteville Road.

The interchange is the final step of the state's response to concerns about the safety of the signal intersection of the freeway and N.C. 130, a two-lane road that serves West Brunswick High School. During the first 18 months the bypass was open to traffic, 20 accidents occurred at the traffic light, including a double fatality, and resulted in \$127,450 estimated property damage. Forty-five percent of the accidents involved vehicles making left turns. Sixteen school buses also travel through the intersection twice a day when county schools are in session.

A traffic study in 1992 indicated that in the one-mile study area, an estimated volume on the bypass of 9,000 vehicles per day (vpd) south of N.C. 130 and 11,300 north of N.C. 130. Traffic on N.C. 130 ranged 3,500 vpd

east of U.S. 17 to 6,200 west of U.S. 17. Trucks accounted for 15 percent of the bypass traffic and 5 percent of Whiteville Road traffic. By the year 2014, traffic on the bypass is expected to increase to 20,500 vpd to 25,900 vpd, and 7,900 vpd to 14,000 vpd on Whiteville Road.

In addition to improving the safety of the intersection, the interchange is expected to provide more efficient travel into and out of Charlotte, the plan indicates.

The project is expected to have limited environmental impact, according to the DOT plan, and a positive economic impact as a result of improved access.

Construction of the \$3.5 million to \$4.0 million project will require relocation of the Han-Dee Hugo Exxon and one 6-unit building only at Charlotte Manor Apartments, which flank N.C. 130 just west of the intersection. An alternative diamond design would have forced relocation of the entire 42-apartment complex, at an additional estimated cost of \$1.4 million.

During construction, traffic on N.C. 130 will be rerouted along a temporary detour road to be built just west of the existing roadway, cutting through the service station property.

Also, under the plan:

- the current Southeastern Welcome Center/rest area entrance on the northbound lanes of the bypass would be closed and the roadbed allowed to revert naturally to wetland conditions. The closing, according to the plans, is to "eliminate any possible confusion for motorists on

U.S. 17 regarding where the entrance and exit to the interchange is located." Access to the center would be by the N.C. 130 entrance, using the ramp/loop system.

■Bridgers Road (S.R. 1349) would be realigned again, this time about 700 feet east of the current intersection, to a point across from the terminus of a ramp and loop. The old asphalt would be removed and the roadbed graded to a natural contour.

■an existing circular drive would be closed and a new access drive built to serve Charlotte Manor Apartments residents. The access would intersect N.C. 130 opposite the end of the southbound ramp.

■Left- and right-turn lanes on both approaches to N.C. 130 will be replaced by deceleration and acceleration lanes.

■Between the terminals of the access ramps, N.C. 130 will be a three-lane road, with a concrete median. Also, as another safety measure, the area between the terminals will have full access control and will be fenced off.

DOT will accept comments, questions and materials from the public at the hearing and also by mail for 10 days afterward. The hearing officer will be W.A. Garrett Jr., who can be contacted at P.O. Box 25201, Raleigh, N.C. 27611, or 1-919-250-4092.



## Sifting Through The Sand

Rudy Becker of Charlotte and his son Jeff had found only bottle caps at Ocean Isle Beach on a recent Sunday afternoon minutes into their metal detector search of the narrow dry sand beach at high tide. They were hoping for better luck as the afternoon progressed.

STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

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