ATTACHMENT 8

COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

I-26 Asheville Connector
Buncombe County, North Carolina

TIP I-2513
State Project No. 8.U843701
Federal Aid Project No. MANHF 26-1(53)
WBS Element 34165.1.2

THE NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Project Development and Environmental Analysis Unit
Human Environment Section

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Existing Conditions

The following report is an update and validation of the April 2010 Community Impact Assessment (CIA). This update includes validation of information derived from previously developed project materials, integration of prior technical memoranda, data, and other supporting information, as well as the preparation of updated information pertinent to previous human environment studies and updated project information/ data.

This updated and revised CIA and associated technical memoranda, data, and supporting information supersedes previous community studies conducted between 2007 and 2010.

At the time of the report, there are instances in which project surveys or data collection and assessments are incomplete such as Preliminary Design Plans and NCDOT Relocation Reports. When completed, information from technical reports and other project materials will be incorporated into the CIA either directly, or by reference

This information has the potential to influence the professional opinions and recommendations contained within this report, and as such, will be fully updated prior to a final version.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 4
II. PROJECT AND COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION 13
Community Context 15
III. CIA METHODOLOGY 24
IV. CIA STUDY AREA DESCRIPTIONS 24
Direct Community Impact Area (DCIA) 24
Demographic Study Area 24
V. COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS 25
Population Characteristics 25
Housing Characteristics 27
Limited English Proficiency 27
Business and Employment Characteristics 28
Community Resources - Facilities 30
Community Resources – Infrastructure 32
Community Resources - Natural 34
Crime, Safety, and Emergency Services 34
Local Plans & Vision 34
VI. COMMUNITY IMPACT ANALYSIS 41
Physical, Social, and Psychological Aspects 41
Visual and Aesthetic Impacts 43
Displacement/Relocation Impacts 44
Temporary Construction Effects 55
Community Safety Effects 59
Environmental Justice Assessment 60
Benefits/Burdens Assessment 68
Conclusions 69
Community Outreach 70
Recurring Community / Neighborhood Impacts 71
VII. CIA RECOMMENDATIONS 72
VIII. BIBLIOGRAPHY 74

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the 1990s, Buncombe County experienced economic and population growth; however, growth slowed in the 2000s. Although there have been job losses in the manufacturing sector, jobs have increased in industry sectors such as health care, social assistance, accommodation, and food services . This could, in part, be attributed to Asheville's attractiveness as a retirement destination.

The Interstate-26 (I-26)/I-240 project area through West Asheville has not experienced the same kind of growth as did Buncombe County in the last couple of decades, as West Asheville is primarily a well-established residential area. However, this area is characterized by the notable presence of traditionally underserved populations such as low-income and minorities.

The neighborhoods within the Direct Community Impact Area (DCIA) have been affected in the past by the construction of transportation infrastructure projects. Based on interviews with local residents, neighborhoods such as Burton Street, Westwood Place, and Fairfax/Virginia were divided through the original construction of I-240 in the 1960s, which resulted in community cohesion impacts.

Neighborhoods
Based on outreach efforts and discussions with local planners, the West Asheville neighborhoods/communities found within the DCIA are as follows. Throughout this report neighborhoods are classified as areas that have well-defined boundaries, community plans, or an established community group. Communities are those areas that are not well-established, no formal community plan, or a group of residential areas with an identified character and close proximity.

- **Clairmont Crest Mobile Home Park**: Noteworthy minority and low-income populations.
- **Willow Lakes Mobile Home Park**: Noteworthy minority and low-income populations.
- **Morningside Park**: Well-established sub-area of West Asheville. Primarily older housing stock with some new infill development, consisting of primarily single-family residences with several townhomes.
- **Fairfax/Virginia**: Established neighborhood, mix of older housing stock and infill residences, noteworthy low-income population, divided by the construction of I-240 in the 1960s.
- **Kentucky/Hanover/Pisgah View Apartments**: Modest single-family housing and the Asheville Housing Authority's Pisgah View Apartments, noteworthy minority and low-income populations, divided by the construction of I-240 in the 1960s.
- **Burton Street**: Established neighborhood with a mix of older housing stock and infill residences, noteworthy minority and low-income populations, divided by the construction of I-240 in the 1960s.
- **Westwood Place**: Established neighborhood with a mix of older housing stock and infill residences, divided by the construction of I-240 in the 1960s.

- **Murphy Hill**: Community of five residences, entirely single-family housing, and noteworthy low-income populations. All residents have been in the community since the 1950's and are mostly elderly.
- **Emma Road/Bingham Road**: Modest single-family housing, two manufactured-home parks, and the income-restricted Woodridge Apartments. Notable minority, low-income, and Language Assistance populations.

On the east side of the French Broad River, neighborhoods within the DCIA are:

- **West End/Clingman**: Mix of recently built affordable housing options and older homes, notable minority and low-income populations, divided by the construction of I-240 in the 1960s.
- **River Arts District**: This neighborhood overlaps with the West End/ Clingman community and contains a mix of new residential and commercial spaces as well as noteworthy minority and low-income populations. This area has seen a turnover of old industrial sites and warehouses into art studios. This area has been identified by the City as a focal point for redevelopment activities.
- **Hillcrest Apartments**: Owned by the Asheville Housing Authority, only has one access point, notable minority and low-income populations, isolated by the construction of I-240 in the 1960s.
- **Houston/Courtland**: Predominantly older homes. Census indicates notable minority and low-income populations, but local representatives indicate it is predominately non-minority and mixed income.
- **Montford**: Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, contains a mix of older housing stock, recently constructed infill residences, and the Klondyke Apartments (owned by the Asheville Housing Authority), notable minority and low-income populations.
- **UNC Asheville**: Liberal arts college with approximately 3,500 students, surrounding neighborhood is comprised primarily of student housing. Census indicates a notable low-income population, but this is likely due to the presence of the students.

The general locations of these neighborhoods can be seen on Figure 4 in the Appendix.

The I-26/I-240 corridor also travels through areas of commercial development. The largest is centered on the Patton Avenue interchange. Patton Avenue was formerly a local street which was absorbed by I-240 in the 1960s. The Westgate Shopping Center, the Crowne Plaza Resort (with golf, tennis, and swimming facilities for guests), and other businesses are located here. Haywood Road between Patton Avenue and Clingman Avenue largely serves as the "Main Street" of West Asheville. The east bank of the French Broad River, throughout the Asheville city limits, has commercial and industrial uses.

Project Description Summary

State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Project I-2513, also referred to as the proposed I-26 Connector, is approximately 5.1 miles in length from the I-26/I-40/I-240 interchange to Broadway Street, and is divided into three sections – C, A, and B (listed geographically from south to north).

Section C is the proposed modification of the existing I-26/I-40/I-240 interchange. There are currently four alternatives under consideration for Section C (Alternatives A2, C2, D1, and F1).

Section A is the widening (with safety modifications) of existing I-240 from a four-lane freeway to an eight-lane freeway between the I-26/I-40/I-240 interchange and a point just south of the Patton Avenue interchange. Section A also includes the extension of Amboy Road westward along the northern side of I-240 to Brevard Road. There is only one alternative under consideration for Section A.

Section B is the proposed freeway section on new location from just south of Patton Avenue to the interchange at US 19/23/70 and Broadway (SR 1781). This new location section would be constructed on the west side of the French Broad River, before crossing the river north of the existing I-240/Patton Avenue bridges. Four alternatives for Section B (Alternatives 3, 3C, 4, and 4B) are currently under consideration. Alternatives 4 and 4B separate interstate and local traffic on Patton Avenue, cross under Patton Avenue, and modify existing interchanges.

Community Outreach Summary

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) has held numerous meetings with community stakeholders since the project's inception. Beyond the traditional Citizens Informational Workshops, public hearings, and small group meetings, NCDOT has incorporated feedback from several community committees and/or organizations.

Ideas and recommendations from the general public caused NCDOT to add two alternatives (4 and 4B) that separate I-240 and Patton Avenue traffic crossing the existing I-240/Patton Avenue bridges. NCDOT also included as part of the project major interchange modifications to the I-26/I-40/I-240 interchange southwest of Asheville.

Major topics discussed during outreach include:

- Asheville Design Center (ADC) "Ten Principles for Livable Communities" and the Key Design Goals.
- Separation of local and interstate traffic on Patton Avenue.
- Match the scale of the project to community character, increase connectivity, and minimize impacts.
- The desire to reduce the footprint of the corridor.
- The desire to create a "gateway" to Asheville.
- The opposition to an eight-lane cross section.
- Improved pedestrian and bicycle connectivity.
- The incorporation of aesthetically-pleasing streetscape and landscape improvements.
- The perception of cost versus community impacts.

Community Impacts & Burdens Summary

Section C

- Both Clairmont Crest and Willow Lakes Mobile Home Parks will be impacted through minor residential displacements with all alternatives; however most of the proposed alternatives are located within existing NCDOT right-of-way.

Section A

- Burton Street, Kentucky/Hanover/Pisgah View, Fairfax/Virginia, and Westwood Place would experience impacts primarily due to increased noise levels, physical intrusion from the roadway, reduced community cohesion & neighborhood stability, and temporary construction effects.
- These four neighborhood/communities have been impacted by previous transportation – related projects and have the potential to experience recurring impacts. These impacts would be considered high and adverse.

Section B

- Burton Street and Westwood Place would experience impacts primarily attributed to increased noise levels, physical intrusion, and temporary construction impacts.
- Both Burton Street and Westwood Place have been impacted by previous transportation-related projects and have the potential to experience recurring impacts. These impacts would be considered high and adverse.
- Montford would experience impacts primarily due to increase noise levels and potneital visual or aesthetic effects related to proposed new bridges over the French Broad River, as well as temporary construction impacts. These impacts would be considered high and adverse.

Community Benefits Summary

The construction of the project is expected to result in reduced congestion and traffic delays that would save Asheville citizens and regional travelers valuable time. In addition, the proposed project will address multiple roadway deficiencies that should result in a safer facility for the traveling public (part of the project's purpose and need). A similar level of benefit is expected with all alternatives. While residents of the DCIA may bear the burden of the project, they will gain some benefit through reduced congestion. Non-DCIA residents will likely use the facility more than local neighborhood residents, and will gain more benefits than those within the DCIA.

Key Community Characteristics

- **Community Activity Areas and Resources**
  - Haywood Road between Patton Avenue and Clingman Avenue generally serves as the "Main Street" of West Asheville.
  - Public facilities within the DCIA include Biltmore Estate, University of North Carolina – Asheville, Riverside Cemetery, numerous churches, schools, and parks. Public facilities can be seen on Figure 3 in the Appendix.
  - The River Arts District is an area of former industrial mills and warehouses that has since evolved into a burgeoning arts district with restaurants, bars, and other small retail shops.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

- There are a number of bicycle facilities scattered throughout the DCIA. In addition, NCDOT has assigned local neighborhood bike routes on several streets in the DCIA.
- Existing sidewalks are located along several streets in the DCIA. There are two active pedestrian bridges over I-240.
- Within the DCIA, segments of the French Broad River Greenway link the French Broad River Park to Carrier Park and Hominy Creek River Park. Future greenways are planned.

Vehicular Facilities

- There are a number of roadway facilities that provide circulation to and around the corridor. Many of these serve as short-cuts and cut-through roads for residents traveling across the project area.
- Major arterials include Patton Avenue, Haywood Road, Amboy Road, Hill Street, Broadway, and Riverside Drive.

Community Safety Resources

- The Buncombe County Rescue Squad Station #2 is the only emergency services facility identified within the DCIA.
- The City of Asheville Fire Department and Buncombe County Emergency Services provide emergency medical services throughout the DCIA predominately through the use of several facilities located outside of the DCIA.

Environmental Justice & Limited English Proficiency Community Characteristics

- Census data indicates a notable presence of minority and low-income populations meeting the criteria for Environmental Justice within the Demographic Study Area (DSA) and minority and low-income communities were observed within the Direct Community Impacts Area (DCIA) during the site visit.
- Nine of the sixteen Block Groups included in the DSA contain percentages of minority populations greater than 10 percentage points higher than in the county. In addition, thirteen of these Block Groups also have populations living below the poverty level that were 5 percentage points higher than in the county.
- Census data does not indicate Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations meeting the US Department of Justice LEP Safe Harbor threshold but does indicate a Spanish-speaking population that exceeds 50 persons within the Demographic Study Area that may require language assistance.
- There are two Block Groups where Census data indicates Spanish-speaking populations that may require language assistance. These Block Groups generally correspond with the Montford community and the Emma Road/Bingham Road community.

Key Direct Community Impacts

Physical, Social and Psychological Aspects

- Residential and business displacements are anticipated in the Fairfax/Virginia, the Kentucky/Hanover, Burton Street, and Westwood Place communities. The effects to

these neighborhoods may be minimized because the anticipated displacements are on the periphery of the neighborhood.

- Section B (all alternatives) will result in the construction of new aerial structures in the vicinity of the I-240/Patton Avenue interchange. There is local concern that the new structures would be out of character with the community and would affect the viewshed along the French Broad River..

Relocations

- The 2010 *EIS Relocation Reports for STIP Project I-2513* indicate that there will be a problem of obtaining housing within financial means in the community or vicinity, but that last resort housing will enable any person(s) being displaced to obtain housing within their financial means in the general area or region.

Economic Effects

- The *Direct Land Use and Economic Effects Assessment* (2014) concluded that the effect of any build alternative on property tax receipts would not likely be substantial.
- The direct land use and economic effects assessment also concluded that there would be no adverse effects on business or employment opportunities in the area as a result of the proposed project.
- Right-of-way acquisitions related to Sections A and B may affect the amount of parking available for businesses along Burton Street, Haywood Street, and for the Crowne Plaza Resort.
- Relocation reports did not break down the number and type of business displacements by neighborhood; therefore, the displacements for specific minority businesses are unknown.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Impacts

- The Stewart Street pedestrian bridge will be removed for Section A of the project, while the Hillcrest Apartment pedestrian bridge will be removed only for Alternatives 4 and 4B (Section B).
- Currently many pedestrians and bicyclists use State Street. The segment under the I-26/I-240 bridge does not have lights, which makes usage difficult at night and presents safety concerns for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Overall, bicycle and pedestrian access should not be affected by STIP Project I-2513 since it is a proposed freeway facility with limited access. Additionally, the proposed project will not preclude construction of any bicycle or pedestrian facilities within the Direct Community Impact Area.

Vehicular Facility Impacts

- The preliminary design plans indicate that the connection of Hanover Street to Haywood Road may be closed to provide access control within the immediate area of the interchange (Section A). The homes on Hanover Street can still be accessed through other local roads.
- The exit ramp from US 19/23/70 northbound to Hill Street will be removed with Alternatives 4 and 4B (Section B). This will reduce access to Montford and Houston/Courtland (predominantly minority areas). Hill Street between Riverside Drive and Montford Avenue would become a local roadway without a connection to the proposed freeway.

- As part of Section A, Amboy Road will be extended along the west side of I-240 to Brevard Road (NC 191). The extension of Amboy Road should provide better local connectivity to and circulation within the Fairfax/Virginia neighborhood, but there is also the potential for increased cut-through traffic.
- Alternatives 4 and 4B (Section B) includes a new connection/access point which could be utilized by residents of the Hillcrest Apartments. Community residents indicate this proposed connection would help to reconnect them to the rest of the City through improved vehicular and pedestrian access.
- Access to Westgate and Crowne Plaza will be slightly modified with any of the Section B alternatives currently under consideration. These modifications should provide more direct access to these businesses.

Temporary Construction Effects

- An assessment of temporary construction effects (which are primarily operational or related to construction staging, detours, lane reductions, etc.) for the four alternatives included in Section C resulted in all alternatives having at least some construction effects that have a magnitude that would be classified as High; however, none of the alternatives had any effects that would be considered Severe.
- An assessment of temporary construction effects estimated that construction of Section A would result in four High magnitude and one Severe magnitude construction effects for closures and offsite detours and one High magnitude construction effect on a business.
- Construction of Section B would result in all alternatives having at least some construction effects that have a magnitude that would be classified as High or Severe. In general Alternative 3 would have the fewest construction effects, with three construction effects being considered High and two effects being considered Severe. Alternative 4B would have the next fewest construction effects with two construction effects being considered High and three effects being considered Severe. Alternative 4 would have the greatest effects due to construction with two construction effects being considered High and four effects being considered Severe.

Community Safety Effects

- Emergency response times may temporarily increase during construction of the project due to increased congestion resulting from construction activities, potential access restrictions in construction zones, lane closures, and detours. Local officials indicate that alternative access is available to the only emergency services facility in the DCIA (Buncombe County Rescue Squad Station #2), and they requested that NCDOT provide construction phasing details to all local emergency service providers.

Recurring Community/ Neighborhood Impacts

- The neighborhoods within the DCIA have been affected in the past through construction of previous transportation infrastructure projects. The original construction of I-240 in the mid-1960s divided established neighborhoods such as Fairfax/Virginia, Kentucky/Hanover/Pisgah View Apartments, Burton Street, Westwood Place, and West End/Clingman, and there is a potential for recurring impacts as a result of STIP Project I-2513.

- According to NCDOT documentation and stakeholder input during the neighborhood outreach meetings, residents of adjacent neighborhoods have the perception that they have been burdened in the past.

Environmental Justice Assessment

- Notably adverse community impacts are anticipated with this project and these effects appear to affect EJ populations notably more than the general population and have higher adverse effects on the EJ population than on the general population; thus, impacts to minority and low-income populations appear to be disproportionately high and adverse. Benefits and burdens resulting from the project are not anticipated to be equitably distributed throughout the community.
- In addition, the identified minority and low-income populations within the DCIA will experience high and adverse impacts resulting from the recurring impacts that resulted from the previous I-240 project.
- The identified minority and low-income populations within the DCIA (and located along Sections A and B) will also receive project benefits in the form of improved mobility and system linkage, enhanced accessibility, and congestion reduction. Separating local traffic from I-240, particularly in the Patton Avenue area, will result in notable community benefits.
- The project will result in improved connectivity for the Fairfax/Virginia neighborhood, and Alternatives 4 and 4B (Section B) will improve connectivity to the Hillcrest Apartments.
- Many of the project's impacts have been avoided or minimized by design changes, and partially offset by increased benefits to some neighborhoods. However, disproportionately high and adverse community impacts still exist, including possible loss of the pedestrian bridge to the Hillcrest Apartments, and possible loss of neighborhood churches.

Recommendations

- The Project Planning Engineer should consult with NCDOT Public Involvement about updating the public involvement plan for the project to include consideration of Spanish-speaking populations in the project development process.
- The Project Planning Engineer should coordinate with NCDOT Public Involvement to evaluate opportunities for continued outreach to the minority and low-income communities/neighborhoods that have the potential to experience disproportionately high and adverse effects and/or unmitigated recurring impacts from the proposed project. At a minimum, this outreach would include the following neighborhoods and communities: Fairfax/Virginia, Kentucky/Hanover/Pisgah View Apartments, Burton Street, Westwood Place, Emma Road/Bingham Road, and Montford.
- The Project Planning Engineer should consult with NCDOT Public Involvement about updating the public involvement plan for the project prior to the public hearing for continuing to include consideration of businesses (and the City of Asheville) in the project development process. The purpose of this outreach would be to engage businesses which may lose parking spaces.

- NCDOT should coordinate with first responders such as Buncombe County Rescue Squad, City of Asheville Fire Department, and Buncombe County Emergency Services Department during development of the construction phasing and traffic control plans. This coordination should also include Asheville City Schools since they have multiple bus routes and facilities within the DCIA.
- NCDOT should consider context sensitive bridge designs and engage the community regarding design options and features that would help to minimize perceived impacts to the French Broad River viewshed.
- The Project Planning Engineer should coordinate with NCDOT Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation to evaluate opportunities for consideration of bicycle and pedestrian facilities along non-interstate facilities as part of the project design and to ensure that pedestrian facilities on the Haywood Road bridge meet NCDOT and ADA design requirements.
- NCDOT should consider improved lighting for pedestrian and bicycle safety under the State Street bridge at the Haywood Road interchange.
- NCDOT should consider maintaining the pedestrian bridge near the Hillcrest Apartments, and perhaps improving lighting, in this predominantly minority area.
- NCDOT should consider enhancements such as re-connection of local streets, wide sidewalks, bicycle lanes, streetscape improvements, pedestrian-scale lighting, pedestrian crossings and countdown timers wherever it will modify several side streets and intersecting roadways as part of the proposed project. Specific details of these enhancements, including design criteria and potential cost sharing mechanisms, would need to be determined between NCDOT and the City of Asheville to ensure that they are in accordance with established state and federal policies.
- NCDOT should consider the inclusion of pedestrian-oriented streetscapes, and landscaping at I-240 and Haywood Road to promote compatible growth and neighborhood cohesion.
- NCDOT should evaluate whether it is feasible to construct a roundabout on the corner of Clingman Avenue and Patton Avenue for consistency with the WECAN Citizens Master Plan. Additional landscaping along Patton Avenue would be beneficial to fulfill the Asheville Design Center’s goals for a tree-lined urban boulevard.

II. PROJECT AND COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

Community Description

The City of Asheville and Buncombe County are located in the heart of the Blue Ridge Mountains in western North Carolina. Asheville is the seat of Buncombe County's government, and is the largest city in western North Carolina with a population of 85,712 in 2012. Asheville is located near several major interstates and regional highways (I-26, I-40, I-240, US 19/23/70, US 25, US 74, US 74A, and the Blue Ridge Parkway).

Residences in West End/Clingman neighborhood.

Buncombe County was created out of portions of Burke and Rutherford County in 1791. Originally inhabited by Cherokee Indians, the region was crisscrossed by trading paths that intersected near present day Asheville. Shortly after the Revolutionary War, Scotch-Irish settlers began moving into the area and the City of Asheville was incorporated in 1797. The completion of the Buncombe Turnpike in 1827, which connected Tennessee and Kentucky to South Carolina, brought about economic expansion throughout the region. The Turnpike allowed "drovers" from points westward to move herds of sheep, cattle, and turkeys to the population centers of South Carolina while providing travelers with a route westward.

The coming of the railroads in 1880 helped revive the economy of Buncombe County, which had slowed due to the Civil War. Tobacco, fruit, and dairy products became important crops, and the railroad offered a means of transporting these crops. Expansion of the timber, handicrafts, and agricultural industries brought economic diversity to the region, and tourism became an important industry by the turn of the century. Many of these industries continue to play key roles in the economic vitality of Buncombe County.

The I-26/I-240 corridor skirts along the edge of the Biltmore Estate, a National Register Historic District. The project also traverses urbanized portions of West Asheville before crossing the French Broad River. The West Asheville area, for the purposes of this report, primarily includes those neighborhoods west of the French Broad River and south of Patton Avenue. These neighborhoods generally consist of single-family homes which are typically older than those found in Buncombe County (the median year of structures built in the Demographic Study Area is 1957 while Buncombe County is 1980), with not only some infill development in recent years, but also conversion of multi-family housing to single-family housing. Some of the land along the proposed project alignment is also utilized for commercial and industrial purposes.

In the 1990s, Buncombe County experienced economic and population growth; however, growth has slowed in the 2000s. Although there have been job losses in the manufacturing sector, jobs

have increased in industry sectors such as health care and social assistance. This could be attributed to Asheville's attractiveness as a retirement destination.

During the 2000s, overall employment and population growth increased in Buncombe County. Job losses continued in the manufacturing sector, while employment in health care, social assistance, accommodation, and food services continued to increase.

The I-26/I-240 project area through West Asheville has not experienced the same kind of growth as did Buncombe County in the last couple of decades as West Asheville is primarily a well-established residential area. This area however, is characterized by the notable presence of traditionally underserved populations such as low-income and minorities.

Based on outreach efforts and discussions with local planners, the West Asheville neighborhoods/communities found within the DCIA are as follows:

- **Clairmont Crest Mobile Home Park**: Noteworthy minority and low-income populations.
- **Willow Lakes Mobile Home Park**: Noteworthy minority and low-income populations.
- **Morningside Park**: Well-established sub-area of West Asheville
- **Fairfax/Virginia**: Established neighborhood, mix of older housing stock and infill residences, noteworthy low-income population, divided by the construction of I-240 in the 1960s.
- **Kentucky/Hanover/Pisgah View Apartments**: Modest single-family housing and the Asheville Housing Authority's Pisgah View Apartments, noteworthy minority and low-income populations, divided by the construction of I-240 in the 1960s.
- **Burton Street**: Established neighborhood with a mix of older housing stock and infill residences, notable minority populations, divided by the construction of I-240 in the 1960s.
- **Westwood Place**: Established neighborhood with a mix of older housing stock and infill residences, divided by the construction of I-240 in the 1960s.
- **Murphy Hill**: Community of five residences, entirely single-family housing, all residents have been in the community since the 1950's and are mostly elderly.
- **Emma Road/Bingham Road**: Modest single-family housing, two manufactured-home parks, and the income-restricted Woodridge Apartments, notable minority, low-income, and Language Assistance populations.

On the east side of the French Broad River, there are additional neighborhoods within the DCIA:

- **West End/Clingman**: Mix of recently built affordable housing options and older homes, notable minority and low-income populations, divided by the construction of I-240 in the 1960s.
- **River Arts District**: This neighborhood overlaps with the West End/ Clingman community and contains a mix of new residential and commercial spaces. This area has seen a turnover of old industrial sites and warehouses into art studios. This area has been identified by the City as a focal point for redevelopment activities.

- **Hillcrest Apartments**: Owned by the Asheville Housing Authority, only has one access point, notable minority and low-income populations, isolated by the construction of I-240 in the 1960s.
- **Houston/Courtland**: Predominantly older homes. Census indicates notable minority and low-income populations, but local representatives indicate it is predominately non-minority and mixed income.
- **Montford**: Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, contains a mix of older housing stock, recently constructed infill residences, and the Klondyke Apartments (owned by the Asheville Housing Authority), notable minority and low-income populations.
- **UNC Asheville**: Liberal arts college with approximately 3,500 students, surrounding neighborhood is comprised primarily of student housing. Census indicates a notable low-income population, but this is likely due to the presence of the students.

The I-26/I-240 corridor also travels adjacent to an area of commercial development centered on the Patton Avenue interchange. Patton Avenue was formerly a local street which was absorbed by I-240 in the 1960s. The Westgate Shopping Center, the Crowne Plaza Resort (with golf, tennis and swimming facilities for guests), and other businesses are located here. Based on site visit observations from August 2013, the Westgate Shopping Center and Crowne Plaza Resort have been redeveloped with the intent of transforming it into a mixed-use lifestyle center. Haywood Road between Patton Avenue and Clingman Avenue generally serves as the "Main Street" of West Asheville.

Community Context

Using NC OneMap, French Broad River MPO, ESRI and URS GIS information and input from local planners, a community context diagram was developed for the Direct Community Impact Area (DCIA). This information is shown on Figure 3 in the Appendix. A summary of the information is included below:

- I-26, I-40, I-240, Haywood Road, Brevard Road, Patton Avenue, US 19/23/70, and Broadway are major vehicular pathways.
- The French Broad River Greenway and Glenn's Creek Greenway are two greenway facilities in the study area.
- Westgate Shopping Center, Haywood Road, River Arts District, and West End/Clingman are community commercial nodes.
- There are thirteen parks in the DCIA. This includes Carrier Park, Hummingbird Park, Burton Street Park, Jean Webb Park, Murray Hill Park, Owens-Bell Park, Riverside Cemetery, Southside Center, Aston Park, Magnolia Park, Montford Park, West Asheville Park, and the Montford Recreation Center.
- Asheville avoided most of the urban renewal period of the 1950s and 60s, so much of its urban fabric is intact. There are seven National Register Districts in the DCIA. This includes the Biltmore Estate Historic District, the Asheville School Historic District, West Asheville-Aycock School Historic District, Downtown Asheville Historic District Boundary Increase, the Riverside Industrial Historic District, the Clingman Avenue Historic District, and the Montford Area Historic District.

- There are twelve neighborhoods in the DCIA with higher concentrations of minority and/or low-income populations. The general locations of these neighborhoods are shown in Figures 3A, 3B, and 3C in the Appendix. These neighborhoods include: Clairmont Crest Mobile Home Park, Pisgah View Apartments, Fairfax/Virginia Neighborhood, Westwood Place Neighborhood, Burton Street Neighborhood, West End/Clingman Neighborhood, Hillcrest Apartments, Houston/Courtland Neighborhood, Westgate Area, Emma Road/Bingham Road Neighborhood, River Arts District, and the Historic Montford Neighborhood.
- Census data also indicates the presence of LA populations in the Emma Road/Bingham Road and Montford neighborhoods.
- Community edges or barriers include Interstate corridors (I-26, I-40 and I-240), US routes (US 19/23/70), the French Broad River, the Norfolk Southern Railroad, the Craggy Spur Line of the Norfolk Southern Railroad, and the Murphy Branch line of the Norfolk Southern Railroad.

Project Description

STIP Project I-2513, the proposed I-26 Connector, would be approximately 5.1 miles in length from the I-26/I-40/I-240 interchange to Broadway Street (SR 1781) and is divided into three sections – C, A, and B (listed geographically from south to north – see Figure 1 in the Appendix).

Section C is the proposed modification of the existing I-26/I-40/I-240 interchange. There are currently four alternatives under consideration for Section C (Alts. A2, C2, D1, F1) and they are generally described below:

- **Interchange Alternative A2.** This interchange option provides a fully directional interchange configuration for traffic movements between I-26, I-240, and I-40. It also includes a westbound collector-distributor along westbound I-40. A modified diamond interchange is proposed at NC 191 and I-40, with an entrance ramp loop from NC 191 to I-40 westbound**.**

- **Interchange Alternative C2.** This interchange option provides a semi-directional interchange configuration with loops instead of directional ramps for southbound I-26/I-240 to eastbound I-40, and for westbound I-40 to southbound I-26. Collector-distributors are proposed along both sides of I-40 through the I-26/I-240 and NC 191 interchanges, and the proposed NC 191 interchange provides the same loops in the eastern quadrants as the existing interchange**.**

- **Interchange Alternative D1.** This interchange alternative provides a semi-directional interchange configuration with a loop instead of a directional ramp from southbound I-26/I-240 to eastbound I-40, and a conventional diamond-type interchange at NC 191 and I-40.

- **Interchange Alternative F1.** This interchange option provides a semi-directional interchange configuration much like the existing configuration, but with an additional loop from southbound I-26/I-240 to eastbound I-40 and a directional ramp from westbound I-40 to northbound I-26/I-240.

Section A is the widening (with safety modifications) of existing I-240 from a four-lane freeway to an eight-lane freeway between the I-26/I-40/I-240 interchange and a point just south of the Patton Avenue interchange. The widening of I-240 accomplished as part of Section A will require acquisition of additional right-of-way. Section A also includes the extension of Amboy Road westward along the northern side of I-240 to Brevard Road. There is only one alternative under consideration for Section A.

Section B is the proposed freeway section on new location from just south of Patton Avenue to the interchange at US 19/23/70 and Broadway (SR 1781). This new location section would be constructed on the west side of the French Broad River, before crossing the river approximately 0.5 to 1.0 mile north of the existing I-240/Patton Avenue bridges. The I-240/Patton Avenue bridges over the French Broad River are known locally as the Smoky Park Bridges. Four Section B alternatives (Alternatives 3, 3C, 4, and 4B) are currently under consideration. These alternatives are generally described below.

- **Alternative 3**. The proposed alignment would cross the edge of the Crowne Plaza Resort golf course and would not affect the Westgate Shopping Center. The alignment would parallel the French Broad River and the main line of the Norfolk Southern Railway before turning east and crossing the French Broad River approximately one mile north of the Smoky Park Bridges. East of the French Broad River, I-26 combines with US 19/23/70 approximately 2,500 feet south of the SR 1781 (Broadway) interchange. Due to the topography and existing infrastructure, Alternative 3 would require an approximately 2,300 foot long bridge that would span from slightly north of Patton Avenue to north of SR 1338 (Emma Road) crossing the Murphy Branch line of the Norfolk Southern Railway and SR 1338 (Emma Road).

  The existing I-240 interchange with US 19/23/70/Patton Avenue east of the French Broad River would not be modified as part of Alternative 3. Additionally, freeway traffic on I-240 and local traffic on Patton Avenue would not be separated under this alternative with both using the Smoky Park Bridges.

- **Alternative 3C**. The proposed alignment would cross the edge of the Crowne Plaza Resort golf course and would not affect the Westgate Shopping Center. The alignment would parallel the French Broad River and the main line of the Norfolk Southern Railway before turning east and crossing the French Broad River approximately one mile north of the Smoky Park Bridges. East of the French Broad River, I-26 combines with US 19/23/70 approximately 2,500 feet south of the SR 1781 (Broadway) interchange. Due to the topography and existing infrastructure, Alternative 3C would require an approximately 2,300 foot long bridge that would span from slightly north of Patton Avenue to north of SR 1338 (Emma Road) crossing the Murphy Branch line of the Norfolk Southern Railway and SR 1338 (Emma Road).

  The existing I-240 interchange with US 19/23/70/Patton Avenue east of the French Broad River would not be modified as part of Alternative 3C. In addition, freeway traffic on I-

240 and local traffic on Patton Avenue would not be separated under this alternative with both using the Smoky Park Bridges.

- **Alternative 4.** Alternative 4 was developed to separate the local Patton Avenue traffic from the I-40 through-traffic. To create this separation, the split between I-26 and I-240 would be moved to the north and the existing Smoky Park Bridges would be converted to serve Patton Avenue traffic only. The I-26 freeway alignment would be very similar to Alternative 3 and would turn the freeway to the east and then north, crossing under Patton Avenue. The new location freeway would cross through the edge of Crowne Plaza Resort golf course and along the west side of the Westgate Shopping Center. The alignment would continue running parallel along the west bank of the French Broad River and the mainline of the Norfolk Southern Railway. The alignment would cross the French Broad River approximately one mile north of the Smoky Park Bridges. The new location freeway carrying I-26 would then merge into US 19/23/70 approximately 2,500 feet south of the Broadway (SR 1781) interchange.

  The interchange of I-26/I-240 and Patton Avenue west of the French Broad River would have a conventional diamond interchange configuration with ramps in all four quadrants. North of the I-26/I-24 interchange with US 19-23-74A/Patton Avenue, the combined I-26 ad I-240 roadway split. The mainline would continue to the north and I-240 would turn to the east and cross the French Broad River along two flyover bridges. One bridge would carry eastbound traffic and the other bridge would carry westbound I-240 traffic.

  The existing interchange that connects to Hill Street and Riverside Drive (SR 1477) would be closed due to the proximity of the proposed I-240 alignment. Replacement access would be provided by a new bridge south of the existing Atkinson Road crossing and a new roadway that would connect Riverside Drive (SR 1477) to Patton Avenue. A new connection from Atkinson Drive to Patton Avenue would also be provided on the west side of the interchange.

- **Alternative 4B.** Alternative 4B was developed to separate the local Patton Avenue traffic from the I-240 through-traffic, and to minimize the footprint of the design. The I-26 freeway alignment for Alternative 4B would be very similar to Alternatives 3 and 4. Alternative 4B would cross beneath Patton Avenue and parts of the Crowne Plaza golf course along the west side of the Westgate Shopping Center property. The I-26 alignment would then cross the French Broad River and continue along the east side of the river, crossing the Craggy spur line of the Norfolk Southern Railway, Riverside Drive (SR 1477), and would become an elevated structure over US 19/23/70 approximately one-half mile north of the Smoky Park Bridges before merging with US 19/23/70 south of Broadway. Similar to Alternative 4, this alternative would also realign I-240 on the east side of the French Broad River to follow the alignment of US 19/23/70 northward past the Hillcrest Community and onto new I-240 flyover bridges crossing the river and connecting to the I-26 Connector on the west side of the river. This would remove I-240 traffic from the existing Smoky Park Bridges over the French Broad River. The Smoky Park Bridges would continue to accommodate Patton Avenue traffic.

East of the French Broad River, the configuration of the proposed interchange with Patton Avenue would be identical to Alternative 4.

The I-26 Connector would be designed with full control of access. The existing four-lane section of I-240 would be widened (both inside and outside of existing right-of-way) to eight lanes with a variable width median ranging from approximately 26 feet to 35 feet. The new location portion of the I-26 Connector would be six lanes, including a median of variable width (approximately 26-35 feet). The proposed 26-foot median includes 12-foot paved shoulders and a median barrier, while the 35-foot median includes 12-foot paved shoulders with an 11-foot raised planter within the median barriers. The outside shoulder width is 14-feet wide, including 12-foot wide paved shoulder for both typical section configurations.

US 19/23/70, between the new location section and Broadway, would be widened (both inside and outside of existing right-of-way) from four lanes to six lanes, in order to connect to the six-lane new location section.

The project includes the removal of a pedestrian bridge (which is no longer in use) at Stewart Street (Section A). A second pedestrian bridge located near Hillcrest Apartments will also be removed as part of Alternatives 4 and 4B (Section B). The existing and active pedestrian bridge near the Isaac Dickson School will be replaced for Alternatives 4 and 4B; however, if Alternative 3 or 3C is selected, neither bridge will be affected.

According to the March 2008 Draft Environmental Impact Statement, the primary purposes of STIP Project I-2513 are:

- To provide a freeway-to-freeway connection between I-26 south of Asheville and US 19-23 north of Asheville;
- To provide a link in the transportation system connecting a direct, multi-lane, freeway facility meeting interstate standards from the Port of Charleston, South Carolina to I-81 near Kingsport, Tennessee;
- To improve the capacity of existing I-240 west of Asheville to accommodate the existing and forecasted (2033 design year) traffic in this growing area;
- To reduce traffic delays and congestion along the I-240 crossing of the French Broad River, which currently operates at capacity;
- To increase the remaining useful service of the existing Smoky Park Bridges by substantially reducing the volume of traffic on this vital crossing of the French Broad River; and
- To improve the safety of I-240 west of Asheville.

Public Comments

NCDOT has held numerous meetings with community stakeholders since the project's inception, and particularly since 1998. On April 23, 1998, a Citizens Informational Workshop was held to present three proposed project alternatives to the general public. In late 1999, public concern about the project prompted the City of Asheville to request that NCDOT pursue additional public involvement. NCDOT partnered with the City of Asheville, business groups, affected

neighborhoods, and other public interest organizations to form a Community Coordinating Committee (CCC) to bring the greater community to a consensus regarding the project.

The CCC, with the help of NCDOT and the City of Asheville, conducted a Project Educational Forum on June 15, 2000 to present project design issues and to encourage further public participation in a Project Design Forum. On July 21 and 22, 2000, the CCC organized and conducted the Project Design Forum to allow interested citizens the opportunity to suggest improvements and become involved in the project design. Ideas and recommendations from the general public caused NCDOT to add two alternatives that separate I-240 and Patton Avenue traffic crossing the existing I-240/Patton Avenue bridges. NCDOT also included major interchange modifications to the I-26/I-40/I-240 interchange southwest of Asheville as part of this project.

These interchange modifications were reviewed and discussed at a Citizens Informational Workshop in June 2004. The next month, NCDOT also conducted a Citizens Informational Forum to explain their recommendation for an eight-lane section along the I-240 segment of the Asheville Connector.

A Citizens Informational Workshop was held in Asheville on October 9-10, 2006. NCDOT received approximately 48 comment forms during this workshop. These comments revealed that 21 of those commenting preferred a local architectural group's options for Section B, Alternative 4 and Section B, Alternative 5. This group, associated with the Asheville Design Center (ADC), has developed an alternative concept that involves a "signature" bridge over the French Broad River. Proponents of this alternative concept feel that the bridge will have a smaller footprint, thus freeing up unused NCDOT right-of-way for development.

About 20 persons commenting during the workshop preferred separation of Patton Avenue and I-240 traffic. However, 12 persons objected to Alternatives 4 and 5 completely, while six persons preferred Alternative 5. Option F-1 (for interchange modifications) appeared to be the most popular option for Section C. There were a few recommendations for bicycle and pedestrian amenities on intersecting roadways.

I-26 Aesthetics Advisory Committee members attended this workshop and offered written comments. Comments included the desire to reduce the footprint of the corridor to "free up" land, to include natural landscaping in the median with a more formal landscaping around retaining walls and noise barriers, to provide lighting at all bridges and underpasses, and the desire to use signage to indicate the corridor is a gateway to Asheville.

In 2007, using information in the "Community Identification Technical Memorandum, STIP Project I-2513" dated March 23, 2007, and guidance from the North Carolina Department of Transportation's Project Development and Environmental Analysis Unit (NCDOT PDEA), five neighborhoods were identified for additional outreach. These neighborhoods were the Burton Street Neighborhood, the Bingham Road area, the West End/Clingman Neighborhood, the Hillcrest & Houston/Courtland area, and Westwood Place.

Neighborhood representatives were identified through previous public involvement efforts by NCDOT PDEA and the prime NEPA consultant, communication with City of Asheville staff, and internet research. Representatives from each of the five neighborhoods were interviewed in order to gain initial insight into the community and its concerns, and to identify effective outreach techniques to engage maximum participation in neighborhood meetings.

In July 2007, meetings were held in each of the five neighborhoods to solicit feedback regarding the potential effects of STIP Project I-2513. Fourteen respondents completed a comment sheet or provided written comments via email. In general, there was mixed support for the project within these five neighborhoods. Below is a summary of comments from all meetings:

- Residents participating in these meetings indicated a slight preference for Section B, Alternative 4.
- Residents support the separation of interstate traffic from local traffic.
- There is general opposition to an eight-lane cross section.
- Residents felt that the local design plans were not adequately considered.
- Residents would like to see components of the project improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity within the project area, especially in the area of the Westgate Shopping Center
- Residents are anxious for the lengthy planning process to conclude, and are apprehensive about how their issues and concerns will be incorporated into the planning document.
- Residents would like aesthetically pleasing sound walls, landscaped medians and buffers as part of the project.
- There is a perception that the preferred alternative selection is biased toward costs. Residents felt that alternatives impacting working class African American neighborhoods are more affordable for the State than alternatives in other Asheville neighborhoods, therefore skewing the selection of the preferred alternative.
- Burton Street residents attending the outreach meeting remember the division of their neighborhood by the construction of I-240, and feel that Section B, Alternative 3 would have negative effects to the remaining Burton Street neighborhood community.

More complete documentation of these neighborhood outreach meetings is included in the "*Neighborhood Outreach Technical Memorandum*" dated January 2015.

The project planning process for the I-26 Connector project has included an extensive public outreach component to engage the locals in the decision-making process. As a result of this outreach, an additional alternative (Section B, Alternative 4B) was developed and is currently being considered as a detailed study alternative. Additionally, based on the public input received, several refinements to the project design were incorporated to minimize impacts to the surrounding community.

Following the issuance of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) in March 2008, a Corridor Public Hearing was held on September 16, 2008 in the Ballroom of the Renaissance Hotel in Asheville. The detailed study alternatives evaluated in the Draft EIS (Alternatives 2, 3, and 4) were presented, as well as the Functional Design level maps for Section B, Alternative 4B. Participants were encouraged to provide comments for the public record, whether verbally or

in writing. Maps and exhibit boards were available for viewing and all attendees received a project handout.

A total of 328 participants signed in at the public hearing. NCDOT also received 225 comment sheets, emails, and/or letters regarding the project, a resolution signed by 100 individuals, and a transcript of verbal comments from the 21 individuals who spoke at the public hearing. Comments were also received from nine environmental regulatory agencies. A summary of the comments made on the project is presented in the "Summary of Comments and Responses" contained in the *I-2513 Meeting Minutes to Post Hearing Meeting* which was conducted by NCDOT on January 29, 2009 to discuss comments received on the DEIS and from the Corridor Public Hearing.

During the Corridor Public Hearing, several local citizens expressed a desire to see any excess land along Patton Avenue resulting from this separation of local and interstate traffic be made available for infill development along the Patton Avenue corridor.

Asheville Design Center (ADC)

The Asheville Design Center (ADC) began from an American Institute of Architects (AIA) "Blueprint for America – AIA 150" project grant in June 2006. According to its website, the ADC "is interested in involving individual citizens and civic organizations with local and state governments and agencies in developing optimal design solutions for growth in our communities." This organization is focused on working with local, state and federal agencies, and other interest groups to develop locally important projects that incorporate the "Ten Principles for Livable Communities."

Since its formation, the ADC has worked to ensure that the "Ten Principles for Livable Communities" and the Key Design Goals identified in the Community Coordinating Committee's (CCC's) report of 2000 are considered for implementation on the I-26 Connector Project. In so doing, the ADC developed a conceptual alternative that they believed met the livable communities principles and the CCC's Key Design Goals. The CCC's Key Design Goals include the following:

1. Separation of local and interstate traffic
2. Matching scale of project to character of community
3. Reunification and connectivity of community
4. Minimization of neighborhood and local business impacts
5. Use of updated traffic modeling software and data
6. Maintenance of compatibility with communities design vision plan; incorporation of community-selected design features
7. Creation of full interstate movements between I-26 and I-40
8. Minimization of air quality and other environmental impacts
9. Emphasis on safety – during construction and in the design of the final product

In September 2007, the City of Asheville and Buncombe County hired an independent engineering consulting firm to further evaluate and develop an alternative concept using a similar footprint to the original ADC concept. In January of 2008, the ADC presented the revised concept to the Asheville City Council and the City Council requested that NCDOT consider the

modified conceptual alternative. The resulting conceptual alternative design was identified as Section B, Alternative 4B and was presented to the public at the Corridor Public Hearing in September 2008. After extensive coordination with the City of Asheville, the ADC, and its engineering consultants, the NCDOT decided to carry Alternative 4B forward as a detailed study alternative and develop preliminary design plans. Based on comments from the City of Asheville, Buncombe County, the ADC and the public, the preliminary design was developed and enhanced to allow I-26 to cross under Patton Avenue and to eliminate the free flow turn movements along Patton Avenue that generated concern for pedestrians and bicyclists.

The ADC also hopes that, with interstate traffic removed from the Smokey Park Bridges (I-240/ Patton Avenue bridges), West Asheville and downtown will be connected by a tree-lined urban boulevard.

III. CIA METHODOLOGY

The community characteristics section of this report is primarily based on demographic data collected from the US Census Bureau (factfinder2.census.gov) and employment by industry data collected from the Employment Security Commission of North Carolina (www.ncesc.com). The community description is also based on site visit observations (August 19th and 20th, 2013) and interviews with staff from the City of Asheville and the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization (FBRMPO).

It is necessary to use the demographic and employment data, as well as site visit observations and findings, as a foundation for evaluating the direct impacts of the project on the community. These direct impacts may be related to social/psychological issues, physical/visual issues, land use patterns, economic conditions, mobility, access, safety, and natural resources. The National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) Report 456, *Guidebook for Assessing the Social and Economic Effects of Transportation Projects*, and the Federal Highway Administration's *Community Impact Assessment: A Quick Reference for Transportation* are utilized as a reference in this analysis.

IV. CIA STUDY AREA DESCRIPTIONS

Direct Community Impact Area (DCIA)
The DCIA is the area surrounding a construction project that is likely to be directly affected in any way during, throughout, and after project completion. The DCIA identified for this project primarily follows parcel boundaries and roadway corridors as shown in Figure 1.

The DCIA generally includes all parcels within 1,000 feet of the proposed alignments. In areas such as the I-26/I-40/I-240 interchange, the boundary was reduced because the I-26 Connector project would modify an existing interchange. Consequently, it is anticipated that the project will only minimally affect the surrounding areas. North of where Alternative 3 (Section B) crosses the French Broad River, the parcels on the west bank of the river were excluded because the river acts as a natural buffer for impacts.

Along Section A, the DCIA was expanded from 1,000 feet in areas where the proposed project would widen existing I-240. These expanded areas include Pisgah View Apartments, portions of the Westwood Place neighborhood on the east side of I-240, and the Fairfax/Virginia Avenue and Burton Street communities on the west of I-240. In some cases, the DCIA boundary was extended to include entire neighborhoods or districts based on discussions with local officials. Extensions of the DCIA boundary in some areas, such as Houston/Courtland, were also identified to ensure consideration of potential effects related to access and cohesion. Portions of the Bingham Road neighborhood and the Historic Montford neighborhood are included in the DCIA because of the proximity to the proposed project. These neighborhoods are not included in their entirety because they are relatively large and effects are not anticipated beyond a certain point within the neighborhood.

Demographic Study Area
In order to analyze population characteristics, a Demographic Study Area was identified for STIP Project I-2513 (see Figure 2 in the Appendix). The Demographic Study Area is located

entirely within Buncombe County and also includes portions of the City of Asheville, the Town of Woodfin, and unincorporated Buncombe County. This area is generally bounded by the following features: Richmond Hill Drive and Lookout Road to the north; US 25, Pearson Street, South French Broad Avenue, and the French Broad River to the east; I-40 and Brevard Road to the south; and a Norfolk Southern rail line, Sand Hill Road, and North Louisiana Avenue to the west.

The following US Census Bureau Block Groups from the 2010 Census are included in the Demographic Study Area of STIP Project I-2513:

- Census Tract 2, Block Group 1 & 2
- Census Tract 3, Block Group 1 & 2
- Census Tract 4, Block Group 1
- Census Tract 6, Block Group 2
- Census Tract 9, Block Group 2 & 3
- Census Tract 10, Block Groups 1 & 2
- Census Tract 11, Block Groups 1, 2 & 3
- Census Tract 12, Block Group 5
- Census Tract 14, Block Groups 1 & 2

It was determined that this area would best illustrate the demographic characteristics of the community because it encompasses the majority of the DCIA. Census Tract 23.02, Block Group 4 and Census Tract 21.01, Block Group 1 were not included in the Demographic Study Area because the portion of these block groups within the DCIA contain Biltmore Estate property. This property is not heavily populated, and the Block Groups are so large that they likely do not represent the DCIA very well. Although Census Tract 4, Block Group 1 is included in the Demographic Study Area, this Block Group is located at the extreme northern portion of the DCIA and is not as likely to experience as many impacts related to the project.

V. COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

Community-based demographic data was gathered from the 2010 US Census as well as the 2007-2011 American Community Survey. A comprehensive table of the below listed categories can be found in the *Demographic Analysis, 2014*.

Population Characteristics

Between 2000 and 2010, the Demographic Study Area experienced population growth of 41.1% (see Table 1). The population of Buncombe County grew at more than a third of that rate (15.5%) while the City of Asheville grew at a 21.1% rate during that same period. Only Buncombe County grew at a lower rate than the State of North Carolina (18.5%) during the same time period.

Table 1. Population Trends, 2000-2010

	Population		Growth	
Area	2000	2010	Difference	% Change
Demographic Study Area	14,925	21,063	6,138	41.1%
Asheville	68,889	83,393	14,504	21.1%
Buncombe County	206,330	238,318	31,988	15.5%
North Carolina	8,049,313	9,535,483	1,486,170	18.5%

Source: US Census Bureau, Summary File 1, Table P1 (2000 & 2010)

In 2010, the African American populations within the City of Asheville (13.4%) and the Demographic Study Area (21.1%) were more than two and three times greater, respectively, than Buncombe County (6.4%) (see Table 2). The Demographic Study Area also contained a greater percentage of Hispanics (6.0%) than Buncombe County (5.7%).

Table 2. Population by Race/Ethnicity, 2010

	Demographic Study Area		Asheville		Buncombe County		North Carolina	
Race	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**
White	14979	71.1%	66,143	79.3%	208,192	87.4%	6,528,950	68.5%
Black or African American	4450	21.1%	11,134	13.4%	15,211	6.4%	2,048,628	21.5%
American Indian / Alaska Native	84	0.4%	280	0.3%	948	0.4%	122,110	1.3%
Asian	136	0.6%	1,142	1.4%	2,417	1.0%	208,962	2.2%
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	10	0.0%	126	0.2%	289	0.1%	6,604	0.1%
Other Race	757	3.6%	2,401	2.9%	6,266	2.6%	414,030	4.3%
Two or More Races	647	3.1%	2,167	2.6%	4,995	2.1%	206,199	2.2%
Total	**21,063**	**100.0%**	**83,393**	**100.0%**	**238,318**	**100.0%**	9,535,483	**100.0%**
Total Hispanic	1,737	8.2%	5,455	6.5%	14,254	6.0%	800,120	8.4%

Source: US Census Bureau, (2010)

In 2010, the median age within the Demographic Study Area (33.9) was lower than all other geographic areas studied (see Table 3).

Table 3. Median Age, 2010

	Demographic Study Area	Asheville	Buncombe County	North Carolina
Median Age	33.9	38.2	40.6	37.4

Source: US Census Bureau, Summary File 1, Tables DP1 (2010)

The 2011 median household income for the Demographic Study Area ($31,661) was lower than in Buncombe County ($44,321). The Demographic Study Area had a higher percentage of people living below poverty (34.3%) than Buncombe County (15.6%) in 2011 (see Table 4).

Asheville Housing Authority or Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-insured communities are located within the following Block Groups:

- Census Tract 2, Block Group 1 (Hillcrest Apartments)

- Census Tract 3, Block Group 1 (Klondyke Apartments)
- Census Tract 10, Block Group 2 (Pisgah View Apartments)
- Census Tract 14, Block Group 2 (Woodridge Apartments)

The Hillcrest Apartments, Klondyke Apartments and Pisgah View Apartments are operated by the City of Asheville Housing Authority, and housing choice vouchers are not accepted. Housing choice vouchers are accepted at the Income-restricted Woodridge Apartments.

Table 4. Percentage Population Below Poverty Level, 2011

Area	% Below Poverty
Demographic Study Area	34.3%
Asheville	20.3%
Buncombe County	15.6%
North Carolina	16.1%

Source: American Community Survey 2007-2011

Generally speaking, the education attained by people in the Demographic Study Area is higher than in Buncombe County, but lower than the City of Asheville. Approximately 42.6% of the population in the Demographic Study Area achieved some sort of college degree (Associates, Bachelors or Graduate) as compared to 40.8% in Buncombe County and 47.4% for the City.

Housing Characteristics

Between 2000 and 2010, the number of households in the Demographic Study Area increased by 27.1% as compared to 17.1% in Buncombe County. The higher growth rate could possibly be attributed to the abundance of infill development currently occuring within the Demographic Study Area.

In 2011, the median home value in the Demographic Study Area ($187,342) was lower than that in Buncombe County ($192,200). The median year structure built in the Demographic Study Area is approximately two decades older (1957) than in the County (1980).

The Demographic Study Area generally has a lower homeownership rate than Buncombe County. In 2010, 44.9% of homes in the Demographic Study Area were occupied by the owner, while 65.7% of the homes in Buncombe County were occupied by the owner. Homeownership in both the Demographic Study Area and Buncombe County decreased by 6.5% and 4.6%, respectively, between 2000 and 2010.

In 2011, the Demographic Study Area had a lower median contract rent ($543) than Buncombe County ($637). Lower median contract rents likely support other Census data indicating the presence of lower income areas within the Demographic Study Area.

Limited English Proficiency

A demographic analysis was completed as part of the previous CIA to illustrate characteristics of the community. In order to supplement this analysis, LEP data from the 2011 ACS data was compiled as part of this report. This data is summarized in Table 5.

Census data does not indicate Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations meeting the U.S. Department of Justice LEP Safe Harbor threshold or a notable presence within the Demographic Study Area. As shown in Table 5, there are two Block Groups (CT 3, BG 1 and CT 14, BG 1) where Census data indicates the presence of a Spanish-speaking population which may require Language Assistance. More than 50 persons in each of these Block Groups speaks English "less than very well." These Block Groups are located immediately north of the I-26/I-40/I-240 interchange and north of Patton Avenue on the west side of the French Broad River (Figure 2). These Block Groups generally correspond with the following neighborhoods/communities: Montford and Emma Road/Bingham Road.

Table 5. STIP Project I-2513 Limited English Proficiency Data by Block Group, 2007-2011

Geography	Total Adult Population, 18 years and older	Primary Language Group of Persons Who Speak English Less than Very Well							
		Spanish		Other Indo-Euro		Asian/Pacific		Other	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
CT 2, BG 1 (Montford)	717	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
CT 2, BG 2 (Hillcrest/Houston/Courtland)	612	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
CT 3, BG 1	1,067	73	6.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
CT 3, BG 2 (Montford)	453	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
CT 4, BG 1 (UNC Asheville)	2,329	0	0.0%	9	0.4%	41	0.0%	0	0.0%
CT 6, BG 2	1,078	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
CT 9, BG 2	920	12	1.3%	11	1.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
CT 9, BG 3 (West End/Clingman/River Arts)	1,253	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
CT 10, BG 1 (Westwood Place)	1,416	0	0.0%	11	0.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
CT 10, BG 2 (Kentucky/Hanover/Pisgah View)	1,208	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	7	0.0%	0	0.0%
CT 11, BG 1 (Burton Street)	1,228	14	1.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
CT 11, BG 2 (Fairfax/Virginia)	1,207	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	9	0.0%	0	0.0%
CT 11, BG 3 (Morningside Park)	1,260	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
CT 12, BG 5 (Clairmont Crest & Willow Lakes)	489	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
CT 14, BG 1 (Emma/Bingham/Murphy Hill)	979	45	4.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
CT 14, BG 2 (Emma/Bingham)	665	117	17.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
DSA Aggregate	**16,881**	**261**	**1.5%**	**31**	**0.2%**	**57**	**0.0%**	**0**	**0.0%**

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year Estimates (2007-2011),Table B16004, "Age by Language Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over."

The majority of populations within the Demographic Study Area who speak English less than very well are Spanish language speakers. There are also persons in the "Other Indo-European" and "Asian/Pacific" language groups. Interviews with local planners indicate there is a Ukrainian population within the Study Area. Based on the documentation provided for this report, it is unclear if any bilingual outreach through any Hispanic or Ukrainian media outlets has been conducted to date on the project.

Business and Employment Characteristics

Buncombe County has traditionally had one of the more diverse economies in western North Carolina. Despite the recent decline of manufacturing, numerous other industries have flourished, creating a net gain of jobs throughout the region. According to 2007-2011 ACS data, the median commuting time for the Buncombe County workforce was 20.8 minutes. The median commuting time for all North Carolina workers was 23.4 minutes.

Data from the American Community Survey (accessed in November 2013) indicate that approximately 89.6 percent of the people who resided in Buncombe County also worked in

Buncombe County. These numbers support the assumption that Buncombe County is a regional employment center.

According to data from the Asheville Chamber of Commerce (accessed May 2014), the following companies and entities employ over 3,000 people each within Buncombe County: Mission Health and Hospitals and Buncombe County Public Schools. The following companies and entities employ over 1,000 people each within Buncombe County: Buncombe County Government, The Biltmore Company, Ingles Markets, Inc., the VA Medical Center-Asheville Department of Veterans Affairs, the City of Asheville, the Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College (AB Tech), and The Grove Park Inn resort and spa. In addition, both Care Partners and Eaton Corporation – Electrical Division employ between 750 to and 999 employees.

According to additional data from the North Carolina Department of Commerce-Division of Employment Security North Carolina Employment and Security Commission, employment in Buncombe County increased by 3.9 percent between 2000 and 2010, and increased by 5.7 percent between 2010 and 2013. Buncombe County has experienced employment growth and losses throughout various industry sectors. The largest job loss between 2000 and 2010 in terms of numbers of jobs lost was in the manufacturing sector (5,892 jobs lost). The largest job increase during that time period (in terms of numbers of jobs gained number-wise) was experienced in the health care and social assistance sector (4,998 jobs gained). Accommodation and food services experienced the largest percentage growth during this time (32. 6 percent), while agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting experienced the largest percentage loss (-40.2 percent).

North Carolina experienced a decline in employment (-2.1 percent) between 2000 and 2010. However, between 2010 and 2013, North Carolina experienced employment growth (4.2 percent) that was similar to that of Buncombe County (5.7 percent).

During that same time period, North Carolina experienced the largest raw increase in jobs in the health care & social assistance sector (147,768 jobs added) and also in the educational services sector (80,949 jobs added). Buncombe County and North Carolina both displayed a decrease in the number of manufacturing jobs between 2000 and 2010, and both have experienced growth between 2010 and 2013.

According to data from the North Carolina Employment Security Commission, Buncombe County had a lower unemployment rate than the State in 2000, 2010 and 2013 (Table 7). Buncombe County and North Carolina both experienced increases in unemployment between 2000 and 2010; however levels have decreased slightly since. Unemployment increases for both studied geographies may possibly be attributed to the closure of numerous manufacturing facilities, particularly those related to the textile industry and the more recent recession.

Table 7. Unemployment Rate, 2000 to 2013 Rates

Area	Unemployment Rate		Change; 2000-2010		Unemployment Rate		Change; 2010-2013	
	2000	2010	Difference	% Change	2010	2013	Difference	% Change
City of Asheville	3.5%	8.4%	4.9%	140%	8.4%	6.3%	-2.1%	-25%
Buncombe County	3.4%	8.4%	5.0%	147%	8.4%	6.2%	-2.2%	-26%
North Carolina	3.7%	10.5%	6.8%	184%	10.5%	8.3%	-2.2%	-21%

Source: North Carolina Employment Security Commission (August Reporting Month) http://esesc23.esc.state.nc.us/d4/

Community Resources - Facilities

A review of NCDOT GIS data (August 2013) and field observations reveals six schools within the DCIA, including Isaac Dickson Elementary, the William Randolph Learning Center, the Asheville City Schools (ACS) Pre-School (formerly known as the Accelerated Learning Center and Aycock School), the Rainbow Mountain School, Odyssey Community School, and the Asheville School (see Figure 3). The Isaac Dickson Elementary school is a magnet school located on Hill Street and the (William) Randolph Learning Center is located on Montford Avenue, while the Odyssey Community School is located along Zillicoa Street. The ACS Pre-School and the Rainbow Mountain School are located on Haywood Road east and west of the project area, respectively. The Asheville School is located between Sand Hill Road and US 19-23, in the southwestern part of the DCIA. The University of North Carolina at Asheville campus is also located partially within the DCIA. The campus is located northeast of the proposed northern terminus of the project (see Figure 3).

Three daycare facilities were identified within the DCIA, including the Little Beaver Daycare on Zillicoa Street, the Hill Street Baptist Church Daycare on Hill Street, and the Cavalry Baptist Child Enrichment Center on Haywood Road west of the project area (see Figure 3). The Wee Wiggles Child Care Center used to be located at the Westgate Shopping Center, but has recently relocated to Haywood Road west of the DCIA.

At least twenty churches were identified within the DCIA (see Figure 3 in the Appendix). Several of these churches are located in close proximity to the project alignment, including Crossroads Assembly Church, Inanda Baptist Church, Asheville United Christian Church, Hill Street Baptist Church, Holy Tabernacle Church of God, Haywood Street United Methodist Church, Friendship Baptist Church, Sycamore Temple Church of God, Western Carolina Rescue Ministries, Westwood Baptist Church, St. Paul's Missionary Baptist Church, Community Baptist Church, Cavalry Baptist Church, Trinity United Methodist Church, Church of God, Community Chapel Church of God, Grace Baptist Church, Christian Church of Hope, First Church of God, Unity Church of Asheville, Asheville Wesleyan Church, Crosspoint Community Church, Riverside Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and West Asheville Baptist Church.

According to the North Carolina State Historical Preservation Office (HPO) geographical information system (GIS) data, resources within the DCIA include the following:

- Biltmore Estate
- Buncombe County Bridge No. 216

- Asheville School
- Friendly Grocery Store
- West Asheville/Aycock School Historic District (This facility was identified as Asheville City Schools Pre-School on the Asheville City Schools website,
- Westwood Place Residential Historic District
- West Asheville End of Car Line Historic District
- C.G. Worley House
- South Bear Creek Road Bridge
- Southern Railroad Bridge
- Great Smoky Mountain Park Bridge (Buncombe County Bridge No. 323)
- Riverside Industrial Historic District
- Texas Oil Company
- Clingman Avenue Historic District
- Demens-Rumbaugh-Crawley House
- Minnie Alexander Cottage
- Houston Place House
- Whiteford G. Smith House
- Haywood Street United Methodist Church
- Freeman House
- Montford Area Historic District
- Proposed Montford Area Historic District Boundary Expansion (includes Montford Hills)
- Hans Rees Sons Tannery

The approximate locations of these resources are shown on Figure 3. Additional detail regarding historic architectural resources, including their effects determinations, can be found in the I-26 Connector DEIS (February 2014).

Burton Street Community Center and Park.

The City of Asheville owns and operates thirteen parks in the DCIA. This includes Carrier Park, Hummingbird Park, Burton Street Park, Jean Webb Park, Murray Hill Park, Owens-Bell Park, Riverside Cemetery, Southside Center, Aston Park, Magnolia Park, Montford Park, West Asheville Park, and the Montford Recreation Center (see Figure 3 in the Appendix). Carrier Park is located adjacent to Amboy Road and the French Broad River, and is a Section 4(f) facility. The Buncombe County Parks & Recreation Department owns and operates Hominy Creek River Park at the confluence of Hominy Creek and the French Broad River. The Bear Creek RV Park & Campground is a privately owned campground and recreational vehicle facility located along South Bear Creek Road (see Figure 3 in the Appendix).

Based on City of Asheville GIS data and input from local planners, one future park was identified within the DCIA: Progress Energy Park, which is proposed along the east side of the French Broad River within the River Arts District, north of Jean Webb Park.

The River Arts District (RAD), which is generally bounded by existing I-240/Patton Avenue on the north, Clingman Avenue and Depot Street on the east, Lyman Street on the south, and the French Broad River on the west, is the site of large existing industrial warehouses and the ruins of the Cotton Mills. The RAD is identified by the City of Asheville as a focal point for redevelopment activities. The general location of the RAD can be seen on Figure 4 in the Appendix.

Approximately 650 public housing units are contained in three Asheville Housing Authority communities located within the DCIA, and are operated by the Housing Authority of the City of Asheville. The Pisgah View Apartments are located just north of Amboy Road in the southeastern portion of the DCIA (see Figure 3B). The Pisgah View Community Center and Head Start Center are also located within the Pisgah View Apartments complex. The Hillcrest Apartments are located between Riverside Drive, US 19/23/70, and I-240. The Carl Johnson Community Center and Head Start Center is also located within the Hillcrest Apartments complex. The Klondyke Apartments public housing complex is located along Montford Avenue in the northern portion of the DCIA. An additional 160 Income-restricted units in the Woodridge Apartments located along Bingham Road are operated by the Asheville-Woodridge Limited Partnership (see Figure 3).

There are several key commercial nodes within the DCIA. The Crowne Plaza Resort, Westgate Shopping Center, and several other businesses are concentrated around the I-240/Patton Avenue interchange. Both Westgate Shopping Center and the Crowne Plaza Resort have undergone recent renovation and other development enhancements. The Crowne Plaza Resort is a multi-activity resort center with a golf course, tennis facilities, rock wall, zip-lining, and swimming facilities for use by resort guests. The Western North Carolina Farmers Market is a regional farmers market located at the I-40/NC 191 interchange. Numerous light industrial businesses and commercial businesses are located along the French Broad River and near the railroad system. Professional offices and commercial properties are concentrated along Zillicoa Street.

No post offices or hospitals were identified within the DCIA. A post office is located just outside of the DCIA southwest of the I-40/NC 191 interchange. The Aston Park Health Care Center is located on NC 191 in the southern portion of the DCIA. The Westwood Assisted Living Center is located on Westwood Place. According to local officials, there is also a medical clinic (Western North Carolina Community Health Services – Minnie Jones Family Health Center) just outside of the DCIA near the intersection of Haywood Road and Ridgelawn Road. It is likely that this clinic provides medical services to persons residing within the DCIA.

Community Resources – Infrastructure

Community infrastructure within the DCIA was located based upon field observations, NCDOT GIS data (2010-2014, depending on availability), FBRMPO GIS data, and conversations with local officials. Major roads and highways within the DCIA include I-26, I-40, I-240, US 19, US 23, US 74A, US 70, US 19-23 Business, and NC 191. The Norfolk Southern Railroad owns and

operates two main lines within the DCIA, including an east-west line that crosses the French Broad River north of the I-240/Patton Avenue bridges, and a north-south line that parallels the French Broad River on the west bank. The Craggy Spur branch of the Norfolk Southern Railroad is also located on the east bank of the French Broad River. There are no airports within one mile of the DCIA.

Within the DCIA, the City of Asheville Transit Services Department operates nine fixed bus routes. These routes provide service Monday through Saturday between the hours of 5:30 AM and 10:30 PM. There are no bus stations within the DCIA; however, the City of Asheville operates a transit services operations center located south of Patton Avenue in the eastern portion of the DCIA.

According to the City of Asheville's *Bicycle Comprehensive Plan* (Adopted February 26, 2008), there are a number of bicycle facilities scattered throughout the DCIA. These facilities are located on Lyman Street/Riverside Drive (bike lanes), Sandhill Road (signed bike route), and Amboy Road (Carrier Park/ Asheville Velodrome). The NCDOT's Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation has also developed the *Asheville and Buncombe County Bicycle Transportation Map* to provide information on the suitability of riding a bicycle on different roads in the area. The map is intended to help bicyclists choose where to ride based on their own assessed level of skill. The map indicates that there are 10 locally signed neighborhood bike routes in Asheville. Within the DCIA, these routes include State Street, Haywood Road, Hilliard Avenue, Westgate Parkway, Hazel Mill Road (south of Patton Avenue), Brevard Road (NC 191), Amboy Road, Lyman Street/Riverside Drive, Patton Avenue (west of the French Broad River), Emma Road, and Hill Street.

The Pedestrian Thoroughfare Map found within the *City of Asheville Pedestrian Plan* (Adopted February 22, 2005) indicates that existing sidewalks are located along, but not limited to, the following roads and areas within the DCIA: Montford Avenue, the Hillcrest Apartments, Hill Street, the Pisgah View Apartments, Haywood Road, Hanover Street, Westwood Place, Burton Street, Florida Avenue, Louisiana Avenue, State Street, Florida Avenue, Brevard Road, Clingman Avenue, and Patton Avenue (east of the I-240/Patton Avenue bridges). There is a pedestrian bridge over I-240 in the vicinity of the Isaac Dickson School. There are also pedestrian bridges over I-240 at Stewart Street and over US 19/23/70 near the Hillcrest Apartments. The Stewart Street Bridge has been closed due to safety concerns and is no longer in use. This bridge is planned to be removed as part of the project.

Within the DCIA, segments of the French Broad River Greenway link the French Broad River Park to Carrier Park and Hominy Creek River Park (see Figure 3B). There are future greenways planned within the DCIA, including an extension of the French Broad River Greenway through French Broad River Park, a greenway along Lyman Street/Riverside Drive on the east side of the French Broad River, Montford Greenway, and Clingman Forest Greenway. The *City of Asheville Pedestrian Plan* also shows a planned greenway along Haywood Road within the DCIA (including an off-road section within West End/Clingman Avenue neighborhood. However, no planned greenways are indicated along Haywood Road in the *City of Asheville Parks, Recreation, Cultural Arts & Greenways Master Plan.*

The Metropolitan Sewerage District of Buncombe County provides sewer service within the DCIA. Sewer service areas within the DCIA include most incorporated portions of Asheville and Woodfin. The Regional Water Authority of Asheville-Buncombe-Henderson provides water service within the DCIA. Water service is widespread in urbanized portions of Asheville and Woodfin.

Community Resources - Natural

According to NC OneMap GIS data (July 2014), the DCIA of STIP Project I-2513 encompasses several natural resources, including one Draft 2010 303(d) stream (Hominy Creek), some wetlands (primarily along the French Broad River and Ragsdale Creek/Lake Ashnoca), and two North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission designated trout waters (the French Broad River and Ragsdale Creek/Lake Ashnoca). There are no Water Supply Watersheds, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Outstanding Water Resources, or High Quality Waters within the DCIA.

Crime, Safety, and Emergency Services

Information on crime, safety and emergency services was gathered through phone interviews with local officials and field observations. According to local officials, the Pisgah View Apartments, Hillcrest Apartments, and Klondyke Apartments experience more crime than the remainder of Asheville. The City of Asheville Police Department provides protection throughout the DCIA.

The Buncombe County Rescue Squad Station #2 is the only emergency services facility identified within the DCIA. It is located along Hansel Avenue north of Patton Avenue (see Figure 3). The Buncombe County Rescue Squad, City of Asheville Fire Department, and Buncombe County Emergency Services provide emergency medical services throughout the DCIA through the use of several facilities located outside of the DCIA.

The City of Asheville Fire Department Station #3 is located south of Patton Avenue just west of the DCIA, while Station #11 is located in the southern portion of the DCIA near the I-26/NC-191 interchange. The City of Asheville Fire Department provides fire service throughout the DCIA.

Local officials indicated that the pedestrian bridge for the Hillcrest Apartments was closed due to criminal activity, but has since been re-opened due to a number of pedestrian deaths attributed to crossing I-240/Patton Avenue on foot. Residents of the Fairfax/Virginia and Kentucky/Hanover/Pisgah View communities indicated that lighting is a concern at the State Street underpass which is frequently used by pedestrians and bicyclists to cross under I-240.

Local Plans & Vision

The DCIA includes portions of three governing entities: the City of Asheville, the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization, and the Town of Woodfin. A very small portion of the DCIA falls within unincorporated Buncombe County, as most of the DCIA is under the planning jurisdiction of Asheville. The French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization (FBRMPO) is a transportation policy-making organization made up of representatives from 18 local governments. The Land-of-Sky Regional Council is another regional planning organization comprised of 15 municipalities, including Asheville, and four counties, including Buncombe,

and provides planning services as well. For a detailed evaluation of local plans, please refer to the *Consistency with Local Plans Assessment, 2014*.

Buncombe County Plans

Draft Buncombe County Comprehensive Land Use Plan Update (2013)

Buncombe County has a 2013 Comprehensive Land Use Plan update, a draft of which is currently being reviewed and is anticipated to be finalized shortly. The Proposed Land Use Map in the draft 2013 Comprehensive Land Use Plan shows the areas in the DCIA as being part of the Biltmore Estate and part of UNC Asheville. These areas were classified as rural/agricultural. It has been proposed to classify the Biltmore Estate as a Resort District.

City of Asheville Land Use Plans

City of Asheville Downtown Master Plan (March 2009)

Developable land in Asheville is limited by topography and large public holdings (40% of the land in Downtown Asheville is tax exempt), which further increases the value of available land. Patton Avenue serves as the primary link between the Traditional Downtown District and the River Arts District, and identifies opportunity for redevelopment. The new residential development and creation of the Clingman Greenway reinforces Clingman's function as an important node and connection to the River Arts District and West Asheville. The plan also identifies a potential opportunity to reclaim and reuse public rights-of-way from the I-26/I-240 interchange improvements included as part of the I-26 Connector. Because they separate local traffic and interstate traffic, Alternatives 4 and 4B (Section B) are more consistent with the vision identified in this plan.

City of Asheville, North Carolina Parks, Recreation, Cultural Arts, & Greenways Master Plan (February 2009, updated 2013)

This plan is intended to help meet the needs of current and future residents by positioning Asheville to build on the community's unique parks and recreation assets and identify new opportunities. The citizen-driven plan establishes a clear direction to guide City staff, advisory committees, and elected officials in their efforts to enhance the community's parks, recreation, and cultural arts programs, services, and facilities.

The plan identified two future park sites within the DCIA: Jean Webb Park and Progress Energy Park. Jean Webb Park has since been constructed. The 2013 update to the plan specifically mentions the I-26 Connector and that the eventual selected alternative "can impact the proposed greenway network". As the project will evaluate and plan for bicycle and pedestrian connections along the corridor, it appears to be generally consistent with the goals and objectives of the plan.

West End/Clingman Avenue Neighborhood (WECAN) Citizens Master Plan (Completed 1996, Adopted January 2008)

This citizen's master plan focuses on the West End/Clingman Avenue neighborhoods. This plan identifies a clear community desire to separate local and interstate traffic, allowing Patton Avenue to return to a City entryway boulevard, with a traffic oval (roundabout) on the corner of Clingman Avenue and Patton Avenue. A section of Clingman Avenue, between Hilliard Avenue

and Patton Avenue, is proposed as a mixed use residential and commercial street. Consistent with the *Asheville City Plan 2010*, the *WECAN Citizens Master Plan* supports the proposal to change the use of the site occupied by the Welding Company and relocation of the Bus Depot, thereby opening up these two sites for residential development and connecting the West End and Clingman communities.

The I-26 Connector project is included in the *WECAN Citizens Master Plan*. Because the plan is oriented around the community's desire to separate local and interstate traffic, Alternatives 4 and 4B (Section B) appear to be more compatible with the vision outlined in the plan.

Wilma Dykeman RiverWay Master Plan (2004)

The *Wilma Dykeman RiverWay Master Plan* focuses on the potential redevelopment of land along the French Broad and Swannanoa Rivers through the creation of a system of trails, greenways, and parkways to connect a variety of uses focused on the waterfront. The RiverWay is planned to link existing and parks and tourist designations via a 17-mile greenway with separate walking and biking trails. With respect to the I-26 Connector, the plan suggests that the construction of the I-26 Connector will present the City with a "once in a generation opportunity" to reconnect parts of the City by reclaiming large areas of land now occupied by the ramps along I-240 on the eastern side of the French Broad River. Key redevelopment opportunities south of the existing I-240 bridge include a River Arts District (RAD), the removal of existing buildings and replacement with an urban riverfront park, and new development along the rail corridor. The plan also states that the environmental impact of potential bridges across the French Broad River related to the I-26 Connector project should be carefully considered.

It is anticipated that there will be no direct impacts to the RAD as a result of the proposed project. However, if Alternative 4 or 4B (Section B) are selected, some enhancement to local and regional bicycle and pedestrian connectivity may occur with the separation of local and interstate traffic.

A Strategic Plan for Sustainable Economic Development of the City of Asheville, North Carolina (2004)

In 2004, the City of Asheville formally adopted *A Strategic Plan for the Sustainable Economic Development of the City of Asheville, North Carolina*. This document recognizes transportation as one of the strengths of the city from a business recruitment and investment perspective. It notes the excellent highway access provided to the area by I-26 and I-40. However, it also notes a concern about the future capacity and quality of the highway system. After mentioning several planned projects, including the proposed project, that will improve the capacity of the highway system, this plan recommends addressing future capacity improvement needs in the area's long range transportation plan.

The I-26 Connector project is not explicitly mentioned or referenced in the economic development strategic plan; however, the project seems generally compatible with the overall goals and objectives.

City of Asheville Unified Development Ordinance (1997, updated 2010)

The City of Asheville has adopted a Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) that includes environmental and development regulations (including zoning, hillside and ridge top

development, subdivision, soil erosion and sediment control, and stormwater management ordinances) to regulate the intensity of development and protect the environment while enhancing the quality of life for residents.

The ordinance also includes a section on flood protection that outlines safe development guidelines within the floodplain, limits the type and intensity of development, prevents or controls the alteration of floodplains (through grading, filling, or otherwise restraining water bodies), and establishes building requirements. This ordinance is intended to generally control and regulate development within the floodplains present within the City of Asheville.

Asheville City Development Plan 2025 (2002)
This development plan outlines long-term growth and development goals and serves as a general guide for the future development of the city and its surrounding planning area. The plan touches on key development issues such as the need for smart growth, communication and coordination between all vested parties, land use, transportation, air and water quality, economic development, and the development of the downtown area. No specific recommendations concerning development throughout the DCIA of STIP Project I-2513 were made in this document.

City of Asheville River Development Plan (2005)
The City of Asheville has recently completed a planning document focusing on the redevelopment of lands along the French Broad and Swannanoa Rivers. This document builds on the recommendations within the Wilma Dykeman RiverWay Master Plan. The plan was crafted in conjunction with RiverLink, a regional non-profit organization spearheading the economic and environmental revitalization of the French Broad River as a place to live, work and play. The plan has separated the riverfront into several "redevelopment areas" focusing on the area south of the I-240 bridge and the Swannanoa River. The plan focuses on safety issues (flooding), planning/development efforts (including buildings, greenways, and parks), and environmental issues related to the rivers. The plan recommends a mixture of residential, commercial and recreational/conservational land uses along the rivers.

The City of Asheville Consolidated Strategic Housing & Community Development Plan (2010)
The City of Asheville receives annual federal grants under the Community Development Block Grant program and the four-county area of Buncombe, Henderson, Madison and Transylvania Counties receives federal grants under the HOME Investment Partnerships Act Program (HOME). Together, these programs bring about $3,000,000 a year into the area to provide affordable housing, economic opportunities and other benefits for low income people in Asheville and the surrounding consortium counties. The Consolidated Strategic Housing and Community Development Plan describes the needs and priorities for housing and community development, strategies to be pursued, and targets to be achieved through Community Development Block Grant funded and HOME funded activities from July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2015. It includes a detailed Housing Needs Assessment for the Asheville Regional Housing Consortium; this is also available in a form that shows each county's data alone.
The Consolidated Strategic Housing and Community Development Plan emphasizes the need for affordable housing, as well as the need for improvements to public infrastructure that will aid in community development. Haywood Road is specifically referenced as an area that needs commercial development to support the local residents. The proposed project will make improvements to the existing interchange with Haywood Road, and thus may help encourage

economic development along this corridor through increased access. There are infill development opportunities in the communities adjacent to the Haywood Road corridor and increased access and development would help serve this development. Therefore, all sections of the proposed project would be consistent with the recommendations included in this plan.

Broadway Corridor Action Plan (2002)

In 2002, the City of Asheville conducted a study of the Broadway corridor to ascertain the needs of local residents and businesses. The purpose of the Broadway Corridor Action Plan is to provide a detailed guide for the future development and redevelopment of the corridor study area. The study includes recommendations for enhanced streetscapes, well designed redevelopment, the encouragement of mixed use development, and the conversion of NCDOT right of way to these desired uses. The plan also recommended the creation of a zoning overlay district for this area in order to promote these goals.

Haywood Road Corridor Study (1999)

The City of Asheville conducted a corridor study of the Haywood Road corridor to ascertain the needs of local residents and businesses. The study includes recommendations for the inclusion of pedestrian-oriented streetscapes, landscaping, architectural specifications, and the inclusion of various rezoning to promote compatible growth and neighborhood cohesion. With respect to STIP Project I-2513, the plan comments on the opportunity to reunite West Asheville with the downtown area and improve the pedestrian bridge across the French Broad River to promote safer, more desirable pedestrian mobility.

Haywood Road Vision Plan (2012)

In 2012, the Haywood Road Corridor Study group, in conjunction with the City of Asheville, released a series of recommendations for the Haywood Road Vision Plan. Several goals were identified during a 10-year study process including the following:

- Placing a high emphasis on street and sidewalk improvements to include multi-modal transportation options consistent with the Complete Streets Policy adopted by the City of Asheville in 2012. These options include pedestrian, bicycle and multi-modal transit improvements.
- Supporting a diverse mix of businesses along Haywood Road, while increasing the density of residential units.
- Increasing the amount of streetscape improvements.
- Preservation and renovation of historic structures.

Specific references to the project include the following:

- The Haywood Road community should stay involved and review plans for the redevelopment of the I-240 Bridge and interchange to ensure multi-modal transportation safety.
- The need for additional crosswalks and pedestrian signals along Haywood Road where it crosses I-240.

City of Asheville Transportation Plans

City of Asheville Transit Master Plan (October 2009)

This plan outlines the 10-year vision and implementation plan for public transit service through Asheville Transit System (ATS) for the operation of 24 bus routes providing service to Asheville and Black Mountain, as well as connections to Apple Country Transit linking other parts of Buncombe County and the Asheville Airport. This plan identifies an opportunity with the planned improvements to upgrade US 19/23/70 to I-26 to provide a connection from Hillcrest Apartment complex to Patton Avenue through redesigning the entrance/exit ramps, and providing service roads or providing a pedestrian connection.
The C*ity of Asheville Transit Master Plan* also indicates that the following areas within theDCIA be examined for more extensive passenger amenities:

- Haywood Road in the area of Brevard Road/ Louisiana Avenue/ State Street;
- Pisgah View Apartments along State Street at the corner; and
- Large shelters and a bus turnaround at the entrance to the Hillcrest Apartments.

City of Asheville Comprehensive Bicycle Plan (2008)
The vision of the *Comprehensive Bicycle Plan* is to create a 181-mile network of bicycle facilities. In order to accomplish this task, the plan indicates a desire to see bicycle facilities included as part of all planned roadway improvements projects, including the I-26 Connector project. Within the DCIA, several of the streets either already have or are planned to include bicycle facilities. This includes Brevard Road, Fairfax Avenue, Sand Hill Road, State Street, Louisiana Avenue, Westwood Place, Patton Avenue, Haywood Road, Amboy Road, Lyman Street, Riverside Drive, Courtland Avenue, Hill Street, Montford Avenue, Roberts Street, and Depot Street.

French Broad River MPO Comprehensive Transportation Plan (January 2008)
The I-26 Connector project (STIP Project I-2513) is listed in the French Broad River MPO (FBRMPO) Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) as one of the "Highest Priority" projects, as it serves as a vital north-south regional link as well as serving local traffic accessing downtown Asheville. The CTP indicates that an off-road bicycle/pedestrian connector (Patton Ave Connector – Hazel Mill Rd/Regent Park Blvd to W Haywood St) across I-240 should be constructed in tandem with STIP Project I-2513 to provide a safer facility for bicyclists who have limited options to connect between US 19/23 and Haywood Street.

The *City of Asheville Comprehensive Bicycle Plan* was directly incorporated into the FBRMPO CTP bicycle maps for Asheville and Buncombe County.

French Broad River MPO 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (2010)

The proposed project is included in the FBRMPO's *2035 Long Range Transportation Plan* (2035 LRTP) adopted on September 23, 2012. The main goals of this plan are to develop and maintain a safe and efficient system for transportation, as well as enhancing the environment and livability of the area by providing an optimum level of service, choice, mobility, convenience and energy efficiency. Furthermore, the plan calls for the promotion of aesthetic treatments and improvements along the I-26 Corridor through Asheville, the proposed widening to 8 lanes and the identification of other transportation projects with a direct relationship to the I-26 Corridor. The project is consistent with the long-range transportation goals and objectives of the FBRMPO.

The City of Asheville Pedestrian Plan (1999, updated 2005)

This plan was developed by the City of Asheville and the FBRMPO to prioritize capital improvements and maintenance projects with special consideration for ADA compliancy and pedestrian mobility and safety. The plan indicated that the intersection of Riverside Drive and Broadway is the desired northern terminus for the Wilma Dykeman RiverWay and that potential exists for a "Rail-Trail" connection to Woodfin. With respect to TIP Project I-2513, the plan recommends a separate bicycle/pedestrian bridge in conjunction with the roadway structure over the French Broad River. The plan indicated that Haywood Road and State Street are critical connections for the pedestrian plan and that pedestrian connectivity with Patton Avenue is also desired.

Town of Woodfin Plans

Only a small portion of the Town of Woodfin is located within the DCIA. The Town of Woodfin has adopted a zoning ordinance in order to regulate the intensity of development within their jurisdiction. The *Code of Ordinances* designates land use and zoning for the town (Town of Woodfin n.d.). In 2006, the Town of Woodfin created a project development district, labeled the Woodfin Downtown Corridor Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District. This 205-acre tract within Woodfin encompasses a large portion of both the east and west sides of US 19/23. Development plans for this district involved three phases. The first two, east of US 19/23, will be primarily residential, retail, and office uses. Phase three, west of US 19/23 has been identified as being primarily residential. Development has since occurred along this corridor and according to Town officials, will continue to develop. The public improvements to this district include water and sewer extension, pedestrian walkways and bike trails. It is anticipated that approximately $230 million will be privately invested by 2015 in this area. The first sidewalk project in this area was just recently completed.

Asheville Design Center (ADC) Plan

The Asheville Design Center (ADC) began from an American Institute of Architects (AIA) "Blueprint for America – AIA 150" project grant in June 2006. The ADC "is interested in involving individual citizens and civic organizations with local and state governments and agencies in developing optimal design solutions for growth in our communities."[1] This organization is focused on working with local, state and federal agencies, and other interest groups to develop locally important projects that incorporate the "Ten Principles for Livable Communities."

Since its formation, the ADC has worked to ensure that the "Ten Principles for Livable Communities" and the Key Design Goals identified in the Community Coordinating Committee's (CCC's) report of 2000 are considered for implementation on the I-26 Connector Project. In so doing, the ADC developed a conceptual alternative that they believed met the livable communities' principles and the CCC's Key Design Goals. The CCC's Key Design Goals include the following:

1. Separation of local and interstate traffic
2. Matching scale of project to character of community

[1] Asheville Design Center website, http://www.ashevilledesigncenter.org, accessed June 6, 2013.

3. Reunification and connectivity of community
4. Minimization of neighborhood and local business impacts
5. Use of updated traffic modeling software and data
6. Maintenance of compatibility with communities design vision plan; incorporation of community-selected design features
7. Creation of full interstate movements between I-26 and I-40
8. Minimization of air quality and other environmental impacts
9. Emphasis on safety – during construction and in the design of the final product

In September 2007, the City of Asheville and Buncombe County hired an independent engineering consulting firm to further evaluate and develop an alternative concept using a similar footprint to the original ADC concept. In January of 2008, the ADC presented the revised concept to the Asheville City Council and the City Council requested that NCDOT consider the modified conceptual alternative. The resulting conceptual alternative design was identified as Section B, Alternative 4B and was presented to the public at the Corridor Public Hearing in September 2008. After extensive coordination with the City of Asheville, the ADC, and its engineering consultants, the NCDOT decided to carry Alternative 4B forward as a detailed study alternative and develop preliminary design plans. Based on comments from the City of Asheville, Buncombe County, the ADC and the public, the preliminary design was developed and enhanced to allow I-26 to cross under Patton Avenue and to eliminate the free flow turn movements along Patton Avenue that generated concern for pedestrians and bicyclists.

The ADC also hopes that, with interstate traffic removed from the Smokey Park Bridges (I-240 / Patton Avenue bridges), West Asheville and downtown will be connected by a tree-lined urban boulevard.

VI. COMMUNITY IMPACT ANALYSIS

Physical, Social, and Psychological Aspects

Community Stability and Neighborhood Cohesion

While all alternatives of Section C will result in several residential displacements, these displacements are relatively small and should not affect community stability/neighborhood cohesion since this is a fairly rural area. Some existing alignments and ramps may require reconfiguration within the proposed alternatives; however, there should be little to no effect upon neighborhood cohesion in the area of Section C.

Based on site visit observations and input from local planners, West Asheville seems to have its own identity. The neighborhoods primarily consist of single-family homes, but the homes are typically older than in both the county and city. There has been some infill development in recent years, and local planners talked about the desire to increase connectivity of West Asheville neighborhoods to downtown Asheville. Some of the neighborhoods in West Asheville were divided by I-240 during the original construction in the 1960s. For instance, some roads that originally linked homes in the Fairfax/Virginia and Burton Street neighborhoods to the area around the Pisgah View Apartments and Westwood Place neighborhood have been stubbed off on either side of I-240. However, despite the previous impacts from the original construction of I-240, it seems that the individual neighborhoods have their own sense of cohesiveness,

evidenced by the fact that many have separate homeowners associations and have had separate dealings with the NCDOT. Further discussion of the impacts to these neighborhoods from the original construction of I-240 can be found in the Recurring Impacts section of this report.

Additional communities in the DCIA include the Clairmont Crest Mobile Home Park, the neighborhoods surrounding the Westgate Shopping Center and along Bingham Road (west of the French Broad River but north of Patton Avenue), and the Hillcrest Apartments. See Figure 3 for a reference. The Clairmont Crest Mobile Home Park is a relatively large manufactured home park located just off of Sand Hill Road and near I-40. The homes on Murphy Hill and along Bingham Road are unique in diversity of development patterns and housing types in part due to the proximity of commercial development, and in part due to the separation from downtown Asheville by the French Broad River. The Hillcrest Apartments are isolated because they are situated on a hill surrounded by major roadways.

Residential and business displacements are anticipated in the Fairfax/Virginia neighborhood, the Kentucky/Hanover area, the Burton Street neighborhood, and the Westwood Place neighborhood. These neighborhoods/areas were previously impacted by the original construction of I-240 in the 1960s. Consequently, displacements resulting from the proposed I-26 Connector may have a moderate impact on the stability of these neighborhoods/areas due to their recurring nature. The neighborhood with the highest number of anticipated displacements on the existing section of I-240 is Fairfax/Virginia. The effects to these neighborhoods from the current project may be minimized, to an extent, because the anticipated displacements are on the periphery of the neighborhood.

According to NCDOT documentation, and stakeholder input during the neighborhood outreach meetings in July 2007 and June 2014, residents of adjacent neighborhoods and particularly the Burton Street community feel that their working class African American neighborhoods are being encroached upon because they are more affordable for the State. Residents have the perception that they have been burdened in the past. The *Neighborhood Outreach Technical Memorandum*, dated January 2015, may be referenced for more detailed information.

During early preliminary design iterations, it was estimated that there would be a number of displacements in the Burton Street community. A number of minimization measures have been incorporated into the current preliminary designs to reduce the number of displacements. The reduction in the number of displacements, combined with the fact that the displacements are on the periphery of the community, should decrease the potential for effects to community cohesion in the Burton Street community.

The new location portion of Section B (all alternatives) may disrupt neighborhoods north of the Westgate Shopping Center and along Emma Road/Bingham Road by splitting them with a new facility. Grade separated vehicular overpasses along Emma Road (proposed as part of STIP Project I-2513) should help to minimize this issue and maintain cohesion in this area.

Additionally, Alternative 4B includes a new connection/access to Patton Avenue which could be utilized by residents of the Hillcrest Apartments. This same connection is included as part of Alternative 4. Input received during the 2007 neighborhood outreach meetings indicates that the

community feels this proposed connection would help to bring the Hillcrest community back into the fabric of the City through improved vehicular and pedestrian access.

Another issue to be considered is the fact that new residential infill development occurring throughout West Asheville may make it more difficult for low-income residents to remain in the community. The newer housing is likely more expensive than the existing housing. This infill development is not a result of the proposed STIP Project however. The *EIS Relocation Reports for STIP Project I-2513* (NCDOT, March 1, 2010) indicate that there will be a problem of finding housing within financial means, but that last resort housing will enable any person(s) being displaced to obtain housing within their financial means.

According to North Carolina General Statute 133-10.1, as a last resort, if a project cannot proceed to actual construction because of the lack of availability of comparable sale or rental housing, or because federal-aid payments are in excess of those otherwise authorized by this Article, the State or its agencies may provide for the construction and renovation of housing through private contractors, purchase sites and improvements, or sell or lease the premises to the displaced person. Local governments and agencies may also provide assistance authorized under the Federal Uniform Relocation and Real Property Acquisition Policy Act of 1970, as amended, for last resort housing.

Visual and Aesthetic Impacts

Although several new structures are proposed as part of the modifications to the I-26/I-40/I-240 interchange (Section C), this is an existing interchange and visual and aesthetic impacts as a result of modifications proposed under STIP Project I-2513 should be minimal.

Many homes and businesses along Section A are in close proximity to the existing roadway. Construction of STIP Project I-2513 may change the visual environment for those residences and business that will be closer in proximity to the widened facility.

Section B (all alternatives) will result in the construction of at least one new bridge structure in the vicinity of the I-240/Patton Avenue interchange. Alternative 3 and 3C would result in the construction of a single new bridge over the French Broad River. Alternatives 4 and 4B would result in the construction of three new bridges over the French Broad River. There is local concern that the new bridge structures would be out of character with the community and may affect the viewshed along the French Broad River. This effect may be more pronounced with Alternative 4B due to the complex and multi-level structures required to cross the French Broad River. Additionally, on the east side of the French Broad River, the I-26 mainline will bridge over existing US 19/23/70 until the tie-in point just south of the Broadway interchange. This may affect the viewshed from the Emma/Bingham Road and Montford neighborhoods.

Section B may also result in the clearing of trees and removal of vegetation through right-of-way acquisitions and construction activities. Residents attending the neighborhood outreach meetings in 2014 continued to express a desire to see aesthetic treatments such as landscaped medians incorporated as part of STIP Project I-2513.

Displacement/Relocation Impacts

It is the policy of the NCDOT to provide assistance to those affected by transportation improvements as required under the Federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Properties Acquisition Act of 1970 and its revisions. This Act is intended to ensure that displaced individuals, families and businesses receive fair, consistent and equitable treatment, and are not affected disproportionately by projects that benefit the general public. The NCDOT Relocation Unit provides relocation assistance and benefits to those who are displaced during acquisition.

Relocation reports were prepared by the NCDOT in March 2010. According to *EIS Relocation Reports for TIP No. I-2513* (NCDOT, March 1, 2010), and depending on the alternative selected, Section C will result in the displacement of 5 to 17 residences and one business. Displacements related to Section C are generally concentrated in areas adjacent to the I-26/I-40/I-240 interchange and the I-40/NC 191 interchange.

Section A will result in the displacement of 82 residences and 10 businesses. Displacements related to Section A are generally concentrated at the south end of the Fairfax/Virginia Avenue area, the east and west side of I-240 south of Haywood Road, and the west side of I-240 north of Haywood Road (Burton Street neighborhood).

Depending on the alternative selected, Section B will result in the displacement of 27 to 54 residences and 8 to 16 businesses. Displacements related to Section B are generally concentrated in the I-240/Patton Avenue interchange area, along and north of Emma Road/Bingham Road, in the Riverview Mobile Home Park, and along Hill Street on the east side of the French Broad River.

Table 7 contains a summary of the residential and business displacements by Section/Alternative for STIP Project I-2513.

Table 7: Residential and Business Displacements by Section/Alternative

Section/ Alt.	Business Displacements	Residential Displacements				
		Total Residential	Owners	Renters	Minorities	Non-Profit
Section C						
Alt. A2	1	17	13	4	0	0
Alt. C2	1	8	6	2	0	0
Alt. D1	1	15	12	3	0	0
Alt. F1	0	5	4	1	0	0
Section A	9	82	60	22	25	1
Section B						
Alt. 3	15	54	21	33	23	1
Alt. 3C						
Alt 4	8	51	24	27	18	1
Alt 4B	16	27	21	6	6	0

Source: *EIS Relocation Reports for STIP Project I-2513* (NCDOT, March 1, 2010).
EIS Relocation Report for STIP Project I-2513 - Section A shows 10 estimated businesses displacements. Per direction from NCDOT Division 13 Staff, the table above shows 9 business displacements and 1 non-profit.

The table below (Table 8) contains a comparative summary of the minority displacements for each section/alternative in comparison against the total non-white population percentage found within Buncombe County.

Table 8: Residential Displacements by Section/Alternative

Section/Alt.	Total Residential	Minorities	% Minority	Buncombe County Non-White Population
Section C				
Alt. A2	17	0	0%	
Alt. C2	8	0	0%	
Alt. D1	15	0	0%	
Alt. F1	5	0	0%	10.9%
Section A	82	25	30.5%	
Section B				
Alt. 3	54	23	42.6%	
Alt 4	51	18	35.3%	

Alt 4B	27	6	22.2%	

Source: *EIS Relocation Reports for STIP Project I-2513* (NCDOT, March 1, 2010).

Table 8A: Business Displacements by Section/Alternative

Section/Alt.	Total Business	Minorities	% Minority	Buncombe County Non-White Population
Section C				10.9%
Alt. A2	1	0	0%	
Alt. C2	1	0	0%	
Alt. D1	1	0	0%	
Alt. F1	0	0	0%	
Section A	10	3	30.0%	
Section B				
Alt. 3	15	2	13.3%	
Alt 4	8	1	12.5%	
Alt 4B	16	4	25%	

Source: *EIS Relocation Reports for STIP Project I-2513* (NCDOT, March 1, 2010).

According to the *EIS Relocation Reports for STIP Project I-2513* (NCDOT, March 1, 2010), There are no minority displaces (either residential or business) expected as a result of any of the Section C alternatives. 30 percent (25 / 82) of the residential displacements of Section A would be minorities, and 30 percent (3 / 10) of the business displacements would be minorities. Of the Section B options, Alternative 3 appears to have the greatest effect on minorities. Approximately 43 percent (23 / 54) of the residential displaces would be minorities, compared to 35 percent (18 / 51) for Alternative 4, and 22 percent (6 / 27) for Alternative 4B. Minority business or non-profit displaces from Section B options range from 12.5 to 25 percent.

Table 9 shows the income levels of households to be displaced in each alternative. The columns for $25,000 or less are intended to represent low-income households. None of the alternatives would relocate a household with an annual income of less than $15,000. Section A would relocate 37 households with annual incomes between $15,000 and $25,000 (45 percent of displacements). Of the Section B alternatives, Alternative 4B would relocate the fewest households with annual incomes between $15,000 and $25,000 (6 households or 22 percent of displacements).

Table 9: Income Levels of Displaced Households

	Residential Displacements

Section/Alt.	$0-$15,000*	$15,000-$25,000*	$25,000-$35,000	$35,000-$50,000	$50,000+
Section C					
Alt. A2	0	1	7	9	0
Alt. C2	0	0	3	5	0
Alt. D1	0	1	4	10	0
Alt. F1	0	0	2	3	0
Section A	0	32	37	13	0
Section B					
Alt. 3	0	42	12	0	0
Alt 4	0	34	12	5	0
Alt 4B	0	6	14	7	0

Source: *EIS Relocation Reports for STIP Project I-2513* (NCDOT, March 1, 2010).
*Columns for incomes of $25,000 or less intended to represent low-income households. The US Department of Health and Human Services 2008 Poverty Guidelines (Federal Register, Vol. 74, No. 14, January 23, 2009) list the poverty thresholds as $14,570 for a 2-person household and $22,050 for a 4-person household.

According to the *EIS Relocation Reports for STIP Project I-2513*, providing housing within the financial means of each relocatee may be a problem; however, the last resort housing program that is part of the NCDOT relocation assistance program should enable any person(s) being displaced to obtain or maintain housing within their financial means.

Follow-up discussions were held with the NCDOT Division 13 Right-of-Way staff to further break-down the displacements into neighborhoods and geographic areas for Section A and Section B alternatives. Section C was not broken down further as most of the displacements are associated with rural areas that did not seem to have social interconnections which would typify a cohesive neighborhood.

Section A

Table 10 below summarizes the estimated displacements for Section A by neighborhood/area. The relocation reports do not break down minority relocations by neighborhood. The displacements reports indicate that the St. Paul's Missionary Baptist Church in the Burton Street neighborhood would be displaced as a result of Section A. At the time of this assessment, telephone calls made to the church to determine the demographic make-up of the congregation went unanswered.

Table 10. Estimated Displacements by Neighborhood/Area for Section A

Neighborhood/Area	Residential	Business	Non-Profit
Fairfax/ Virginia	51	5	0
Kentucky/ Hanover/ Pisgah View Apts.	24	0	0
Burton Street Neighborhood	7	4	1 (church)

Westwood Place Neighborhood	0	0	0
TOTAL	**82**	**9**	**1**

Source: *EIS Relocation Reports for STIP Project I-2513* (NCDOT, March 1, 2010).
Displacements broken down into neighborhood/area using maps provided by NCDOT Division 13 Staff.
EIS Relocation Report for Section A shows 10 estimated businesses displacements. Per direction from NCDOT Division 13 Staff, the table above shows 9 business displacements and 1 non-profit.

Section B

Tables 11 through 13 below summarize the estimated displacements for Section B, Alternatives 3, 4, and 4B by neighborhood/area. The relocation reports do not break down minority relocations by neighborhood. The relocation reports indicate that the Christian Church of Hope in the Emma Road/Bingham Road area would be displaced for Alternatives 3 and 4 of Section B. At the time of this assessment, telephone calls made to the church to determine the demographic make-up of the congregation went unanswered.

Overall, it is estimated that Alternative 4B would require the fewest displacements. The majority of this reduction is attributed to the reduction of impact to the Maple Terrace manufactured home park located in the Emma Road/Bingham Road neighborhood.

Table 11. Estimated Displacements by Neighborhood/Area for Section B–Alt. 3

Neighborhood/Area	Residential	Business	Non-Profit
Burton Street Neighborhood	8	0	0
Westwood Place Neighborhood	11	3	0
Patton Avenue Area	0	10	0
Emma Road/ Bingham Road Area	35	1	1 (church)
Riverside Drive Area	0	1	0
Montford Neighborhood	0	0	0
Houston/ Courtland Neighborhood	0	0	0
Hillcrest Apartments	0	0	0
West End/ Clingman Neighborhood	0	0	0
TOTAL	**54**	**15**	**1**

Source: *EIS Relocation Reports for STIP Project I-2513* (NCDOT, March 1, 2010).
Displacements broken down into neighborhood/area using maps provided by NCDOT Division 13 Staff.

Table 12. Estimated Displacements by Neighborhood/Area for Section B–Alt. 4

Neighborhood/Area	Residential	Business	Non-Profit
Burton Street Neighborhood	0	0	0
Westwood Place Neighborhood	11	3	0
Patton Avenue Area	0	3	0
Emma Road/ Bingham Road Area	33	1	1

			(church)
Riverside Drive Area	0	1	0
Montford Neighborhood	7	0	0
Houston/ Courtland Neighborhood	0	0	0
Hillcrest Apartments	0	0	0
West End/ Clingman Neighborhood	0	0	0
TOTAL	**51**	**8**	**1**

Source: *EIS Relocation Reports for STIP Project I-2513* (NCDOT, March 1, 2010).
Displacements broken down into neighborhood/area using maps provided by NCDOT Division 13 Staff.

Table 13. Estimated Displacements by Neighborhood/Area for Section B–Alt. 4B

Neighborhood/Area	Residential	Business	Non-Profit
Burton Street Neighborhood	0	0	0
Westwood Place Neighborhood	12	3	0
Patton Avenue Area	0	10	0
Emma Road/ Bingham Road Area	5	1	0
Riverside Drive Area	0	2	0
Montford Neighborhood	10	0	0
Houston/ Courtland Neighborhood	0	0	0
Hillcrest Apartments	0	0	0
West End/ Clingman Neighborhood	0	0	0
TOTAL	**27**	**16**	**0**

Source: *EIS Relocation Reports for STIP Project I-2513* (NCDOT, March 1, 2010).
Displacements broken down into neighborhood/area using maps provided by NCDOT Division 13 Staff.

Quality of Life

The I-26 Connector project should result in benefits to the overall quality of life for many residents in the Asheville area. The construction of the project is anticipated to result in reduced congestion and traffic delays that will save Asheville citizens and regional travelers valuable time. Additionally, the proposed project will address multiple roadway deficiencies that should generally result in a safer facility for the traveling public (part of the project's purpose and need). A similar level of benefit is expected with all alternatives. While residents of the DCIA may bear the burden of the project, they will gain some benefit through reduced congestion. Non-DCIA residents will likely use the facility more than local neighborhood residents, and will gain more benefits than those within the DCIA.

Alternatives 4 and 4B (Section B) will separate local and interstate traffic on Patton Avenue through the construction of additional bridges over the French Broad River. This is an important issue from the perspective of local citizens as they feel it would allow Patton Avenue to be converted to more of a local street and gateway to Asheville. Locals also believe that it would

enhance the linkages between downtown Asheville and West Asheville. Alternatives 4 and 4B will also improve connectivity to the Hillcrest Apartments.

The project will provide some improved local connectivity and circulation within the Fairfax/Virginia neighborhood. There is no consensus in the Fairfax/Virginia neighborhood regarding the benefits of this part of the project.

Land Use Patterns and Compatibility Effects

Most of the neighborhoods in the DCIA contain older single-family homes. Infill development is occurring on vacant parcels. Several manufactured home parks are also located within the DCIA, particularly in the I-40/I-240/I-26 interchange area, the Bingham Road area and along Sand Hill Road. Local planners indicated new residential infill development is occurring throughout West Asheville, which may make it more difficult for low-income residents to remain in the community. The newer housing is generally more expensive than the existing housing. This infill development has been occurring over the last few years and is occurring irrespective of the proposed I-26 Connector.

Commercial development within the DCIA is concentrated along Patton Avenue (including the I-240 interchange area), the Haywood Road corridor, the Riverside Drive corridor, and along Zillicoa Street. The Westgate Shopping Center and adjacent Crowne Plaza Resort, near the I-240/Patton Avenue interchange, make up the largest concentration of commercial development in the DCIA.

Local officials indicated that there is potential for a multi-level mix of commercial, office and residential redevelopment and infill along Haywood Road and Patton Avenue, and this development may be accelerated by the modified interstate facility. The land use patterns and intensity of redevelopment/infill is not expected to change as a result of STIP Project I-2513. Though West Asheville is experiencing somewhat of a renaissance, the restoration of Patton Avenue to a local street (as provided for with Alternatives 4 and 4B of Section B) along with streetscape improvements, could further increase interest in this area. The separation of interstate and local traffic on Patton Avenue would also improve connections between the underserved populations in West Asheville and downtown Asheville.

Economic Effects

There may be some temporary economic benefit during construction of STIP Project I-2513 due to increased local employment and increased revenue for businesses providing services to construction crews. On the other hand, businesses in the vicinity of the corridor could temporarily experience decreased revenue resulting from construction traffic or decreased access caused by construction activities. Alternatives 3, 3C, 4, and 4B of Section B would affect the Crowne Plaza Resort (golf course and recreational facilities). A multi-year, multi-phased master plan has been approved for the Crowne Plaza Resort development which includes approximately 365,000 square feet of new construction including a sports center expansion, a mixed-use office building and residential building, and a hotel/condo with structured parking. Many of these projects have been constructed and plans are in place to complete the development. Alternatives 4 and 4B would also affect businesses along Patton Avenue both east and west of the existing I-240 interchange. Some businesses in the neighborhoods adjacent to the existing I-240/Patton

Avenue interchange may also be directly affected by right-of-way acquisition required for the proposed project.

According to local officials, if Alternatives 4 or 4B are chosen, commercial development may be more appealing to developers along Patton Avenue on the east shore of the French Broad River due to improved connectivity between downtown and the west shore of the river. In addition, these two alternatives would provide available reclaimed land close to downtown for development. Although there are several logistical issues that would require resolution prior to this land becoming available for infill development, any new commercial developments may result in additional revenue gains for local governments through property taxes.

A *Direct Land Use and Economic Effects Assessment* was also completed in August 2014 to determine the economic effect of the proposed project footprint (all alternatives) on the local tax base. In general, the economic effect of individual alternatives within each section of the project would be proportional to the right-of-way cost estimates included with the total estimated project cost. The assessment concluded that the effect of any build alternative on property tax receipts would not likely be substantial and would reduce the property tax base by less than 1 percent. Even under the worst-case scenario (i.e., acquisition of all affected parcels), the effect on the property tax base would be less than 1.5 percent of the tax value. Furthermore, the assessment concluded that there would be no adverse or long term effects on business or employment opportunities in the area as a result of the proposed project.

Transportation Access Effects

Neighborhood Access

When analyzing the potential impact of a transportation improvement, it is important to address whether the project will impede or enhance the ability of residents to access neighborhoods and community facilities. Since STIP Project I-2513 is the proposed widening of an existing freeway facility (including a new location section and interchange modifications), it is possible that neighborhood access along the corridor may generally improve. As part of the proposed project, Amboy Road will be extended along the west side of I-240 to Brevard Road (NC 191). The extension of Amboy Road should help to provide better local connectivity to and circulation within the Fairfax/Virginia neighborhood. However, based on comments received at various times in the past, there appears to be mixed opinions from the residents in the Fairfax/Virginia neighborhood regarding the proposed extension. Several residents are concerned about the potential of increased cut-through traffic. During modifications to the Haywood Avenue interchange, it may be more difficult to access the Burton Street neighborhood and the Westwood Place neighborhood. However, there are other ways to enter these neighborhoods, and impacts would likely be temporary. Further discussion of temporary construction effects can be found later in this report.

As part of the Section C alternatives, some side streets and intersecting roads may be modified. However, these modifications should not reduce access to adjacent homes.

The preliminary design plans indicate that the connection of Hanover Street to Haywood Road may be permanently closed to provide access control within the immediate area of the interchange (Section A). The homes on Hanover Street would still be accessible by other local

roads. Therefore, impacts would likely be minimal, despite the slightly longer travel times and inconvenience.

The construction of Section B may temporarily hinder access to neighborhoods and businesses in the Westgate area and along Emma Road. It does not appear that the current proposed preliminary designs would permanently change access to these neighborhoods. Although some reconfiguration of the access points and intersecting roads in the area of the Patton Avenue interchange may occur, these changes should ultimately enhance the accessibility to the adjacent businesses and neighborhoods. Residents at a July 2007 neighborhood outreach meetings indicated that restricting access at Hazel Mill Road is desirable. However, the current alternatives under consideration do not restrict access at Hazel Mill Road.

If Alternatives 4 or 4B were selected as the preferred alternative, it is anticipated that access to the Hillcrest Apartments would improve with the proposed connector between Patton Avenue and Atkinson Street/Courtland Avenue. However, the exit ramp from US 19/23/70 northbound to Hill Street will be removed with Alternatives 4 and 4B (Section B). This will reduce accessibility to the Montford and Houston/Courtland neighborhoods. Hill Street between Riverside Drive and Montford Avenue would become a local roadway without a connection to the proposed freeway.

Hillcrest Apartments currently have only one access point (Atkinson Street). Therefore, maintenance of this existing access throughout construction will be essential for residents, first responders, and transit providers. In outreach meetings, residents indicated that the modifications proposed for Alternatives 4 and 4B (Section B) would likely improve service in the long-term because of the increased accessibility to the Hillcrest Apartments.

Commercial Access, Parking and Economic Impacts

STIP Project I-2513 will likely enhance overall commercial access through improved access. Access to Westgate and Crowne Plaza will be slightly modified with any of the Section B alternatives currently under consideration. However, these modifications should provide more direct access to these businesses. Alternative 3 and 3C would require a new service road to provide access to the Crowne Plaza Resort and the Westgate Shopping Center. Alternatives 4 and 4B may generally improve access to commercial properties along Patton Avenue due to the separation of Patton Avenue traffic from I-240 traffic, as well as improved system linkage between downtown Asheville and West Asheville neighborhoods.

It does not appear that construction of Section C will affect commercial access or parking. Right-of-way acquisitions related to Section A may affect the amount of parking available for businesses along Burton Street. Right-of-way acquisition related to Alternative 4 (Section B) may affect the amount of parking available for the Crowne Plaza. All alternatives of Section B may reduce or eliminate parking for businesses in the vicinity of the I-240/Patton Avenue interchange (primarily the southeast and both northern quadrants). A parking study has not been conducted for this project, and information available to date does not allow for the determination of which specific businesses will lose parking and which may be minority owned or have minority employees.

All Section B alternatives would cross parts of the Crowne Plaza Resort (golf course and recreational facilities).

Bicycle/Pedestrian Access

Based upon field observations and interviews with local officials, bicycle activity occurs throughout the DCIA, but bicycle facilities are not as prevalent in the minority and low-income areas. However, this activity seems to be concentrated within neighborhoods away from the project area. The bicycle facility inventory contained in the City of Asheville's *Bicycle Comprehensive Plan* indicates that a few of these facilities may cross the project area. A consistency review was conducted for the entire I-26 Connector project to ensure that the proposed designs were consistent with existing and planned bicycle facilities. Each side street and intersecting roadway that had the potential to be affected by the project was evaluated to determine if the proposed modifications/improvements were consistent with or exceeded the planned bicycle improvements. In a few cases, the proposed improvements did not meet the ultimate recommendation for the facility as identified in the adopted bicycle plan. However, in these cases, the design was developed such that the proposed project would not preclude the planned improvements. Also, depending on which alternative is chosen, a few areas may also require additional coordination with local officials to determine if they can be incorporated in the proposed design through one of the existing NCDOT and or Federal Highway Administration policies.

Preliminary design plans provided by NCDOT indicate that Alternatives 4 and 4B (Section B) may require fewer vehicular travel lanes on Patton Avenue over the French Broad River because of the separation of local and interstate traffic. As a result, opportunities may exist for enhancements to the bicycle and pedestrian facilities on Patton Avenue. Specific details of these facilities, including design criteria and potential cost sharing, would be need to be determined by NCDOT and the City of Asheville to ensure that they are in accordance with established state and federal policies.

Overall, bicycle access should not be affected by STIP Project I-2513 since it is a proposed freeway facility with limited access. Additionally, the proposed project will not preclude construction of any bicycle facilities within the DCIA.

No sidewalks currently exist along the I-26, I-40, or US 19/23/70 corridors, and pedestrian activity noted during the field visit was located away from the project area. Sidewalks are located along the I-240/Patton Avenue bridges providing pedestrian connectivity between downtown and the west shore of the French Broad River. Local officials indicated that residents of the Hillcrest Apartments sometimes cross I-240 on foot, and there is one pedestrian bridge between Atkinson Street within Hillcrest Apartments to W. Haywood Street.

Another pedestrian bridge serving the Houston/Courtland community crosses I-240 between Hill Street, near the Isaac Dickson School., and Haywood Street. Residents at a July 2007 neighborhood outreach meeting expressed support for Section B, Alternative 4 because of the proposed sidewalk(s) connecting Hillcrest Apartments to Patton Avenue. This sidewalk(s) would also be constructed as part of Alternative 4B.

A consistency review was conducted for the entire I-26 Connector project to ensure that the proposed designs were consistent with existing and planned pedestrian facilities. Each side street and intersecting roadway that had the potential to be affected by the project was evaluated to

determine if the proposed modifications/improvements were consistent with or exceeded the planned pedestrian improvements. In a few cases, the proposed construction improvements did not meet the ultimate recommendation for the facility as identified in the adopted pedestrian plan. However, in these cases, the design was developed such that the proposed project would not preclude the planned improvements. Also, depending on which alternative is chosen, a few areas may also require additional coordination with local officials to determine if they can be incorporated in the proposed design through one of the existing NCDOT and or Federal Highway Administration policies.

There are three pedestrian bridges in the DCIA. One of these pedestrian bridges, located at Stewart Street (Section A) has been closed due to safety concerns, and will be removed as part of the project. According to representatives of the Hillcrest Apartments, the pedestrian bridge at this location was closed because of crime, but has since reopened. However, this bridge will be removed for Alternatives 4 and 4B, while the path on the north side of Patton Avenue would remain. While Alternative 4 and 4B provide pedestrian access across Patton Avenue, having separated pedestrian access to the south side of Patton Avenue would provide safer conditions for pedestrians crossing into downtown. It is recommended that NCDOT leave the Hillcrest bridge to maintain connectivity and access to transit, jobs, and shopping, and perhaps improve lighting as a possible enhancement opportunity.

Alternatives 3 and 3C (Section B) do not include construction on the east side of the French Broad River. Therefore, Alternatives 3 and 3C will not remove the pedestrian bridge at Hillcrest Apartments. The Isaac Dickson School pedestrian bridge will be removed and replaced with Alternatives 4 and 4B. It will not be affected by Alternatives 3 and 3C.

Overall, pedestrian access should not be negatively affected by STIP Project I-2513 since it is a proposed freeway facility with limited access. Pedestrian access in many areas including along Patton Avenue (Alternatives 4 and 4B), along Haywood Road, and along Amboy Road will likely be improved as a result of the project through increased connections. Negative effects could occur should no alternative connections be provided when other connections are removed as part of the project (ie. the removal of the Hillcrest pedestrian bridge). Additionally, the proposed project will not preclude construction of any pedestrian facilities (i.e., sidewalks and/or greenways) within the DCIA.

The Americans with Disabilities Act

Since STIP Project I-2513 is proposed as a controlled access facility, the project is not anticipated to impact ADA facilities. All proposed construction on side streets and intersecting roads will be compliant with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Public Transit

The City of Asheville Transit Services Department operates nine fixed bus routes that have stops within the DCIA. These routes provide service Monday through Saturday between the hours of 5:30 AM and 10:30 PM. There are no bus stations within theDCIA; however, the City of Asheville operates a transit services operations center located south of Patton Avenue in the eastern portion of the DCIA. All bus routes originate at the Asheville Transit Center located in downtown Asheville.

In general, it is anticipated that effects to existing transit services provided within the DCIA will be related primarily to construction. Temporary congestion, delays, and limited access associated with each of the alternatives currently under consideration may affect the existing transit operations.

Transportation Network Effects

Change in Commuting Patterns

I-240 is a major highway around the City of Asheville that provides access to I-40 and I-26. Local officials indicated that I-240 in the vicinity of Patton Avenue and the I-240 bridges often get congested. The widening of I-240 and intersection improvements (at Patton Avenue and I-26/I-40/I-240) may help to alleviate this congestion. Also, local officials feel that the separation of interstate (I-26/I-240) traffic from local (Patton Avenue) traffic in Section B (Alternatives 4 and 4B) may further reduce congestion in these areas. Section B (all alternatives) will provide a more direct system linkage for commuters traveling the I-26 corridor, thereby removing motorists from US 19/23/70 and I-240. Local officials hope that construction of STIP Project I-2513 will divert I-240 traffic away from downtown Asheville by making the I-240 (future I-26) corridor a less congested option.

Travel Time

Travel times along the I-240 corridor should improve as a result of STIP Project I-2513. Currently, I-240 is a four-lane controlled access facility with numerous interchanges along the corridor. The proposed addition of lanes, interchange modifications, and more direct access to the future I-26 corridor north of Asheville may improve travel times along the corridor due to less congestion and improved system linkage. Alternatives 4 and 4B (Section B) in particular may improve travel times due to the separation of local Patton Avenue traffic from I-240 traffic.

Consistency with Thoroughfare Plans

Transportation 2030: The Long Range Multi-Modal Plan for Buncombe, Haywood, and Henderson Counties is a regional transportation planning document developed by the FBRMPO. The FBRMPO has prioritized STIP projects within its jurisdiction and has designated a portion of STIP Project I-2513 as a Priority One project, indicating that it is already funded and included in the STIP. The remainder of the project, the non-trust-fund portion, is considered a Priority Two project with construction scheduled to start between 2011 and 2020. The Plan also indicated that STIP Project I-2513 is included on the "Special Funding – Highway Trust Fund Urban Loop" list.

The I-26 Connector project (STIP Project I-2513) is listed in the French Broad River MPO (FBRMPO) *Comprehensive Transportation Plan* (CTP) as one of the "Highest Priority" projects, as it serves as a vital north-south regional link as well as serving local traffic accessing downtown Asheville.

STIP Project I-2513 is generally consistent with local transportation and transit plans.

Temporary Construction Effects

An evaluation of the construction effects for the proposed project was conducted (*Draft Construction Effects Evaluation*) to determine the magnitude of the potential effects that may

occur as the result of constructing the proposed project. The level of detail included in the evaluation is based on a preliminary evaluation of the construction phasing that was only developed to demonstrate that the alternatives were constructable. Community impacts resulting from construction impacts will be better determined as design plans move forward and operational effects become clearer.

The phasing plans were developed based on the preliminary design plans and additional work will be required before the true effects are completely known. The construction phasing is an item that evolves throughout the duration of the planning design and construction phases of the project and will likely be minimized from the effects included in this assessment. The final construction phasing and traffic control plans will likely be quite different from the preliminary phasing. Further, the Contractor will have the authority to materially change the phasing to optimize his manpower and equipment. Roads that are not identified for lane reductions, detours, or closures may well be affected when the final plans are developed. On the other hand, roads that are identified as affected may not be when the plans are finalized.

The durations, potential closures, lane reductions, detours and access restrictions are estimates based on construction phasing that are a good faith estimate of what may occur and will help to show the overall magnitude of effects for each alternative. The intent of this evaluation is to compare the construction effects of each alternative relative to one another. The additional refinement of construction phasing that will occur in later stages of the design process would likely result in a similar level of change for each of the alternatives being considered. Therefore, this evaluation method will be adequate for selection of a preferred alternative and any improvements made beyond the decision of a preferred alternative would likely be of the same magnitude for any of the alternatives being considered.

The method for evaluating the construction effects of the proposed project includes determining the potential effects that may occur as a result of the construction of the proposed project including:

- Estimated duration of construction
- Any closures or major detours required to construct the project
- Any lane reductions required to construct the project
- Any temporary changes in access to businesses required to construct the project
- Any specialized construction techniques or staging requirements

For each of the effects identified (most of which are operational in nature), a qualitative evaluation was conducted to determine the likely overall magnitude of the effect. Four categories were established for determining the magnitude of the effects. The evaluation measures are described in general for each of the four categories as follows:

Low or Moderate – the construction effect would not be substantial and would be considered normal for a major interstate construction project in an urban area.

High – the construction effect would be substantial and would be beyond what would be considered normal for a major interstate construction project in an urban area.

Severe - the construction effect would be substantial and may have adverse effects on the traveling public and/or adjacent properties and businesses and would be considered to be substantially beyond what would be normal for a major interstate construction project in an urban area.

This summary only included those construction effects that would be considered High or Severe. It is recommended that for any effect that is determined to be a High or Severe impact that additional analyses occur to determine if the magnitude of the effect can be minimized or mitigated. It is recommended that the additional evaluation of effects should occur prior to selection of a preferred alternative and that preliminary mitigation measures be considered for the effects that are classified as Severe.

In addition, construction impacts are incremental and temporary in nature, and may not alone be considered substantial, but when evaluated cumulatively with other impacts, may result in substantial community impacts.

Section C Construction Effects Summary

The construction effects evaluation for the four alternatives included in Section C resulted in all alternatives having at least some construction effects that have a magnitude that would be classified as High; however none of the alternatives had any effects that would be considered Severe.

In general, the construction effects in Section C would include some effects that are classified as High. The overall duration for construction would be similar among all four alternatives; however Alternative F-1 would likely have a slightly shorter construction duration thanthan the other three alternatives. In general Alternative F-1 would have the fewest construction effects, with only one construction effect being considered High. Alternative A-2 and would include two construction effects classified as High, while Alternative C-2 and D-1 would have similar construction effects and would include three effects classified as High.

Based on field observations and a review of the preliminary design plans, the construction effects associated with Section C were not further broken down by neighborhood/area. The nature of interchange modifications proposed as part of Section C is such that there is no differentiation of community impacts between alternatives. Additionally, due to the more rural residential character of this area, there do not appear to be social interconnections present that typify a cohesive community.

Section A Construction Effects Summary

The construction effects evaluation for the I-240 Widening Alternative in Section A resulted in four High magnitude and one Severe magnitude construction effects for closures and offsite detours and one High magnitude construction effect on a business.

The construction effects for Section A were also assessed from a community perspective to determine the potential effects to specific neighborhoods/areas within theDCIA. Through this assessment, a relative comparison of the potential construction effects by neighborhood was developed and is contained in Table 14.

Table 14. Estimated Number of Temporary Construction Effects by Neighborhood/Area for Section A

Neighborhood/Area	High	Severe
Fairfax/Virginia	3	1
Kentucky/ Hanover/ Pisgah View Apts.	4	1
Burton Street Neighborhood	4	0
Westwood Place	2	0
SUB-TOTAL	**13**	**2**
TOTAL	**15**	

Source: *Draft Construction Effects Assessment for STIP Project I-2513* (URS, March 11, 2010).

Section B Construction Effects Summary

The construction effects evaluation for the three alternatives included in Section B resulted in all alternatives having at least some construction effects that have a magnitude that would be classified as High or Severe.

In general, the overall duration for construction would be similar among all four alternatives; however Alternative 3 would likely have a slightly shorter construction duration that the other two alternatives because it does not include construction on the east side of the French Broad River. In general Alternative 3 would have the fewest construction effects, with three construction effects being considered High and two effects being considered Severe. Alternative 4B would have the next fewest construction effects with two construction effects being considered High and three effects being considered Severe. Alternative 4 would have the greatest effects due to construction with two construction effects being considered High and four effects being considered Severe.

A summary of the construction effects that were determined to be High or Severe are summarized for each of the alternatives in the appendix.

The construction effects for Section B were also assessed from a community perspective to determine the potential effects to specific neighborhoods/areas within the DCIA. Through this assessment, a relative comparison of the potential construction effects by neighborhood was developed and is contained in Table 15. Based on this assessment, it appears that Alternative 4B would have the fewest High and Severe construction effects to the surrounding communities.

Table 15. Estimated Number of Temporary Construction Effects by Neighborhood/Area for Section B

Neighborhood/Area	Alternative 3		Alternative 4		Alternative 4B	
	High	Severe	High	Severe	High	Severe
Burton Street Neighborhood	3	1	1	1	1	1
Westwood Place Neighborhood	2	1	1	2	1	2

Emma Road/Bingham Road Area	0	1	0	1	0	1
Montford Neighborhood	0	2	2	3	0	2
Houston/Courtland	0	2	2	2	0	1
Hillcrest Apartments	0	1	1	3	0	2
West End/Clingman Neighborhood	0	1	2	3	0	1
SUB-TOTAL	**5**	**9**	**9**	**15**	**2**	**10**
TOTAL	**14**		**24**		**12**	

Source: *Draft Construction Effects Assessment for STIP Project I-2513* (URS, March 11, 2010).

Community Safety Effects

Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety

Because the existing I-240 corridor is a controlled access highway, bicyclists and pedestrians are prohibited. No pedestrian or bicycle facilities are included in the design of the proposed I-26 Connector alternatives. However, a number of intersecting roadways will be modified to accommodate the proposed project. In these instances, the intersecting roadways will be designed to include in-kind replacement of disturbed bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Additionally, if the intersecting roadway does not currently include existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities, but is planned to include them at some point in the future, the proposed designs will not preclude their future construction. As a result, impacts to existing bicycle routes and pedestrian facilities as a result of STIP Project I-2513 should be minimal, if any.

There are three pedestrian bridges within the DCIA that cross I-26/I-240. One pedestrian bridge crosses over I-240 near the Isaac Dickson School. This pedestrian bridge should not experience any effects by the construction of STIP Project I-2513. Two additional pedestrian bridges include one at Stewart Street and one between Atkinson Street, where the Hillcrest Apartments are located, and W. Haywood Street. According to local officials, the pedestrian bridge at the Hillcrest Apartments was closed because of criminal activity but has since reopened. Both of these bridges will be removed as a result of this project. No impacts to pedestrians are anticipated as a result of removing the Stewart Street Bridge since the bridge is no longer in use; however it is recommended that NCDOT leave the Hillcrest bridge to maintain connectivity and access to transit, jobs, and shopping.

Since NCDOT proposes to modify the State Street bridge and the Haywood Road interchange, NCDOT should consider improved lighting for pedestrian and bicycle safety.

Emergency Response

According to local officials, the Buncombe County Rescue Squad Station #2 is the only emergency services facility within the DCIA. The facility is located along Hansel Avenue north of Patton Avenue. This facility provides emergency response services for areas throughout Buncombe County. According to local officials, this facility responds to an average of 6 calls per day and most calls originate from within the DCIA. Approximately 90 to 94 percent of the

responses utilize Patton Avenue, including the Smoky Park Bridges and/or existing I-240 south of Patton Avenue.

Buncombe County Emergency Services also provides emergency service to those persons located within the DCIA. Local officials expressed some concern with increased response times during construction of the project.

The City of Asheville Fire Department Station #3 (south of Patton Avenue just west of the DCIA) is also in close proximity to the DCIA. Police services throughout the area are provided by the City of Asheville Police Department, which has several facilities outside of the DCIA. There are no City of Asheville police stations located in the DCIA; however the UNC-Asheville Police Department is located within the DCIA.

According to local officials, STIP Project I-2513 could affect emergency response times. Response times may temporarily increase during construction of the project due to increased congestion resulting from construction activities, potential access restrictions in construction zones, lane closures, and detours. Local officials indicated that alternative access to the Buncombe County Rescue Squad was available, but requested that construction phasing details be coordinated with local emergency service providers. This coordination would include Buncombe County Rescue Squad, Buncombe Emergency Service, and the City of Asheville Fire Department. Upon completion of the project, it is anticipated emergency response times along the corridor may decrease, especially during peak hour traffic, due to improved system linkages, interchange modifications, reduced congestion, and greater capacity along the corridor.

Pisgah View Apartments

Vehicular Safety

I-240 is currently a four-lane, controlled access facility experiencing traffic congestion and travel delays. According to local officials, high numbers of crashes occur at the I-240/Patton Avenue interchange, on the I-240/Patton Avenue bridges, and at the I-240/US 19/23/70 interchange. The proposed construction of additional lanes, maintaining the controlled access nature of the facility, and safety improvements associated with interchange modifications and modernization of the roadway from a design standards perspective should enhance vehicular safety in these areas. Improved traffic flows resulting in reduced congestion could potentially improve vehicular safety along the corridor.

Environmental Justice Assessment

Environmental Justice Regulations

Environmental justice refers to the equitable treatment of people of all races, cultures, ages, and incomes with respect to development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. This document will identify special populations based on those set forth in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 12898, to insure that the I-2513 project does not have a disproportionately high and adverse impact or deny benefits of the project. If special populations are present within the DCIA, community outreach, including meaningful non-traditional methods, will be identified.

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) has oversight of the Federal government's compliance with Executive Order 12898. CEQ has developed guidance to further assist agencies with their procedures so that environmental justice concerns are effectively identified and addressed. Based on the CEQ guidance, low-income populations should be identified with the annual statistical poverty thresholds from the United States Census Bureau's Current Population Reports (Series P-60 on Income and Poverty). Minority populations, based on the CEQ guidance, should be identified where either: (a) the minority population of the affected area exceeds 50 percent or (b) the minority population percentage of the affected area is meaningfully greater than the minority population in the general population or other appropriate unit of geographic analysis. This section will assess environmental justice based on the race and low-income thresholds put forth by CEQ.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and related statutes, requires there be no discrimination in Federally-assisted programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability. Executive Order 12898, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations," provides that "each federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionably high and adverse human health and environmental effects of its program, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations." Special populations may include the elderly, children, the disabled, low-income areas, American Indians and other minority groups. Executive Order 12898 requires that Environmental Justice principles be incorporated into all transportation studies, programs, policies and activities. The three environmental principles are: 1) to ensure the full and fair participation of all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process, 2) to avoid, minimize or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority or low-income populations, and 3) to fully evaluate the benefits and burdens of transportation programs, policies, and activities, upon low-income and minority populations.

Affected Populations

Using the North Carolina Department of Transportation's Demographic Analysis Tool, a spatial analysis of non-white populations was conducted for STIP Project I-2513. The NCDOT tool utilizes 2007-2011 American Community Survey data at the Block Group level to identify non-white populations which are 10 percentage points higher than the corresponding non-white population in Buncombe County. Nine of the sixteen Block Groups included in the DSA contained percentages of non-white populations that meet this threshold. The majority of the non-white population concentrations are found adjacent to the project area between Brevard Road (NC 191) and Patton Avenue (Section A) and on either side of the French Broad River between Patton Avenue and the Broadway interchange (Section B). The highest concentrations

(>3x county average) are in the areas encompassing the Kentucky/Hanover/Pisgah View Apartments, Burton Street neighborhood, West End/Clingman neighborhood, Hillcrest Apartments, Houston/Courtland neighborhood, Montford neighborhood, and the Emma Road/Bingham Road area.

Spatial analysis using 2007-2011 ACS Block Group data was also completed to identify areas where higher populations of persons below the Federal poverty threshold resided. Thirteen of the sixteen Block Groups have concentrations of persons living below the poverty level that are five percentage points above that of the county.

In order to identify and assess potential effects to special populations within the DCIA, Census demographic data was evaluated to summarize community characteristics pertaining to race, poverty level, median income, and median age within the potentially affected neighborhoods, the City of Asheville, and Buncombe County. Identified neighborhoods were generally correlated to particular Block Groups when defining community characteristics. A summary of the neighborhood characteristics is included below in Table 16.

Table 16. Community Characteristics, 2010						
Area	**% African American**	**% Hispanic**	**% Below Poverty**	**% Minority**	**Median Household Income**	**Median Age**
Clairmont Crest Mobile Home Park (Census Tract 12, Block Group 5)	6.3%	17.5%	33.3%	26.3%	$37,348	31.6
Willow Lakes Mobile Home Park (Census Tract 12, Block Group 5)	9.7%	24.3%	30.0%	36.9%	$37,348	31.3
Morningside Park (Census Tract 11, Block Group 3)	2.3%	3.7%	7.4%	14.3%	$45,577	39.7
Kentucky/Hanover/Pisgah View Apts. (Census Tract 10, Block Group 2)	39.7%	4.8%	33.7%	48.8%	$31,698	26.5
Fairfax/Virginia Neighborhood (Census Tract 11, Block Group 2 & 3)	8.6%	8.8%	22.1%	20.3%	$37,960	36.6
Westwood Place Neighborhood (Census Tract 10, Block Group 1)	9.8%	6.8%	18.2%	18.7%	$48,558	34.2
Burton Street Neighborhood (Census Tract 11, Block Group 1)	38.4%	7.6%	21.2%	45.8%	$31,950	35.4
West End/Clingman Neighborhood (Census Tract 9, Block Group 3 & 4)	22.8%	3.9%	45.9%	29.5%	$ $17,208	50.1
Hillcrest Apartments (Census Tract 2, Block Group 2)	74.7%	1.2%	62.4%	80.0%	$15,721	20.0
Houston/Courtland Neighborhood (Census Tract 2, Block Group 2)	26.3%	2.8%	62.5%	31.8%	$15,721	30.1
Emma / Bingham Road (Census Tract 14, Block Group 1 & 2)	26.3%	35.4%	40.8%	66.4%	$27,351	29.3
Murphy Hill (Census Tract 14, Block Group 1)	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	$22,021	52.1
River Arts District (Census Track 9, Block Group 3 & 4)	48.2%	1.8%	50.5%	53.6%	$17,208	48.6
Montford Neighborhood (Census Tract 2 & 3, Block Group 1 & 2)	18.7%	2.6%	39.0%	25.9%	$29,398	31.5
UNC Asheville (Census Tract 4, Block Group 3)	4.5%	4.3%	35.1%	13.6%	$31,224	28.5
City of Asheville	13.4%	6.5%	20.3%	23.8%	$40,863	38.2
Buncombe County	6.4%	6.0%	15.6%	15.6%	$44,321	40.6

Source: US Census Bureau (2010), American Community Survey (2007-2011)

2010 US Census data indicates that there is a high percentage of Hispanics along the project area; however, local officials were not aware of any specific Hispanic communities within the DCIA. Census Tract 2, Block Group 2 ($15,721) and Census Tract 9, Block Groups 3 & 4 ($17,208) were also determined to have the lowest median household incomes within the DCIA.

At least 50 percent of the populations in Census Tract 9, Block Groups 3 & 4, Census Tract 2, Block Group 2, and Census Tract 14, Block Group 1 live below the poverty level.

Descriptions of the neighborhoods within the DCIA are given below.

Clairmont Crest Mobile Home Park
The Clairmont Crest Mobile Home Park is located off Sand Hill Road north of I-40, adjacent to the I-26/I-40/I-240 interchange. The community is somewhat isolated due to its close proximity to the interchange, with no nearby community amenities within walking distance. This community is comprised entirely of Census Tract 12, Block Group 5. According to 2010 Census data, this neighborhood contains an African American population (6.3%) that is about equal as that in Buncombe County (6.4%). The Hispanic population (17.5%) is almost triple the County average (6.0%). More than a third (33.3%) of the population in this neighborhood lived below poverty level as compared to 15.6% in the County. The median annual income in this neighborhood ($37,348) was substantially less than the median income in the County ($44,321). Additionally, the median age in this neighborhood (31.6) is relatively low when compared to the median age in the County (40.6). This neighborhood meets the EJ threshold for notable ow-income populations.

Willow Lakes Mobile Home Park
The Willow Lakes Mobile Home Park is located off Sand Hill Road north of I-40, adjacent to the I-26/I-40/I-240 interchange. The community is somewhat isolated due to its close proximity to the interchange, with no nearby community amenities within walking distance. This community is comprised entirely of Census Tract 12, Block Group 5. According to 2010 Census data, this neighborhood contains an African American population (9.7%) that is slightly higher than that in Buncombe County (6.4%). The Hispanic population (24.3%) is quadruple the County average (6.0%). Almost a third (30.0%) of the population in this neighborhood lived below poverty level as compared to 15.6% in the County. The median annual income in this neighborhood ($37,348) was substantially less than the median income in the County ($44,321). Additionally, the median age in this neighborhood (31.3) is relatively low when compared to the median age in the County (40.6). This neighborhood meets the EJ threshold for notable low-income populations.

Morningside Park
Morningside Park is a sub-area of West Asheville located off Brevard Road north of I-240, between Shelburne Road and Fairfax Avenue. The community is primarily single-family with some multi-family townhomes. This community is comprised entirely of Census Tract 11, Block Group 3. According to 2010 Census data, this neighborhood contains an African American population (2.3%) that is significantly lower than that in Buncombe County (6.4%). The Hispanic population (3.7%) is almost half the County average (6.0%). Only 7.4% of the population in this neighborhood lived below poverty level as compared to 15.6% in the County. The median annual income in this neighborhood ($45,577) was slightly higher than the median income in the County ($44,321). Additionally, the median age in this neighborhood (39.7) is even when compared to the median age in the County (40.6). This neighborhood does not meet any EJ thresholds for low-income or minority populations.

Kentucky/ Hanover/ Pisgah View Apartments

The Pisgah View Apartments are operated by the Housing Authority of the City of Asheville. The apartments are located east of the existing interchange at I-240 and Amboy Road. Based upon Buncombe County GIS parcel data, the property is generally bounded by Stewart Street to the north, Michigan Avenue to the east, Amboy Road to the south, and Hanover Street to the west. Combined with the residences along Kentucky Drive and Hanover Street, this community comprises approximately one-third of US Census Bureau Census Tract 10, Block Group 2. According to 2010 Census data, this neighborhood contains an African American population (39.7%) that is about six times as much as that in Buncombe County (6.4%). The Hispanic population (4.8%) is just slightly below the County average (6.0%). More than a third (33.7%) of the population in this neighborhood lived below poverty level as compared to 15.6 percent in the County. The median annual income in this neighborhood ($31,698) was substantially less than the median income in the County ($44,321). Additionally, the median age in this neighborhood (26.5) is relatively low when compared to the median age in the County (40.6). This neighborhood meets the EJ thresholds for notable minority and low-income populations.

Fairfax/Virginia Avenue

The Fairfax/Virginia Avenue neighborhood contains a mix of older housing stock, as well as recently constructed infill residences. The neighborhood is located north of the Brevard Road interchange at I-240, and generally includes Fairfax Avenue, Virginia Avenue, and the secondary streets between them. A small portion of the neighborhood is located within US Census Bureau Census Tract 11, Block Group 2. Census data does not reveal any special populations in this Block Group. The remainder of the neighborhood comprises nearly half of US Census Bureau Census Tract 11, Block Group 3. According to 2010 Census data, this section of the neighborhood contains a Hispanic population (8.8%) that is higher than that (6.0%) in the County, as well as an African American population (8.6%), that is higher than that (6.4%) of Buncombe County. Over twenty-two percent (22.1%) of the population in the neighborhood (as compared to 15.6% in the County) lives below the poverty level. The median income in this neighborhood ($37,960) is lower than in the County ($44,321). This neighborhood meets the EJ threshold for a notable low-income population.

Westwood Place Neighborhood

The Westwood Place neighborhood contains a mix of older housing stock, as well as recently constructed infill residences. This neighborhood is located south of the Patton Avenue interchange at I-240. According to the City of Asheville Neighborhoods Map and a local representative, the Westwood Place neighborhood is generally bounded by I-240 to the north, Waynesville Avenue to the east, Haywood Road to the south, and I-240 to the west. Another local representative indicated that the neighborhood boundaries might extend as far east and south as the French Broad River.

This neighborhood is generally located in US Census Bureau Census Tract 10, Block Group 1. According to 2010 Census data, this neighborhood contains minority populations (9.8% African American and 6.7% Hispanic) that are somewhat higher than those in Buncombe County. As mentioned previously, Buncombe County has African American and Hispanic populations of 6.4 percent and 6.0 percent, respectively. Poverty levels in this neighborhood (18.2%) are only slightly higher than in the County (15.6%). This neighborhood does not meet any EJ thresholds for low-income or minority populations.

Burton Street Neighborhood
The Burton Street neighborhood contains a mix of older housing stock, as well as recently constructed infill residences. Burton Street residents have been active in working with NCDOT during the planning of STIP Project I-2513. This neighborhood is located in the southwest corner of the Patton Avenue interchange at I-240. The Burton Street neighborhood is generally bounded by Patton Avenue to the north, I-240 to the east, Haywood Road to the south, and Dorchester Avenue to the west.

This community comprises approximately one-half of US Census Bureau Census Tract 11, Block Group 1. According to 2010 Census data, this neighborhood contains an African American population (38.4%) that is roughly six times that of the County (6.4%), and a Hispanic population (7.6%) that is slightly higher than that of the County (6.0%). Poverty levels in this neighborhood (21.2%) are higher than in the County (15.6%), and the median income is lower ($31,950 as compared to $44,321 in the County). This neighborhood meets the EJ thresholds for notable minority and low-income populations.

West End/Clingman Neighborhood
The West End/Clingman neighborhood contains a mix of recently built affordable housing options and older homes. This neighborhood is located southwest of the interchange at I-240 and US 19/23/70. According to Asheville planners, the West End/Clingman neighborhood is generally bounded by I-240 to the north, Clingman Avenue to the east, Lyman Street to the south, and the French Broad River to the west.

This community comprises approximately one-third of US Census Bureau Census Tract 9, Block Group 2. According to 2010 Census data, this neighborhood contains an African American population (22.8%) that is approximately 3 times that in Buncombe County (6.4%), and a Hispanic population (3.9%) that is slightly less than in the County (6.0%). Almost half of the population (45.9%) lives below the poverty level, and the median income ($17,208) is approximately one third of the median income in the County ($44,321). Additionally, the median age in this neighborhood (50.1) is higher than that of the County (40.6). This neighborhood meets the EJ thresholds for notable minority and low-income populations.

Hillcrest Apartments
The Hillcrest Apartments are operated by the Housing Authority of the City of Asheville. The complex is located northeast of the existing Patton Avenue or I-240 bridges over the French Broad River. Based upon Buncombe County GIS parcel data, the Hillcrest Apartment community is generally bounded by US 19/23/70 to the north and east, I-240 to the south, and the Craggy Spur Branch of the Norfolk Southern Railroad to the west.

This community comprises approximately one-fifth of US Census Bureau Census Tract 2, Block Group 1. According to 2010 Census data, this neighborhood contains the highest percentage (74.7%) of African Americans in the DCIA, more than ten times that of the County (6.4%). The Hispanic population (1.2%) is lower than in the County (6.0%). More than half of the population (62.4%) lives below the poverty level, and the median income ($15,721) is approximately one third of the median income in the County ($44,321). Additionally, the median age in this

neighborhood (20) is half that of the County (40.6). This neighborhood meets the EJ thresholds for notable minority and low-income populations.

Houston/Courtland Neighborhood

The Houston/Courtland neighborhood is a historically African American neighborhood containing predominantly older homes. This neighborhood is located adjacent to US 19/23/70, northeast of the interchange with I-240. The Houston/Courtland neighborhood generally includes Houston Street, Courtland Avenue, and several small side streets. This community comprises approximately one-fifth of US Census Bureau Census Tract 2, Block Group 1. This is the same Block Group that the Hillcrest Apartments are located in, and most of the demographic statistics are the same for this community. However, while the Hillcrest Apartments contained the highest percentage of African Americans (74.7%), this neighborhood (26.3%) was approximately 4 times that of the County (6.4%). Percentages of Hispanics, Low-Income and Poverty were approximately the same. Hillcrest representatives indicated that the Houston/Courtland neighborhood interacts more with the Montford Neighborhood (to its north) than with Hillcrest. This neighborhood meets the EJ threshold for notable minority populations.

Emma Road/Bingham Road Area

The area along Bingham Road around Westgate Shopping Center contains a mix of single-family homes and manufactured housing. This area is primarily within US Census Bureau Census Tract 14, Block Group 2. According to 2010 Census data, this neighborhood contains a Hispanic population (35.4%) that is about six times that in the County (6.0%). The African American population (26.3%) is higher than in the County (6.4%), as well as the percentage below poverty (40.8%), while median income ($27,351) is somewhat lower than in the County (15.6% and $44,321 respectively). This neighborhood meets the EJ thresholds for notable minority and low-income populations.

The Woodridge Apartments, a City of Asheville Housing Authority complex, are also located in Census Tract 14, Block Group 2. Local representatives indicated that many Hispanics live either in this complex or the adjoining manufactured home park, but that these residents typically do not attend government sponsored meetings or events.

Murphy Hill

Murphy Hill is a group of 5 single-family residences located just north of the Westgate Plaza. The area is referred to as Murphy Hill as it overlooks an area of the railroad formerly known as “Murphy Junction”. This area is primarily within US Census Bureau Census Tract 14, Block Group 1. According to 2010 Census data, this neighborhood contains neither Hispanic populations nor any African American population. The community however, has a percentage below poverty (50.0%) that is significantly higher than the county (15.6%), while median income ($22,021) is significantly lower than in the County ($44,321). This neighborhood meets the EJ threshold for notable low-income populations.

River Arts District

The River Arts District (RAD) Community is generally bounded by Patton Avenue to the north; Roberts Street, Haywood Road, Clingman Avenue, Depot Street, and the Norfolk Southern Railroad to the east, Oakland Road to the south, and the French Broad River to the west. RAD is

an area of former industrial mills and warehouses that has evolved into a burgeoning arts district within the City of Asheville. This area is primarily within US Census Bureau Census Tract 9, Block Groups 3 & 4. According to 2010 Census data, this neighborhood contains a Hispanic population (1.8%) that is about one-third that of the County (6.0%). The African American population (48.2%) is significantly higher than in the County (6.4%), as well as the percentage below poverty (50.5%) and median income ($17,208) are significantly lower than in the County (15.6% and $44,321 respectively). This neighborhood meets the EJ thresholds for notable minority and low-income populations.

Montford Neighborhood

The Historic Montford neighborhood contains a mix of older housing stock and recently constructed infill residences. The neighborhood also includes the Klondyke Apartments, a public housing facility operated by the Housing Authority of the City of Asheville. This historic neighborhood is located off of Montford Avenue and is listed as a historic district on the National Register. According to the City of Asheville Neighborhoods Map, the neighborhood is generally bounded by Broadway to the north and east, I-240 to the south, and US 19/23/70 to the west. This community consists of US Census Bureau Census Tracts 3 & 4, Block Groups 1& 2. According to 2010 Census data, this Block Group contains an African American population of 18.7 percent, approximately three times that of the County. Approximately 39 percent of the population lives below the poverty level, which is over two times as much as in the County (15.6%). The median household income ($29,398) is nearly three-quarters that of the County. Additionally, the median age (31.5) is much lower than in the County (40.6). This neighborhood meets the EJ thresholds for notable minority and low-income populations.

UNC-Asheville

UNC-Asheville is a liberal arts college with approximately 3,500 students, which is generally bounded by Lookout Road to the north; W.T. Weaver Boulevard, University Heights, and Edgewood Road to the east, Broadway to the south, and I-26 to the west. This area is primarily within US Census Bureau Census Tract 4, Block Group 3. According to 2010 Census data, this neighborhood contains a Hispanic population (4.3%) that is slightly lower than that of the County (6.0%). The African American population (4.5%) is slightly lower than in the County (6.4%), as well as the percentage below poverty (35.1%) and median income ($31,224) are significantly lower than in the County (15.6% and $44,321 respectively). This neighborhood meets the EJ threshold for notable low-income populations.

Benefits/Burdens Assessment

A benefits/burdens assessment was also developed to identify the benefits and burdens (i.e., effects) of the proposed project on each identified minority and low-income community. Using the information contained in previous sections of this report, the summaries provided below explain the benefits/burdens assessment for Sections A, B, and C. The dots in tables represent the level of impact, with one dot being a lower impact and three dots being a higher impact.

Section C

There do not appear to be differentiating benefits and burdens from a community impacts perspective for any of the residences and businesses contained within the proposed Section C interchange improvements. Additionally, based on input from local planners and field

observations, the rural residential area did not appear to have the social interconnections present that typify a cohesive community.

Section A

Based on the preliminary design plans provided by NCDOT, the neighborhoods which would be most affected by Section A modifications are the Fairfax/Virginia/West Asheville neighborhood and the Kentucky/Hanover/Pisgah View Apartments. The higher potential for community impacts as a result of Section A is primarily attributed to the increased noise levels, level of physical intrusion, reduced community cohesion/neighborhood stability, and temporary construction effects. These two neighborhoods have also been impacted by previous transportation-related projects, and the magnitude of overall effects to these neighborhoods is considered high and adverse.

Section B

The summary of the benefits/burdens assessment for neighborhoods found along Section B is as follows. Based on the preliminary design plans provided by NCDOT, there appears to be potential for higher effects to the following neighborhoods:

Alternative 3: Burton Street
Alternative 3C: Burton Street
Alternative 4: Montford, Hillcrest and Westwood Place
Alternative 4B: Montford, Hillcrest and Westwood Place

The higher potential for community impacts to Burton Street as a result of Section B (Alternatives 3 and 3C) is primarily attributed to increased noise levels, physical intrusion, and temporary and permanent construction impacts. Hillcrest and Westwood Place have also been impacted by previous transportation-related projects and new impacts are primarily attributed to temporary construction impacts and loss of pedestrian and bicycle access, including the pedestrian bridge from Hillcrest to downtown Asheville. Given that these would also be potential recurring impacts, the magnitude of overall effects to this neighborhood is considered high and adverse. The high potential for effects to the Montford neighborhood as a result of Section B (Alternatives 4 and 4B) is due to increased noise levels, potential visual or aesthetic effects related to the new bridges over the French Broad River, and temporary construction impacts. While community input does not reveal that Montford was impacted by previous transportation-related projects, the magnitude of overall effects to these neighborhoods is still considered high and adverse.

Conclusions

Several of the neighborhoods mentioned above may experience effects related to noise, community cohesion/neighborhood stability, physical intrusion, and temporary construction effects. Most of the neighborhoods in the DCIA are characterized by minority and low-income populations which are higher than the County average. Many of the project impacts will be predominantly borne by these populations. Many of the communities will experience high and adverse impacts, whether directly related to this project, or as recurring impacts that resulted from the previous I-240 project. Consequently, the STIP Project I-2513 is likely to have a

disproportionately high and adverse effect on the identified special populations discussed in this report.

The identified minority and low-income populations within the DCIA (and located along Sections A and B) will also receive project benefits in the form of improved mobility and system linkage, enhanced accessibility, and congestion reduction. Separating local traffic from I-240, particularly in the Patton Avenue area, will result in notable community benefits. Local vision for this area includes transforming Patton Avenue into a multi-modal urban boulevard. In addition, these improvements provide enhanced connections to cultural amenities on the east side of the river, particularly the River Arts District.

The project will result in improved connectivity for the Fairfax/Virginia neighborhood, and Alternatives 4 and 4B (Section B) will improve connectivity to the Hillcrest community. Neighborhoods closer to Patton will accrue more of these benefits for those alternatives that separate local and interstate traffic. The neighborhoods furthest from the potential Patton improvements will accrue fewer benefits.

Therefore, many of the project impacts have been avoided or minimized by design changes, and offset by increased benefits to some neighborhoods. Further coordination with the affected communities, the City of Asheville, and various stakeholders, can provide an opportunity to sufficiently avoid, minimize, mitigate and enhance for effects that are not currently addressed. Recurring impacts, disproportionate, and high and adverse effects can be offset.

Community Outreach

As mentioned previously, NCDOT has held numerous workshops and meetings with community leaders, local interest groups, business groups and the affected business owners and neighborhood groups throughout the project planning process. These outreach activities began in the late 1990's and have continued throughout the project planning process. The purpose of these meetings has been to explain NCDOT's project development process, to identify methods for reducing project impacts, to engage the affected community in the transportation decision-making process, and to assure conformance with future area plans.

In order to provide a general understanding of the community outreach that has been completed as part of the I-26 Connector project, a select sampling of the workshop and small group meeting documentation (comments received, meeting minutes/summaries, etc.) is provided as part of the *Neighborhood Outreach Technical Memorandum*. This information is a subset of the information contained in the administrative record for the project. In general, this documentation covers from 1998 to the present time and provides context to the input received to date from the identified neighborhoods with minority and/or low-income residents.

Between June and September of 2014, outreach meetings were held in three neighborhoods along the project corridor - the Burton Street neighborhood, the East West Asheville Neighborhood Association area, and the Montford neighborhood. More complete documentation of these meetings is included in the "Neighborhood Outreach Technical Memorandum" dated January 2015. Minutes of the 2014 neighborhood outreach meetings are also included in the memo.

Recurring Community / Neighborhood Impacts

The neighborhoods within the DCIA have been affected in the past through construction of transportation infrastructure projects. The original construction of I-240 in the mid-1960s divided established neighborhoods such as Fairfax/Virginia/West Asheville, Kentucky/Hanover/Pisgah View Apartments, Burton Street, Westwood Place, and West End/Clingman, and there is a potential for recurring impacts as a result of STIP Project I-2513.

Local streets, such as Montana Avenue and Pennsylvania Avenue were once continuous streets in neighborhoods eventually segmented by the construction of I-240. They remain severed today. In September 2004, the City requested that Montana Avenue, Pennsylvania Avenue, New Jersey Avenue, and Stewart Street be re-connected as part of the I-26 Connector project. Some neighborhoods, such as the Burton Street Community and West End Clingman mentioned the effects of this previous transportation project during the neighborhood outreach meetings conducted in 2007. Despite the previous effects from the original construction of I-240, it seems that the individual neighborhoods have their own sense of cohesiveness, evidenced by the fact that many have separate homeowners associations and have had separate dealings with the NCDOT.

In 2011, another project, STIP Project U-3601 widened NC 191 between I-26 and I-40. This project is also within the DCIA for STIP Project I-2513. Additionally, the construction of STIP Project I-4401 in 2008 added additional travel lanes to I-40 between the I-26/I-40/I-240 interchange to west of US 19-23.

Past infrastructure projects have influenced the character of the communities in the DCIA. The original construction of I-240 affected community cohesion, neighborhood stability, and traffic noise levels in the DCIA. STIP Project I-2513 has the potential to have cumulative effects on community cohesiveness, neighborhood stability, and traffic noise in the area.

VII. CIA RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Project Planning Engineer should consult with NCDOT Public Involvement about updating the public involvement plan for the project to include consideration of Spanish-speaking populations in the project development process.
- The Project Planning Engineer should coordinate with NCDOT Public Involvement to evaluate opportunities for continued outreach to the minority and low-income communities/neighborhoods that have the potential to experience disproportionately high and adverse effects and/or unmitigated recurring impacts from the proposed project. At a minimum, this outreach would include the following neighborhoods and communities: Fairfax/Virginia, Kentucky/Hanover/Pisgah View Apartments, Burton Street, Westwood Place, Emma Road/Bingham Road, and Montford.
- The Project Planning Engineer should consult with NCDOT Public Involvement about updating the public involvement plan for the project prior to the public hearing for continuing to include consideration of businesses (and the City of Asheville) in the project development process. The purpose of this outreach would be to engage businesses which may lose parking spaces.
- NCDOT should coordinate with first responders such as Buncombe County Rescue Squad, City of Asheville Fire Department, and Buncombe County Emergency Services Department during development of the construction phasing and traffic control plans. This coordination should also include Asheville City Schools since they have multiple bus routes and facilities within the DCIA.
- NCDOT should consider context sensitive bridge designs and engage the community regarding design options and features that would help to minimize perceived impacts to the French Broad River viewshed.
- The Project Planning Engineer should coordinate with NCDOT Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation to evaluate opportunities for consideration of bicycle and pedestrian facilities along non-interstate facilities as part of the project design and to ensure that pedestrian facilities on the Haywood Road bridge meet NCDOT and ADA design requirements.
- NCDOT should consider improved lighting for pedestrian and bicycle safety under the State Street bridge at the Haywood Road interchange.
- NCDOT should consider maintaining the pedestrian bridge near the Hillcrest Apartments, and perhaps improving lighting, in this predominantly minority area.
- NCDOT should consider enhancements such as re-connection of local streets, wide sidewalks, bicycle lanes, streetscape improvements, pedestrian-scale lighting, pedestrian crossings and countdown timers wherever it will modify several side streets and intersecting roadways as part of the proposed project. Specific details of these enhancements, including design criteria and potential cost sharing mechanisms, would need to be determined between NCDOT and the City of Asheville to ensure that they are in accordance with established state and federal policies.
- NCDOT should consider the inclusion of pedestrian-oriented streetscapes, and landscaping at I-240 and Haywood Road to promote compatible growth and neighborhood cohesion.

- NCDOT should evaluate whether it is feasible to construct a roundabout on the corner of Clingman Avenue and Patton Avenue for consistency with the WECAN Citizens Master Plan. Additional landscaping along Patton Avenue would be beneficial to fulfill the Asheville Design Center's goals for a tree-lined urban boulevard.

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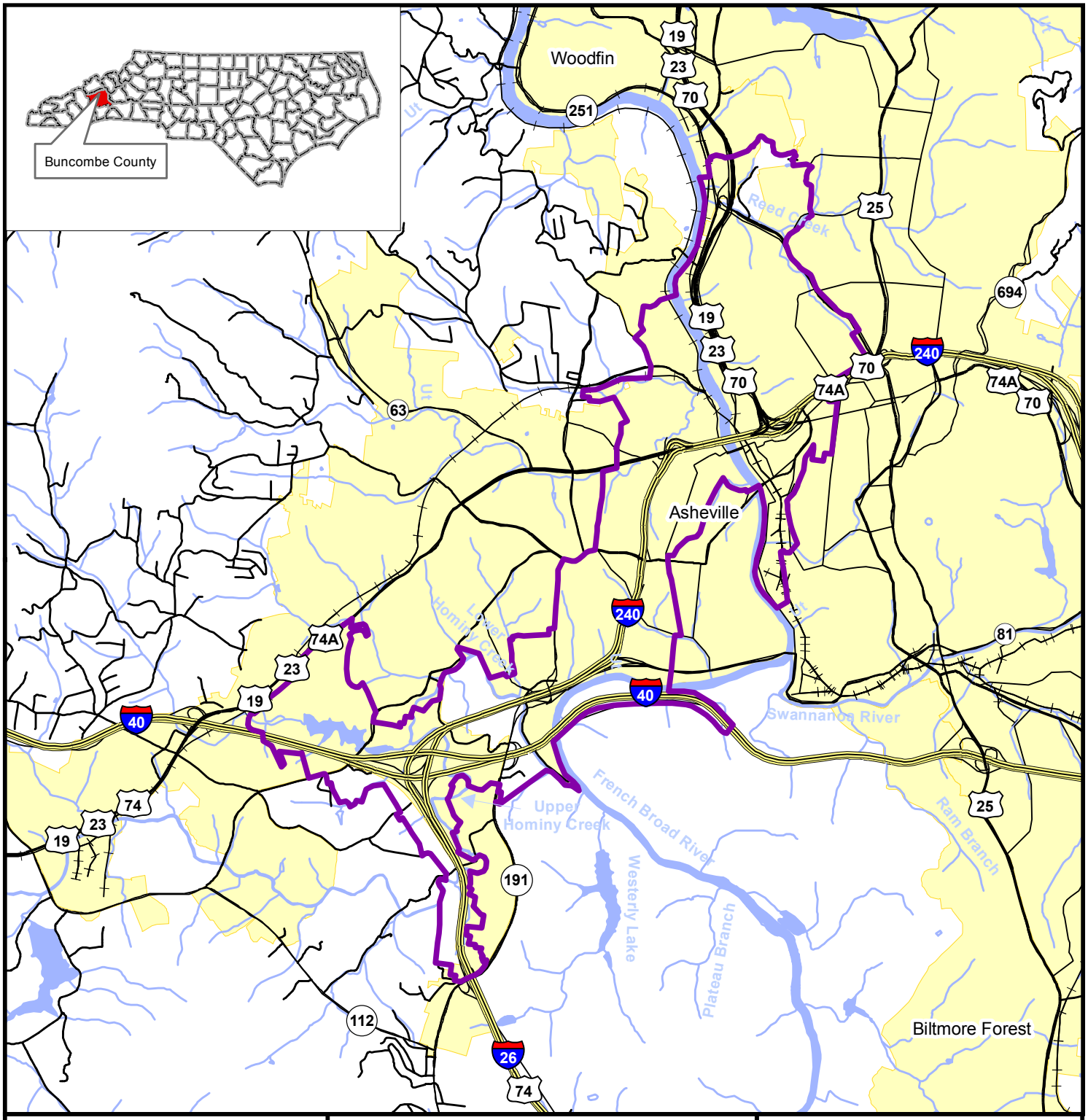
Appendix A



North Carolina Department of Transportation

Legend

- Interstate
- US Highway
- NC Highway
- State Route
- Railroad
- Streams (non-delineated)
- Direct Community Impact Area
- Water
- Municipal Boundary

Date: January 2015

N W E S

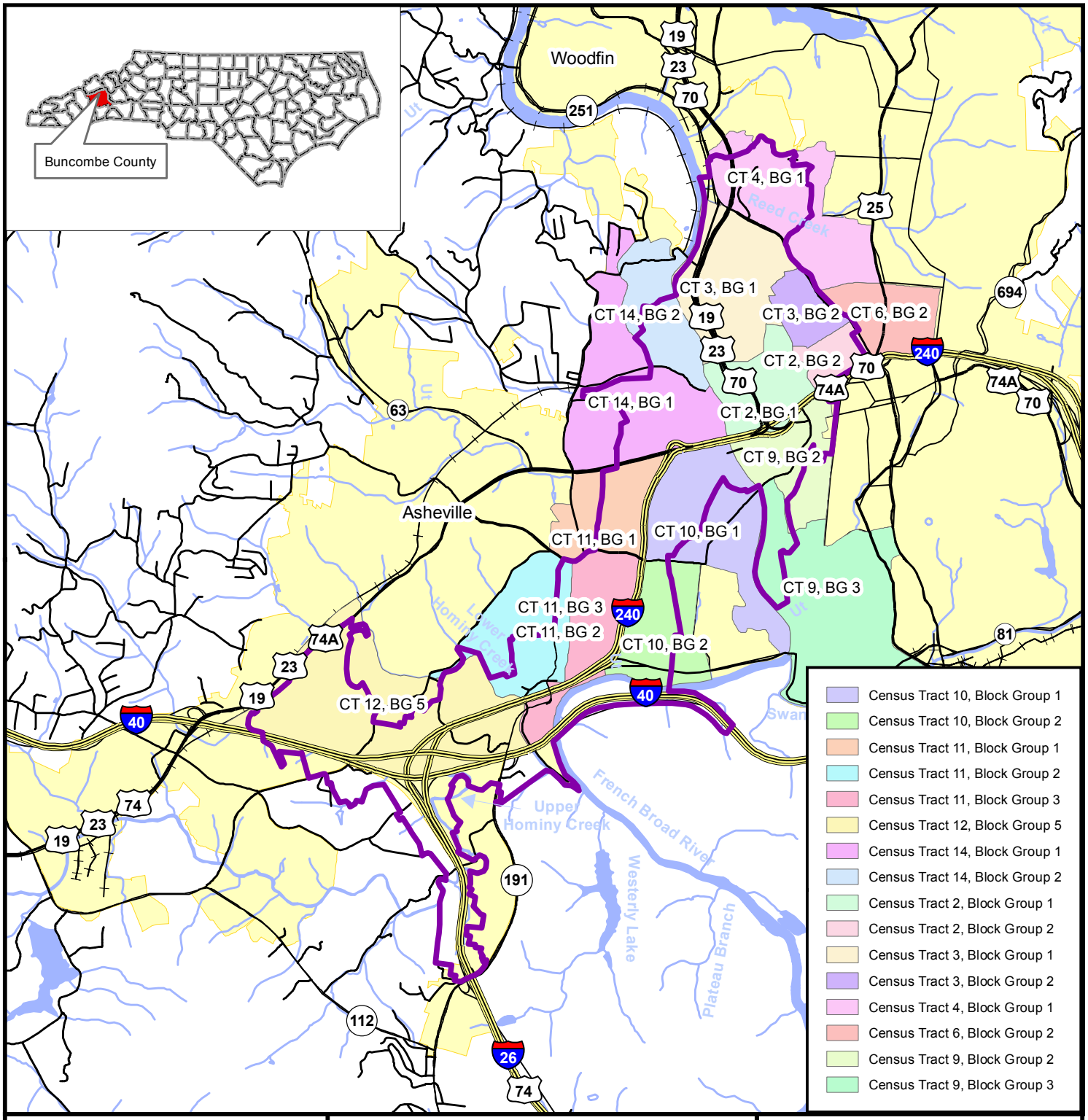
0 0.5 1 Miles

I-26 Asheville Connector
Buncombe County

STIP Project No. I-2513

Figure 1

Direct Community Impact Area (DCIA)



North Carolina Department of Transportation

Legend

- Interstate
- US Highway
- NC Highway
- State Route
- Railroad
- Streams (non-delineated)
- Direct Community Impact Area
- Water
- Municipal Boundary

Date: January 2015

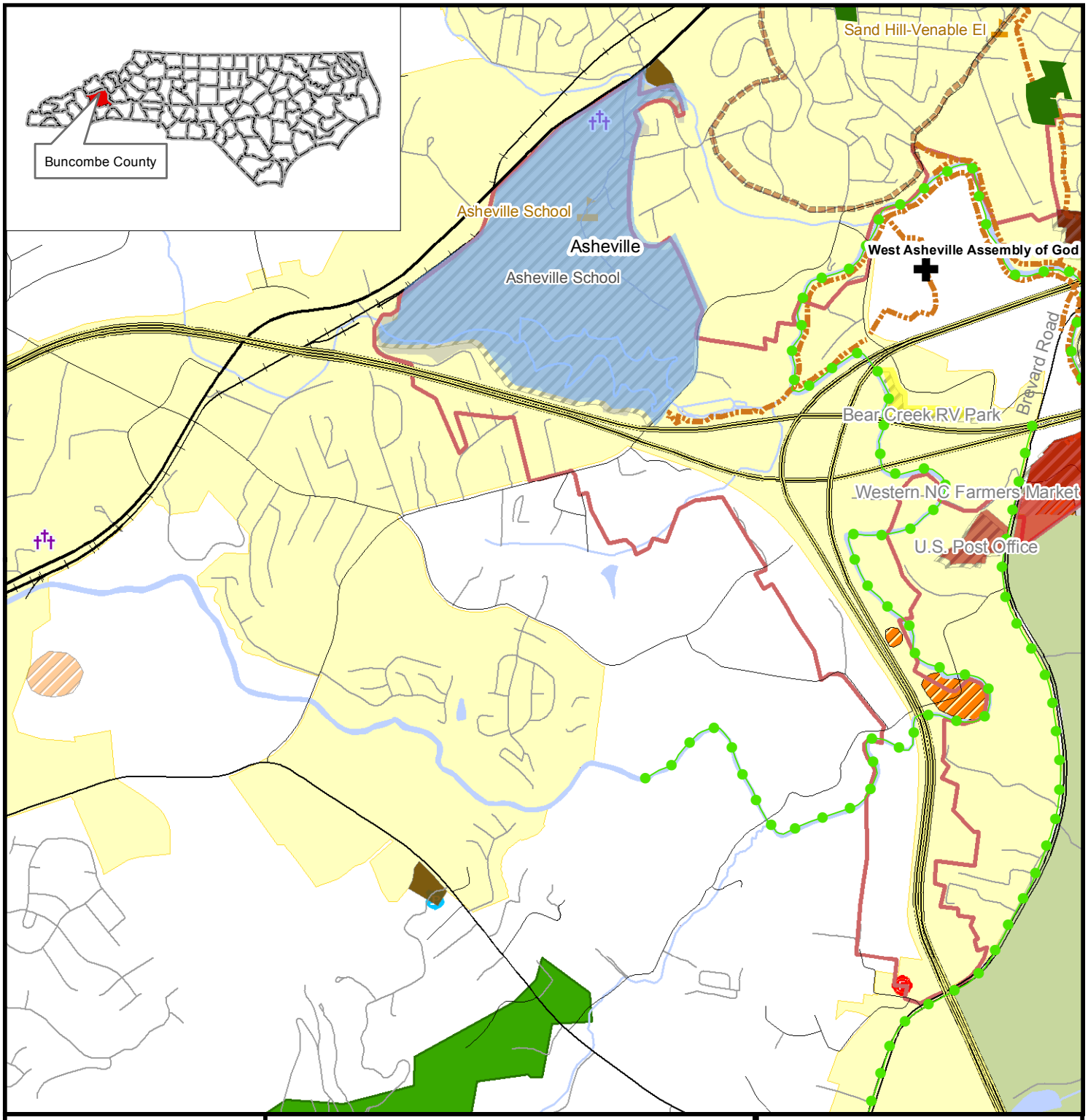
0 0.5 1 Miles

I-26 Asheville Connector
Buncombe County

STIP Project No. I-2513

Figure 2

Demographic Study Area (DSA)



North Carolina Department of Transportation

Legend

- Church
- Greenways
- Parks
- Trail Network
- Interstate
- US Route
- NC Route
- State Route
- Local Road
- Railroad
- Bike Route
- DCIA
- Streams (non-delineated)
- Water
- Pisgah National Forest
- Biltmore Estate
- Cemetery
- School
- Community Facilities
- State Owned Complexes
- Fire Station
- Police Station
- EMS
- Historic Resource
- Hazardous Materials Site
- Municipal Boundary

Date: January 2015

N W E S

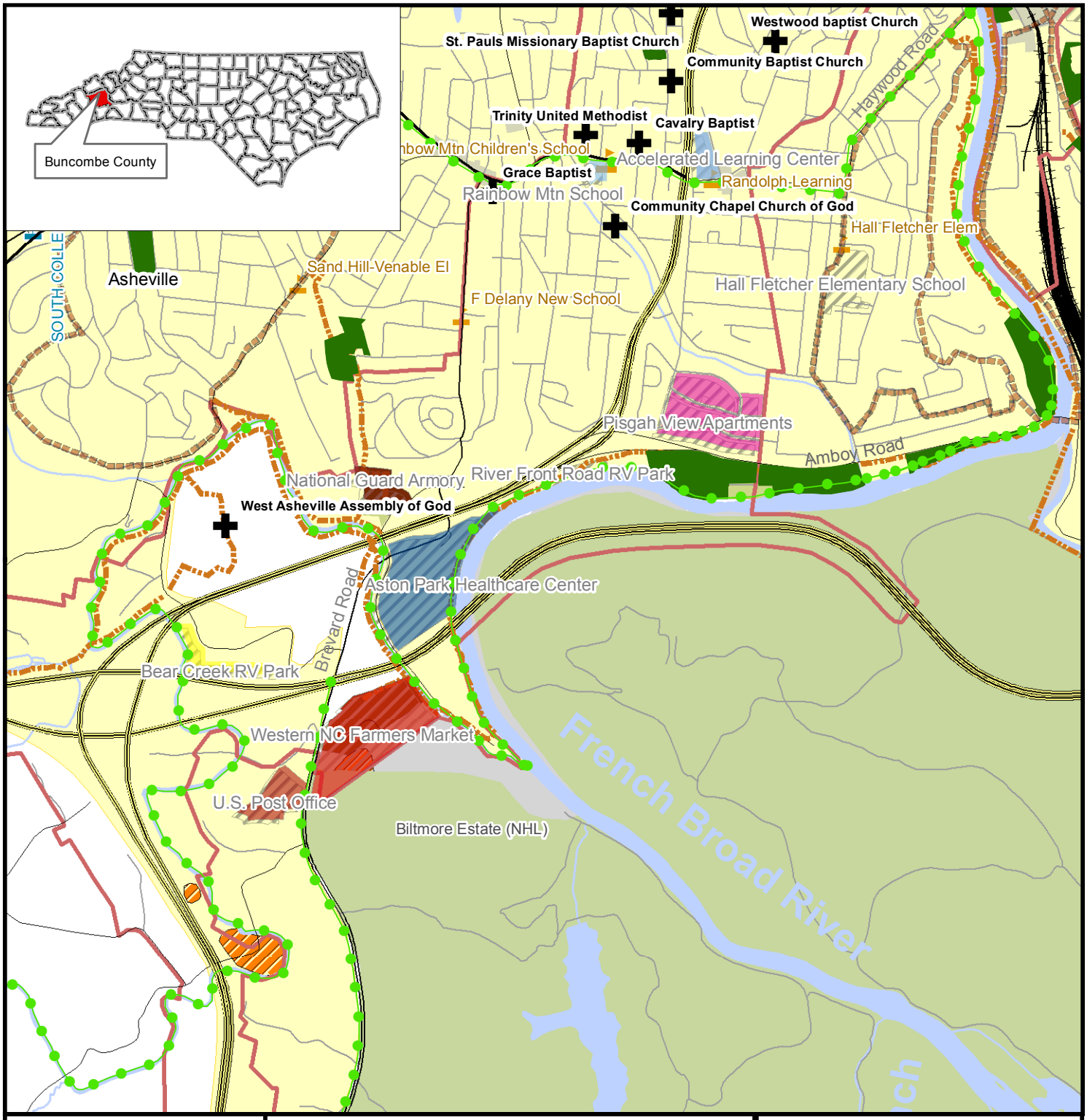
0 0.25 0.5 Miles

I-26 Asheville Connector
Buncombe County

STIP Project No. I-2513

Figure 3A

Community Context and Facilities



North Carolina Department of Transportation

Legend

- Church
- Greenways
- Parks
- Trail Network
- Interstate
- US Route
- NC Route
- State Route
- Local Road
- Railroad
- Bike Route
- DCIA
- Streams (non-delineated)
- Water
- Biltmore Estate
- College/University
- School
- Indoor Recreation Areas
- Community Facilities
- State Owned Complexes
- Fire Station
- Police Station
- EMS
- Historic Resource
- Hazardous Materials Site
- Municipal Boundary

Date: January 2015

N W E S

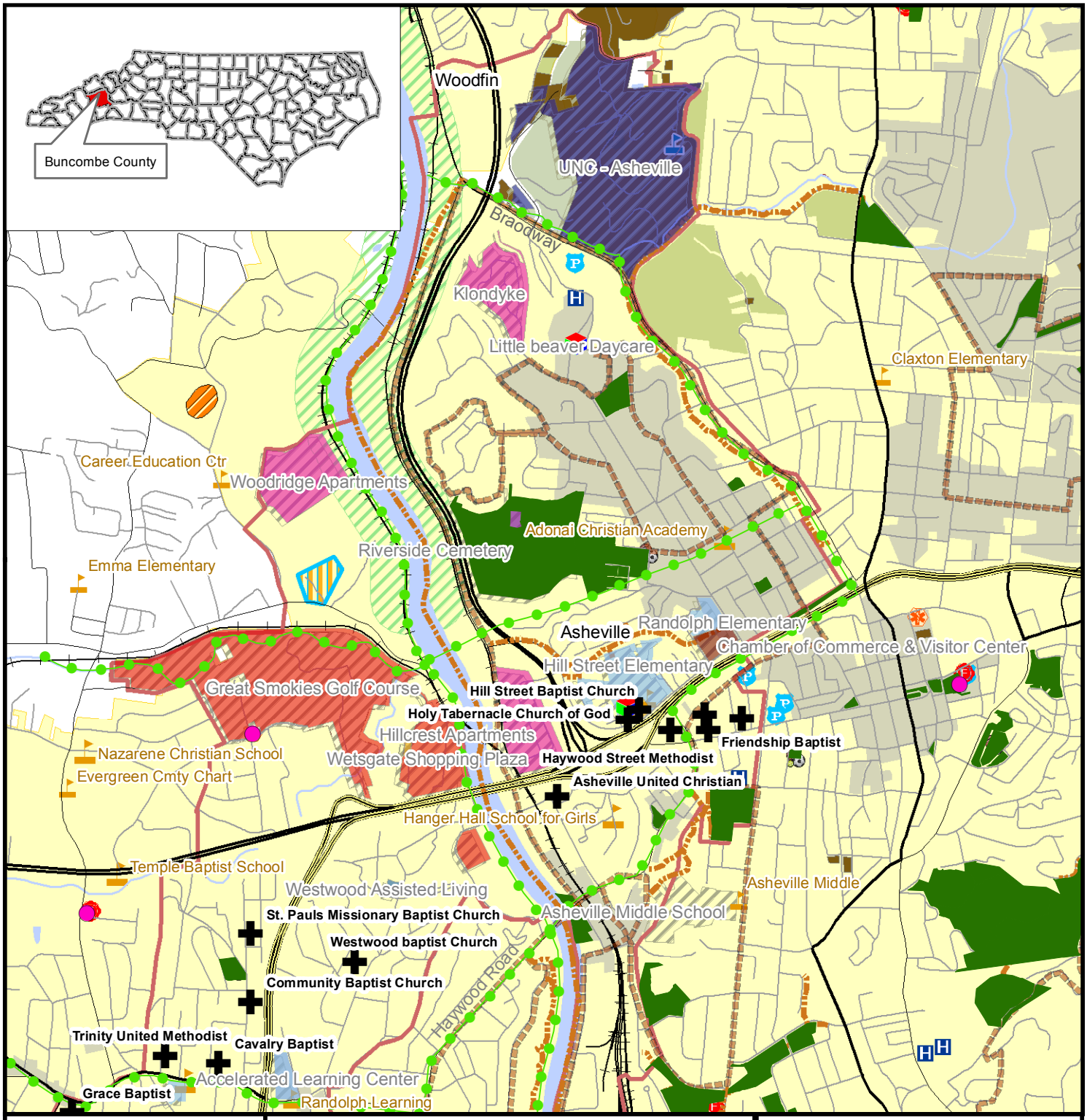
0 0.25 0.5 Miles

I-26 Asheville Connector
Buncombe County

STIP Project No. I-2513

Figure 3B

Community Context and Facilities



North Carolina Department of Transportation

I-26 Asheville Connector
Buncombe County

STIP Project No. I-2513

Legend

- Church
- Daycares
- Greenways
- Parks
- Trail Network
- Interstate
- US Route
- NC Route
- State Route
- Local Road
- Railroad
- Bike Route
- DCIA
- Streams (non-delineated)
- Water
- College/University
- Cemetery
- School
- Hospitals
- Indoor Recreation Areas
- Crowne Plaza Golf Resort
- Community Facilities
- Land Trust Priority Area
- Maple Terrace Mobile Home Park
- State Owned Complexes
- Fire Station
- Police Station
- EMS
- Historic Resource
- Hazardous Materials Site
- Municipal Boundary

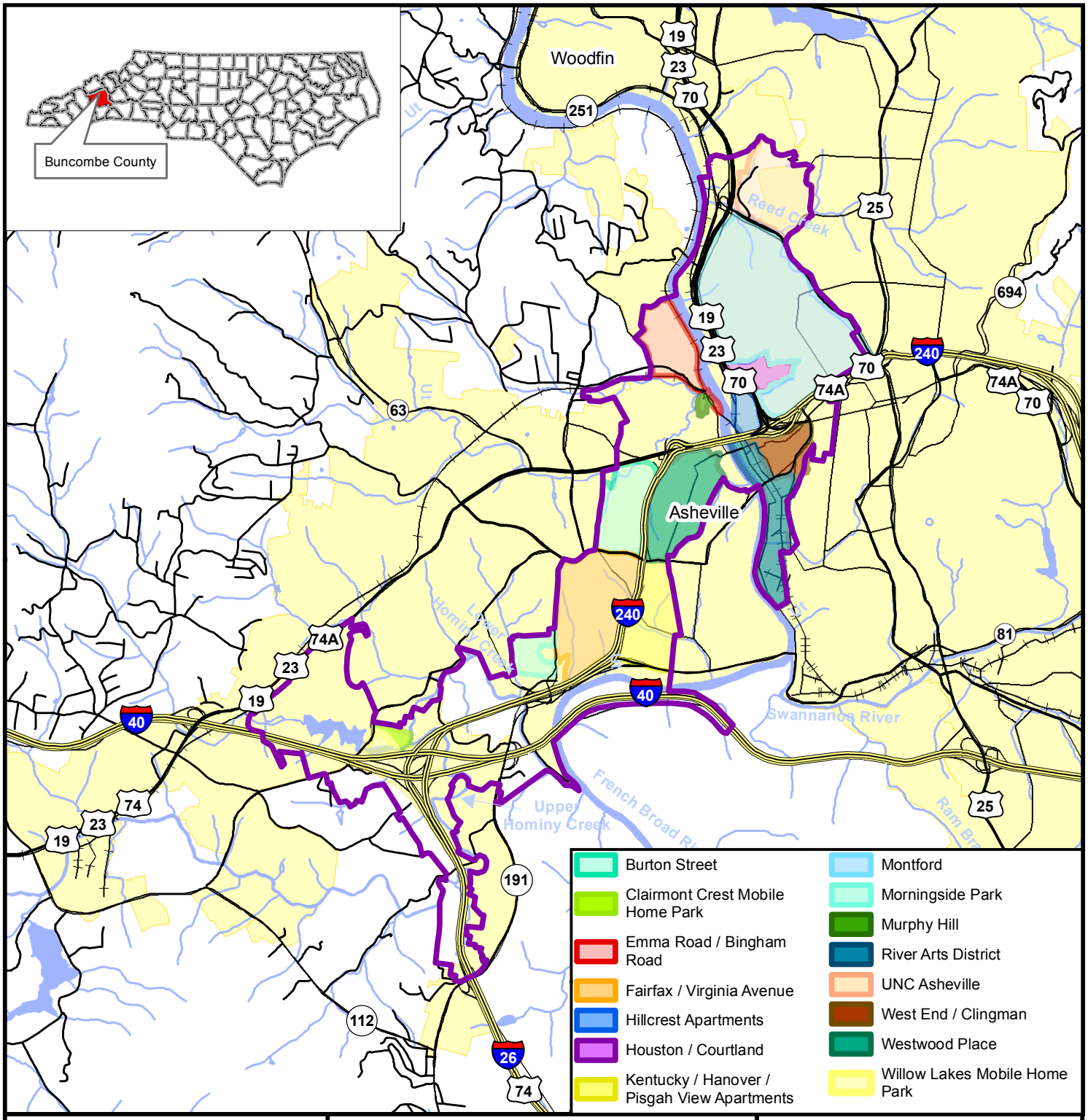
Date: January 2015

N W E S

0 0.25 0.5 Miles

Figure 3C

Community Context and Facilities



North Carolina Department of Transportation

Legend

- Interstate
- US Highway
- NC Highway
- State Route
- Railroad
- Streams (non-delineated)
- Direct Community Impact Area
- Water
- Municipal Boundary

Date: January 2015

0 0.5 1 Miles

I-26 Asheville Connector
Buncombe County

STIP Project No. I-2513

Figure 4

Communities