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STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Technical Services Division

BEVERLY EAVES PERDUE
GOVERNOR

1501 MAIL SERVICE CENTER, RALEIGH, N.C. 27699-1501

EUGENE A. CONTI, JR.
SECRETARY

September 2, 2010

The Honorable Kay Hagan
United States Senate
B40A Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Hagan:

The following is in response to the August 5, 2010 letter you received from the Department of the Interior (DOI) regarding the Bonner Bridge Replacement Project. Based on recent experience with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Park Service (NPS), the North Carolina Department of Transportation is not convinced that the DOI "remains committed to finding a workable solution to this complex and important project."

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) arrived at the Parallel Bridge/NC 12 Transportation Management Plan as the Preferred Alternative after almost 20 years of study on this project and analyzing approximately 33 different design options. The Plan was developed through cooperation with environmental regulatory and resource agencies as part of NCDOT's NEPA/Section 404 Merger Process. This approach includes replacement of the bridge in the parallel corridor and future projects along NC 12 as the need arises (NC 12 Transportation Management Plan). The NC 12 projects will follow the NEPA process which includes agency comments and approval. This alternative is consistent with the July 2006 letter from former DOI Secretary Kempthorne that agrees with proceeding with replacement of the bridge in order to address the "clear and present safety issue for all concerned." DOI's most recent actions are reversing this position.

NCDOT recognizes that both the USFWS and NPS prefer the Pamlico Sound Bridge Corridor. However, as part of the project's environmental analysis, NCDOT and FHWA conducted a thorough financial analysis to determine whether the alternative could be funded. Based on this analysis, there is no available source of money to construct either of the Pamlico Sound Bridge Corridor alternatives. Due to the exorbitant cost of this alternative the Pamlico Sound Bridge Corridor has been determined to be neither practicable under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act nor feasible and prudent under Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966. Because the Pamlico Sound Bridge Corridor is no longer a viable alternative, an option that would work within the Parallel Bridge Corridor must be selected.

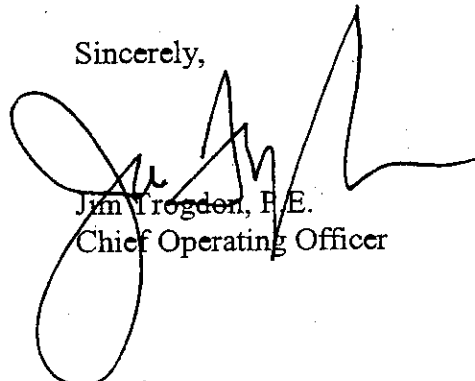
With the years of effort that NCDOT has spent studying alternatives and responding to agency, non-governmental, and public concerns, we dispute the notion that NCDOT has not addressed all of the issues related to this project. The only comments not addressed to date are from the June 28, 2010 letter from USFWS and these are not new comments. On December 11, 2009 representatives of the USFWS, FHWA, and NCDOT met with representatives of the Council on Environmental Quality to discuss concerns with the Bonner Bridge Replacement Project. The CEQ representatives urged both the USFWS and FHWA to work together to resolve any remaining issues with the project so that NCDOT could proceed with the replacement of the Bonner Bridge as soon as possible. To date we have experienced no sense of urgency or cooperation from the DOI and specifically USFWS.

In July 2010, NCDOT hosted a series of public workshops and hearings to seek public comments on the Environmental Assessment. We have since received 4,062 comments from local residents, business owners, and tourists that show overwhelming support for the Parallel Bridge Corridor and the current Preferred Alternative. Only nine comments have been received expressing dissent with the Parallel Bridge alternative. A common theme heard during the public hearings was the feeling that the government, specifically USFWS, by continuing to stall a critical public safety project in endless environmental studies, was not working for the overall public good. We currently have agreement from all federal and state agencies to advance this preferred alternative, except DOI.

NCDOT has responded to the citizens of North Carolina by attempting to move the project forward as quickly as possible; we ask that DOI do the same. We continue to spend approximately \$300,000 a year for inspection and maintenance to keep the existing bridge viable as it approaches the end of its useful life while waiting for DOI to complete their "ongoing analysis" of the project. We have asked for a timeframe for their response, yet they have not provided one. We encourage your acceptance of the invitation from DOI for a briefing on this project, and we would like to attend.

Thank you for your support in seeking resolution on this effort.

Sincerely,



Jim Trogdon, P.E.
Chief Operating Officer

JT:vs

cc: Secretary Eugene A. Conti, Jr.
Stan White, Board of Transportation Member
John Sullivan, P.E., FHWA - NC Division Administrator
Jim McCleskey, Director - Governor's DC Office
Susan Coward, Deputy Secretary of Intergovernmental Affairs and Budget Coordination
Victor Barbour, P.E., Technical Services Director
Susan Howard, Federal Programs Coordinator



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1501 MAIL SERVICE CENTER, RALEIGH, N.C. 27699-1501

EUGENE A. CONTI, JR.
SECRETARY

September 2, 2010

The Honorable Richard Burr
United States Senate
217 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Burr:

The following is in response to the August 5, 2010 letter you received from the Department of the Interior (DOI) regarding the Bonner Bridge Replacement Project. Based on recent experience with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Park Service (NPS), the North Carolina Department of Transportation is not convinced that the DOI "remains committed to finding a workable solution to this complex and important project." ✓

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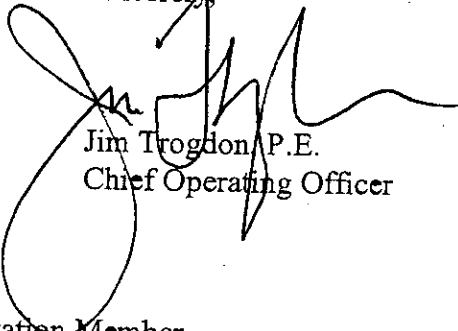
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Thank you for your support in seeking resolution on this effort.

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Jim McCleskey, Director - Governor's DC Office
Susan Coward, Deputy Secretary of Intergovernmental Affairs and Budget Coordination
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EUGENE A. CONTI, JR.
SECRETARY

September 2, 2010

The Honorable Walter B. Jones, Jr.
United States House of Representatives
2333 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Jones:

The following is in response to the August 5, 2010 letter you received from the Department of the Interior (DOI) regarding the Bonner Bridge Replacement Project. Based on recent experience with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Park Service (NPS), the North Carolina Department of Transportation is not convinced that the DOI "remains committed to finding a workable solution to this complex and important project."

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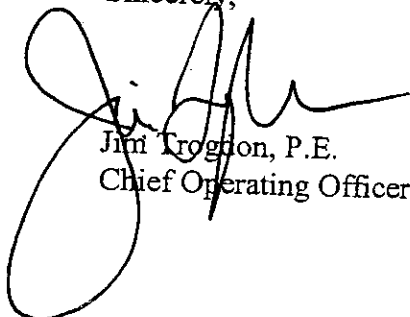
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EUGENE A. CONTI, JR.
SECRETARY

September 2, 2010

The Honorable G. K. Butterfield
United States House of Representatives
413 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Butterfield:

The following is in response to the August 5, 2010 letter you received from the Department of the Interior (DOI) regarding the Bonner Bridge Replacement Project. Based on recent experience with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Park Service (NPS), the North Carolina Department of Transportation is not convinced that the DOI "remains committed to finding a workable solution to this complex and important project."

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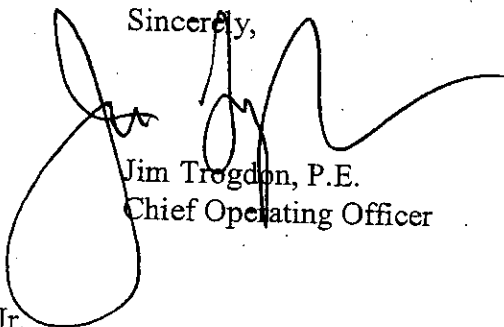
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EUGENE A. CONTI, JR.
SECRETARY

September 2, 2010

The Honorable Howard Coble
United States House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Coble:

The following is in response to the August 5, 2010 letter you received from the Department of the Interior (DOI) regarding the Bonner Bridge Replacement Project. Based on recent experience with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Park Service (NPS), the North Carolina Department of Transportation is not convinced that the DOI "remains committed to finding a workable solution to this complex and important project."

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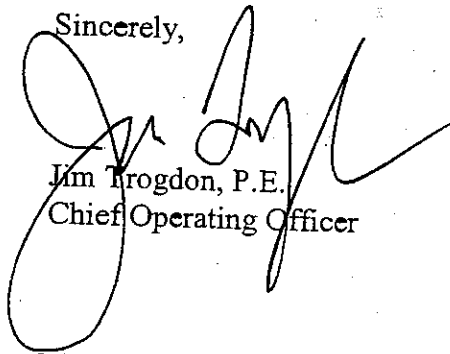
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