



Nash County crafts transportation plan

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Nash County officials are in the blueprint stages of the development of a county wide transportation plan.

Commissioners and town leaders are collaborating with officials from the Upper Coastal Plain Rural Planning Organization and N.C. Department of Transportation to devise a comprehensive transportation plan that eventually would pinpoint certain areas of the county that require traffic improvements.

Study for the plan began in August, and DOT officials project the plan to conclude in 2011.

State DOT engineer Elena Talanker, who is heading the study, said the plan, which is long-range and will include multiple forms of transportation, would provide the county with long-term solutions to transportation woes for the next 25 to 30 years.

Its primary focus would be on rural areas, excluding Rocky Mount and the town of Nashville. Right now, Nash County does not have this plan or a throughfare plan.

During the planning process, researchers will take in account data from local residents on which areas have heavy occurrences of traffic hazards. They also will collect information on elements such as existing land use, population and traffic volumes.

Study results also will consist of maps that provide coordinated planning between all modes of transportation in the rural areas. Those maps will account for highways, public transportation and railways, cyclists and pedestrians.

From the feedback, Nash County officials will be able to use its plan as a reference when making land use, park and recreation or other policy decisions. It also would highlight future transportation needs for the county.

Throughout the different planning phases, the local governing board will be asked to review the plan and make comments and recommendations.

By the end of the study, a set of final maps will be adopted by county and town officials, endorsed by the Upper Coastal Plain Rural Planning Organization and finally adopted by the N.C. Board of Transportation, making it an official county plan.

Talanker said the plan can be used as a reference point for county officials, creating a "wish-list" for what traffic improvements they would like to see.

State legislators made it a requirement for each municipality or metropolitan planning organization to create the plan a few years ago. The state's first mutually adopted plan was for the municipalities of Locust and Stanfield in 2004.

Overall, Talanker said the planning tool eventually could keep accidents in the county to a minimum, reduce unnecessary construction costs and improve traveler safety.

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