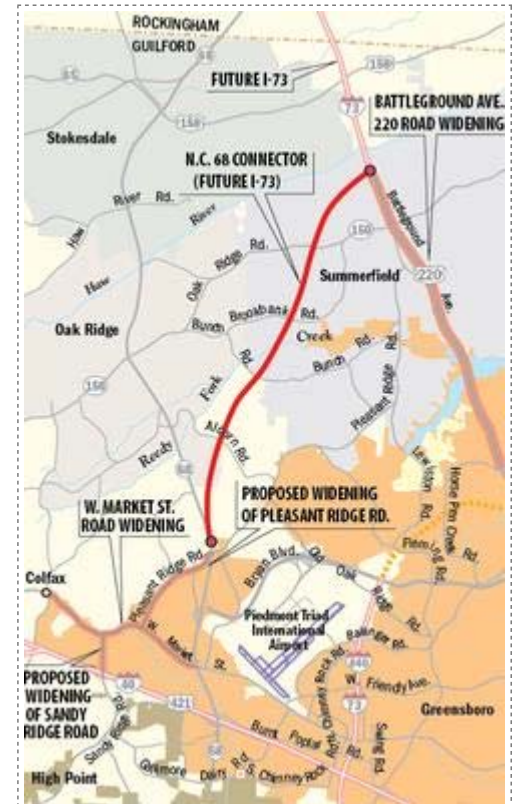


Interstate 73 will change area greatly

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Margaret Baxter (News & Record)
[Additional Photos](#)

ROAD PLANS IN WESTERN GUILFORD

- West Market Street — widen to four lanes with median from N.C. 68 to Colfax, \$21.9 million, August 2011 construction.
- Battleground Avenue/U.S. 220 — widen to

GREENSBORO — Government officials, real estate brokers and regular folks have known for years that western Guilford County was poised for explosive growth.

But last week, transportation planners gave clear signals that profound change is just around the corner.

The state Department of Transportation held a workshop Thursday that drew more than 300 people to see detailed plans for bringing Interstate 73 south from Rockingham County through Summerfield and into the airport area, a project scheduled to begin construction in 2014.

The week also featured a less heavily attended meeting during which Greensboro launched plans to widen Sandy Ridge and Pleasant Ridge roads, just west of the airport.

Meanwhile, similar changes are at various stages of development for West Market Street from N.C. 68 to Colfax, planned for construction next year; Battleground Avenue to Summerfield, planned for 2012; and High Point's segment of Sandy Ridge Road to the south, proposed for sometime after 2014.

"I think what you are talking about is changing the ground transportation system for the entire central part of North Carolina," said Robbie Perkins, a Greensboro City Council member who is chairman of the Metropolitan Planning Organization for transportation issues.

Perkins said I-73 is a game changer, putting the Triad in the very midst of a route linking West Virginia and the Midwest to Myrtle Beach.

Longtime residents of western Guilford have seen change coming for years as Piedmont Triad International Airport has grown, Greensboro's urban loop took shape to the east, and traffic mounted on what once were farm-to-market roads.

In Summerfield, most heavily affected by I-73, Mayor Mark Brown and Town Manager Michael Brandt said they saw "no major surprises" in DOT's latest plans compared with versions the state unveiled earlier.

They foresee two potential sources of controversy: Complaints about highway noise from neighborhoods near the road once it is built, and friction between commercial and residential growth around the future interchange at N.C. 150.

There will be no noise walls built along I-73 through much of the area; its housing developed after the highway was staked out in the mid-1990s. Rules ban using federal funds, the main source of road money, for sound walls, in such situations.

No big surprises doesn't mean everybody left the I-73 meeting happy.

Plans cut up some folks' property in ways they hadn't anticipated. Summerfield home owner Martha Teague knew she would lose some of her family's 62 acres to I-73, but the detailed plan took out some rental property and put the interstate between her and her sister's homes.

Teague recalled how carefully she and her husband positioned their new home in 1976 to preserve the scenic fields: "It turns out we left just enough room for a highway, which is ironic as can be."

Residents along Sandy Ridge and Pleasant Ridge roads seem accepting of change. Traffic is so heavy that both roads gridlock during rush hours.

- four lanes from Horse Pen Creek Road in Greensboro to N.C. 68 in Rockingham County (northernmost leg will be I-73), \$99.3 million, January 2012 construction.
- N.C. 68 Connector-Future I-73 — build on new right-of-way from the Haw River in Summerfield southwest to N.C. 68 near Piedmont Triad International Airport, \$88.1 million, April 2014 construction.
- Sandy Ridge and Pleasant Ridge roads — widen to four lanes with median, feasibility study under way, no cost estimate or construction schedule yet.
- Sandy Ridge and Johnson Street in High Point — widen to four lanes with median from I-40 south to Skeet Club Road, \$18.3 million, sometime after 2014.

WANT TO COMMENT?

The city of Greensboro is seeking comments on its proposal to widen Pleasant Ridge and Sandy Ridge roads, and to improve the I-40/Sandy Ridge interchange.

Residents can see preliminary plans online at www.Greensboro-nc.gov/GDOT.

Comment by Feb. 12, using the online form.

"We try not to leave (home) at that time because the stop lights are so backed up," said Phillip Brande, who has lived in the 1100 block of Pleasant Ridge since 1970. "When I built this place, I never expected the city limits to come out this far." Brande believes the city's plan to widen the road to four lanes with a median is probably warranted. He hopes to live there the rest of his life, but is resigned that it might be impractical as the area continues to change.

"You just have to roll with the punches, I guess."

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