

County Endorses Three Highway Projects For State TIP Update

BY TERRY POPE

With the four-laning of U.S. 17 now under way, Brunswick County Commissioners Monday endorsed three other highway projects they think should receive top priority from the state.

There are no surprises on the county's list:

■ A Wilmington bypass connecting Interstate 40 to U.S. 17 in northern Brunswick County;

■ A second bridge to Oak Island and connecting to a Midway Road extension; and

■ A high-rise bridge to Sunset Beach to replace the present floating barge bridge.

The county will forward its updated list to the N.C. Board of Transportation, which will amend its Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) this summer to reflect increased federal funding.

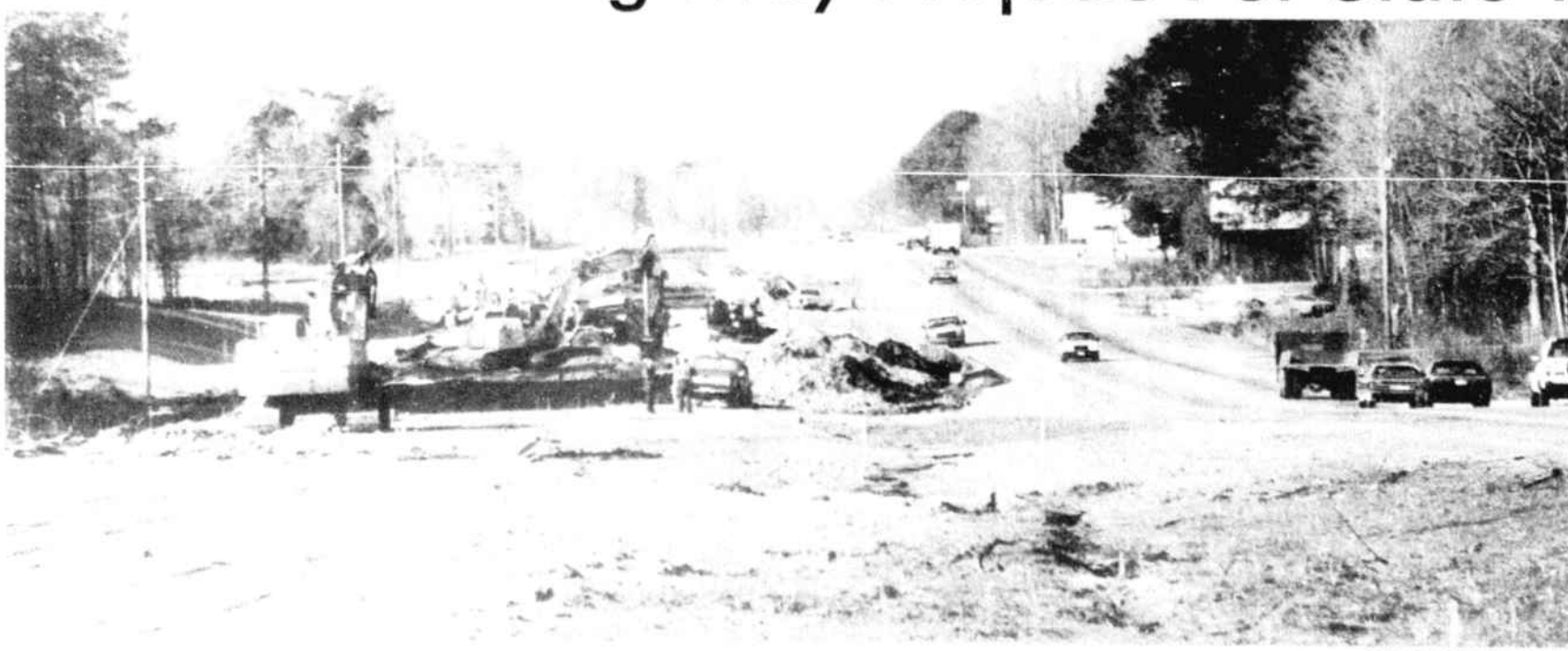
The 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act, signed into law in December, is expected to give the state more federal funds that are not reflected in the current TIP, Transportation Secretary Thomas Harrelson said in a Feb. 12 letter to the board.

That may make more money available for local highway projects this year.

Local chambers of commerce have also been asked for recommendations. To maintain consistency, the Southport-Oak Island Chamber of Commerce plans to adopt the list Brunswick County approved Monday.

Terry Barbee, president of the South Brunswick Islands Chamber of Commerce, said the update request hasn't come before that board as of Tuesday.

Harrelson wrote that "agreeing to



WITH THE FOUR-LANING of U.S. 17 under way from Bell Swamp to the South Carolina line, county commissioners moved three other projects to top priority on their list of transportation needs.

local and regional priorities will help ensure that the projects most important to the greatest number of people stand out. Regional consensus enhances a project's chance for additional attention."

The four-laning of U.S. 17 through Brunswick County is the top priority on the present TIP, but that project is now a reality. Normally, local TIP meetings would be held to gather public input, but time constraints will not allow that, said Harrelson.

Harrelson asked for the updated lists by March 6. Gov. James Martin has instructed the DOT board to put the money to work on state highway projects as quickly as possible.

"We think this program is important enough so that some of these new funds should be used," said Brunswick County Manager David Clegg.

Bypass Needed

A northern loop around Wilmington would route Interstate 40 traffic south and connect with U.S. 17 in the Bishop community near Town Creek. In the 1992-98 TIP, the estimated cost is \$113,265,000.

In a memo to commissioners, Brunswick County Planning Director John Harvey sees the loop as the "new U.S. 17" and believes federal funding is crucial to keep it alive.

Two corridors for the highway have been identified by Greiner Inc.

of Raleigh, hired to do environmental impact studies, and accepted by DOT last June. Both routes would carry traffic north of Leland and Navassa and cross U.S. 74-76 at Malmo.

Greiner has scheduled completion of its draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for this month. It will be available for review at public libraries with a public workshop and hearing on the findings in April.

Following the hearing, DOT will

select one route for the project. A final EIS will be completed by November.

Second Bridge

Residents calling for a second bridge to Oak Island say it is needed for beach evacuations. The present high-rise bridge carries traffic leaving the island into the path of Carolina Power and Light Company's Brunswick Nuclear Plant.

A new 3.7-mile road would be needed to meet the bridge. The high-

rise is expected to cost \$4.2 million.

In recent discussions, the state has indicated the project would proceed only if the right of way and cost for building the road were provided by private funds from mainland property owners. That dispute hasn't been resolved.

If private funds are used to build the road, it also raises questions about county control of possible strip commercial districts and safety requirements, Harvey noted. It may even become a toll highway.

"We urge this bridge and limited access road be a toll facility," noted Harvey.

Some improvement to Midway Road to Bolivia is also needed to eliminate dangerous curves, he said.

Debate continues over a proposed high-rise bridge crossing the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway to Sunset Beach.

The bridge would replace the current floating barge bridge. The 1992 TIP states that the bridge is scheduled for an Environmental Impact Study only and also shows expenses of \$1,835,000 in earlier years for plans and right of way.

Brunswick County has previously supported the need for the bridge as a public safety need.

"That need continues," stated Harvey. "We urge funding be provided in this TIP."

However, some island residents say the present bridge is adequate and cite environmental damage that would be caused by building a new bridge.

Bird Island Development Proposed

(Continued From Page 1-A)

cause additional traffic to the Sunset Beach island, but she isn't certain that 15 lots would mean additional traffic.

Ms. Fluegel said she has spoken with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Charleston, S.C., office because of that agency's concern over the navigability of Mad Inlet. She said the Corps told her that the inlet was not presently passable, and objections from the Corps to the proposed bridge are unlikely.

"It doesn't look like she'll have any problem" getting the CAMA permit, said Ms. Fluegel.

Another adjacent landowner, Richard Tuckey of Salisbury, said Monday afternoon that Ms. Price's plans don't bother him.

"It's her property, and I'm not going to say you can't build on your own property," he said.

The only aspect of the proposed construction that would bother him,

he said, would be if traffic increases through the area.

Interviewed following Monday's council meeting, councilman Ed Gore, another adjacent property owner, also addressed the proposed project in terms of property owners' rights.

"She's certainly entitled to re-establish access to the island," he said. "I don't think anyone should take away her rights or the rights of any property owner."

Clete Waldmiller, president of the Sunset Beach Taxpayer's Association, said he feels differently.

With everybody you meet around here, that's the topic of conversation," he said in a telephone interview Monday. "And what they're saying is 'I hope it's not true!'"

Bird Island was a gift to Mrs. Price from her late husband, Ralph Price, before his death. He originally purchased it from Donald and Margaret Richardson in 1953, according to a

deed dated Aug. 2, 1984.

"I would just hope that their philanthropic feeling would apply here as well," said Waldmiller, noting the family's reputation for benevolence in the Greensboro area.

Even though he said he doesn't think the SBTAA can do much regarding Ms. Price's plans, Waldmiller said his organization would be present at any public hearings involving zoning or CAMA permitting.

The island, accessible from Sunset Beach by foot during low tide, is the popular site of a mailbox installed 11 years ago.

While enjoying a picnic lunch or hiking around the one mile stretch of undeveloped beach, visitors write their thoughts in a journal kept in the box.

Frank Nesmith, a nearby resident, collects the journals and sends them to the woman who he says erected the mailbox.

Convicted Felon Ron Taylor Files For Area Senate Race

Former State Rep. Ron Taylor, 39, who resigned in 1982 to serve a prison term for bribery and conspiracy charges, is running for the 18th District Senate seat.

The Democrat from Elizabethtown filed for office Monday in Bladen County. The district includes Brunswick, Columbus, two precincts in New Hanover County and all but two precincts in Bladen County.

Taylor was the youngest man in the State House of Representatives when he was elected at age 23. His political career came to an end in 1982 when he was charged in a two-year undercover investigation in Columbus County called Colcor, a FBI codename given to the probe that centered on political corruption.

He also pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit arson in connection with the burning of three tobacco warehouses in Bertie County. "I have thought long and hard and prayed about this decision," said Taylor in a news release Monday. "I realize that I have made mistakes in the past, but I also realize that God has forgiven me and I ask the people of Southeastern North Carolina to give me a second chance to serve them again."

FBI agents secretly videotaped Taylor accepting a \$1,500 bribe in exchange for a promise to use his influence as a legislator to pursue an ABC license for the town of Bolton in Columbus County.

In addition to the bribery charge, Taylor also pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit arson stemming from the tobacco warehouse fires.

Taylor's family-owned business, Taylor Manufacturing, lost an appeal of a \$350,000 patent-infringement claim against a rival company

owned by J.J. "Monk" Harrington, state senator from Bertie County and owner of the warehouses that burned.

Taylor was charged with hiring three men to set the fires on April 23, 1982.

Taylor was sentenced to a total of 20 years in prison on the federal and state charges. Of the 20-year sentence, he served four years, including time spent on probation when he worked in a community service program in Bladen County.

He was released from parole on Oct. 31, 1986, and had his citizenship rights restored on May 16, 1989. The restoration of rights includes the right to vote and to run for public office, rights that are suspended for convicted felons while they are serving sentences.

Taylor is now president of the Elizabethtown company that employs 150 people.

"As I have previously stated I know I have made mistakes in my life," said Taylor. "I also know that I have learned a lesson of a lifetime."

In the primary, Taylor will face two Democrats, incumbent R.C. Soles Jr. and Claude Spivey, both of Tabor City.

Soles was also targeted in the Colcor investigation but was acquitted by a federal court jury on Aug. 9, 1983, on charges of aiding and abetting former Columbus County Board of Commissioners Chairman Ed Walton Williamson, who was convicted of taking bribes from undercover FBI agents.

Charges against Soles centered on accusations that he had used his influence to affect an ABC referendum in Bolton and legislation intended to weaken laws affecting precious-metal dealers.

Holden Committee Will Meet Friday

A Holden Beach committee formed to study abuses of septic systems and long-range wastewater management will hold an organizational meeting Friday.

Commissioner Sid Swarts, who is chairing the committee, said the public meeting will start at 1 p.m. at the town hall.

Other panel members, who were recently appointed by Mayor Wally Ausley, are Commissioner David Sandifer, Harold Steorts, Marlene Thomas and Duncan St. Clair.

Campus Officers Proposed

(Continued From Page 1-A)

Powell said the system is well-suited as a vehicle for achieving the stated goals of the county's effective schools philosophy.

"We will do whatever we have to do to support your getting it done," he said.

Voicing his support, Lewis told the group, "We're going to hold you to what you're saying and we're going to get you what you want."

Hankins said he expects both schools "to be moving down the pike" to implement the system over the next year. "We will put nothing in their way and are 100 percent in support," he said, echoing board members.

Board member Polly Russ reminded the group that the board has been responsive to requests from school principals to try new approaches in their individual schools and would support additional requests in the same fashion.

South Brunswick Middle School Principal Les Tubb said later that his school already has in place six of the 12 initial steps of the management approach. He plans to continue looking, with staff and parents, at what other changes can be made to improve the school.

"The result should be similar to the system proposed, but tailored to what will work here," he said.

Comprehensive management emphasizes school intervention for at-risk students through nurturing classes and after-school programs, networking with community resources, higher expectations for behavior and academic performance as well as policies to back the higher standards.

All 11 county schools have local school improvement teams named and working now, Lewis indicated.

Attending a weekend retreat for those team leaders renewed her optimism about efforts to change the system for the better, board Chairman Donna Baxter said.

"If they get on the bandwagon and do what they say, this school system's going to make it."

Redwine, Holden Top Candidate List

(Continued From Page 1-A)

Districts 1 and 2.

In the commissioners' races, a ninth candidate will run for the District 3 seat now held by Gene Pinkerton. Nathaniel (Nat) Parker, 38, of Bolivia, filed as a Democrat.

Two candidates have joined the race in District 4—Democrat C. Lephus Pigott, 25, of Route 3, Shallotte, and Republican Patricia (Patty) Young, 43, of Winnabow.

Democrat Raymond Ericksen, 60, of Ocean Isle Beach, filed for the District 1 race. He will face Don Warren of Shallotte in the primary. No Republicans filed for District 1.

Republican Arthur Knox, 65, of Route 2, Bolivia, a former two-term Register of Deeds, has filed for that seat again. He will not face a primary since Kirby, the only other Republican, withdrew from the race Monday.

Former District 5 County Commissioner Grace Beasley also filed

for Register of Deeds last week as a Democrat. She will run against incumbent Robert J. Robinson of Supply and Edward F. Mintz of Bolivia.

District Court Judge Napoleon B. "Poli" Barefoot Jr. of Leland faces a challenge for his seat in the 13th Judicial District from Wayne Long, a Shallotte attorney and former district court judge. Both are Democrats.

Springlike Weather Linger

The South Brunswick Islands are in for more of the same pattern that's brought warm, sunny weather to the area in the past few weeks.

Jackson Canady, local meteorologist, predicts that more air masses from the Pacific Ocean are headed this way, which will keep any cold air stationed in Canada.

"I don't see any changes in this pattern in the foreseeable future," he said Tuesday.

Canady said temperatures and rainfall should remain above average for the next week.

Temperatures should be in the mid

40s at night, he said, and in the mid

60s during the day. Rainfall should measure three-fourths of an inch.

For the period Feb. 25 through March 2, Canady measured .34 inches of rain at his Shallotte Point home.

The maximum daytime high temperature was 77 degrees, recorded on March 2, and the minimum evening low was 35 degrees, recorded on March 1.

The average high temperature was 70 degrees, and the average low was 47 degrees, which made an average daily temperature of 58 degrees, Canady said.

That reading is eight degrees above normal for this time of year, he said.

Pioneer Manager Killed In Single-Vehicle Wreck

James Edsel "Jimmy" Carter, manager of Pioneer Savings Bank in Shallotte, was killed Saturday night, Feb. 29, in an auto accident.

The funeral was March 3 at White's Creek Baptist Church, with burial in Bladen Memorial Gardens, Elizabethtown.

Carter, 40, of Lake Waccamaw and a native of Elizabethtown, was killed instantly when the pickup truck he was driving ran off the road on U.S. 701 late Saturday night, according to a N.C. Highway Patrol report filed by Trooper L.L. Hatcher.

There were no passengers involved in the single-vehicle accident.

Carter was driving a 1989 Chevrolet pickup truck south on U.S. 701. At about 11:10 p.m. he ran off

the right side of the road almost five miles north of Whiteville. The truck then crossed a ditch into a yard, striking several small cedars, traveled into a field and struck a utility pole and a tree before coming to rest.

Carter was not wearing a seatbelt, according to Hatcher's report.

The Highway Patrol was unable to determine the cause of the accident.

Carter's survivors include a daughter, Lesley Carter of Dunn; his mother and stepfather, Margaret Carter Gibson and R.J. Gibson of Elizabethtown; a sister, Betty Parker of Elizabethtown; and his fiancée, Oakie Lee Wolfe of Cumberland Gap, Tenn.

Carter had been in banking for more than 17 years. He was promoted last August to assistant vice president and branch manager of Pioneer's Shallotte office. Previously he was loan officer and assistant branch manager of the Whiteville office.

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