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Study tracks wrecks, increased traffic with Denver's growth

By Matt Chapman news@lakenormanpublications.com Jul 24, 2019 Updated 21 hrs ago



Lincoln County Sheriff's Office deputies direct traffic along N.C. 16 Business.

DENVER – Representatives of Kimley-Horn, a planning, engineering and design consulting firm hired to complete a study of the roads in eastern Lincoln County, shared data and sought feedback from the public at the East Lincoln Community Center July 23.

The study, authorized by county commissioners in December, is focused on the area bounded by N.C. 16 Business, North Little Egypt Road, St. James Church Road and N.C. 73. Kimley-Horn has collected data on 29 intersections contained within that boundary, which has experienced population growth of nearly 17 percent since 2010.

“Since the first meeting in June, the consultants have continued to collect data and they’ve built a model through the input of that data,” Lincoln County Planning Director Andrew Bryant said. “Tonight’s meeting was really more about continuing to gather more qualitative input from the public and feeling out where the community’s priorities lie. Moving forward, the consultants will merge tonight’s qualitative data with the quantitative data gathered through traffic counts and crash data to begin recommendations.”

The study’s purpose is to help Lincoln County clearly define its transportation needs in the Denver area. The outcome will include a combination of short- and long-term recommendations, as well as an action plan that identifies potential funding sources, which will better position the county in the state’s prioritization process for road projects.

“This study is really the first of its kind in Lincoln County,” Bryant said. “We’re taking a concept that other communities have used successfully to have their projects prioritized and funded at the state level. The purpose of the study is to identify and

prioritize different levels of transportation projects so that we're prepared and ready to react accordingly when opportunities to fund those projects are presented."

Kimley-Horn presented the data collected through graphics set up around the room, allowing members of the community to examine the current road conditions before giving feedback about priorities moving forward.

The data included a traffic analysis, in which turning movement counts were used to analyze the performance of signalized and unsignalized intersections. The results revealed two intersections that exceed capacity during weekday mornings and two others that are overwhelmed on weekday afternoons, as well as one intersection – where N.C. 16 Business meets Natalie Commons Drive – that exceeds capacity during both timeframes.

In the mornings, congestion is worst where N.C. 16 Business intersects Galway Lane near Lincoln Charter School, and at its intersection with South Triangle Circle. The worst afternoon traffic is at the intersection of Optimist Club Road and Triangle Circle, and the intersection of N.C. 16 Business and Waterside Crossing Boulevard.

Kimley-Horn's data also included a crash analysis, and while there were no fatal crashes reported within the study boundary from June 1, 2016 to May 30, 2019, there were several intersections identified as crash hotspots, as well as the entire segment of N.C. 16 Business from South Triangle Circle to Lincoln Charter School. Crash rates along N.C. 73, N.C. 16 Business, Pilot Knob Road, Optimist Club Road, North Little Egypt Road, St. James Church Road and Triangle Circle were all above the statewide average.

"One of the things that stood out during our data collection process was that the traffic demand on N.C. 16 Business is high," Kimley-Horn consultant Dillon Turner said. "Another thing that stood out is that the number of incidents on N.C. 16 Business exceeds the state averages by a significant margin."

The data presented by Kimley-Horn is based solely on existing road conditions. Moving forward, the firm will project how future growth will impact those numbers.

"Next, we want to hear from the public, so taking in their feedback and making sense of it is the first step moving forward," Kimley-Horn Project Manager Jonathan Whitehurst said. "We're just in the beginning of our traffic analysis. What we have now only examines existing conditions, so we've got to consider the development that's planned for this area and project what the traffic may look like in the future. When we come back to the public in a few months we'll have some preliminary recommendations."

Kimley-Horn consultants will return to the East Lincoln Community Center in the fall, although a date hasn't been set yet. To follow the progress of the study, visit the "planning and inspections" page at lincolncounty.org.