

PUBLIC NOTICE

Subject: US 70 Reprioritization for Project U-5720B

March 17, 2023

This letter is a follow-up to public comments received on the FY2024-2033 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) reprogramming swaps. The majority of comments were in reference to project U-5720B which is a segment of the US 70 corridor.

The Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization (DCHC MPO) released the recommended swaps for comment from February 13-March 7, 2023. This release included the projects that were recommended in the swaps, background details on why the swap process was taking place, and the rationales for why each of the projects was being considered for swapping.

Based on the amount of feedback received for project U-5720B, it was determined that additional clarification be provided on this project and the US 70 corridor.

Current Status of US 70

The US 70 corridor is currently undergoing a planning study to understand the needs and desired options for this corridor in providing a safe, efficient, and equitable multimodal transportation system. The segment being reviewed in this study is from I-885 to the future Northern Durham Parkway, near the Wake County border. A recent public engagement effort took place November 2022 through January 2023, and additional engagement will continue in 2023.

The US 70 projects currently in the STIP are for project U-5720 and broken out into segments U-5720A and U-5720B. Segment U-5720A is currently funded for preliminary engineering, whereas segment U-5720B was to receive funding starting with right-of-way (ROW) in 2027.

What Is the Result of Reprioritization?

Strategic Prioritization of Transportation (SPOT) is a transparent, systematic, and data-driven process for prioritizing projects across North Carolina that are priorities at the statewide, region, or division

levels. Projects that rank the highest receive priority funding and are moved up in the STIP. The STIP is a 10-year document with the first six years being programmed and the last four years being developmental.

For the US 70 project that was approved for swapping “out” of the STIP, this terminology does not imply that the project is being removed from the STIP. The U-5720B project will remain in the STIP and be programmed for preliminary engineering like the U-5720A project, and will re-compete for funding in the next cycle. This will allow more time for the US 70 Corridor Study to produce any additional findings that might alter the plans for this corridor. The next prioritization cycle is 7.0 and is currently ongoing. Projects for consideration will be due summer of 2023 and the best competing projects will receive funding during the FY2026-2035 STIP adoption.

Additional Clarification

Several comments were received in reference to the US 70 project being a top priority and that it should not be deprioritized based on expected growth in the area. The MPO understands the concerns associated with this corridor and is taking the necessary steps to address this growth comprehensively, such as through multimodal options. It was not considered feasible to separate the two segments of this project since U-5720A is only funded for preliminary engineering and the entirety of the corridor is still being reviewed.

Other comments requested feedback from the North Carolina Department of Transportation ([NCDOT](http://www.ncdot.gov)) on their thoughts regarding these swaps. Per the guidelines on these project swaps being authorized, the division engineers from NCDOT had to mutually agree with the proposed swaps. Shifting this project out allows the two segments of US 70 to be planned together and more time for the corridor study to make recommendations. The MPO works closely with NCDOT and appreciates their guidance and support.

Additional comments suggested that US 70 should be updated now and there should be no delay. As with any transportation project there is a need to thoroughly plan a project prior to ever breaking ground through construction. The original construction timeline on the U-5720B segment was to be scheduled for 2030 with ROW starting in 2027. While this project will release funding, it is not being abandoned. It will continue with preliminary engineering, which was always a necessary step in the project process before any right-of-way considerations.