

MUMPO Approves Augustalee Transportation Plans

For Release 9 p.m. April 29, 2009

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – The Mecklenburg-Union Metropolitan Planning Organization (MUMPO) voted Wednesday evening (April 29) to add the six transportation improvements for the Augustalee development into their thoroughfare plan as well as their Metrolina Transportation Improvement Plan (MTIP).

“This is an exciting and critical milestone for Augustalee’s approval process,” said Josh Rector, Senior Vice President of Cornelius Bromont, LLC, the developer of Augustalee. “In addition to the major transportation improvements, it’s also a very positive step for the economic development of the region. We expect to create over 4,600 permanent new jobs once the project is built, over 1,000 construction jobs, plus over 100 professional and design jobs immediately. We believe this decision is critical to getting the local and regional economy moving in the right direction now.”

Augustalee is planned as a \$515-million-plus, mixed-use development in Cornelius on I-77 at Westmoreland Road. Its transportation improvements include:

- Adding a third lane to I-77 in each direction from below Exit 23 to Exit 28
- Constructing a new Exit 27 interchange at I-77 and Westmoreland Road
- Widening Highway 21/Statesville Road
- Building a new Jim Cooke Road Bridge from the Bailey Road curve across I-77, connecting with Northcross Drive Extension
- Widening Westmoreland Road
- Construction of Northcross Drive from Jim Cooke Road to Westmoreland Road.

“We appreciate the support of local elected officials and staff in the approval of our transportation projects,” Rector said. “Special thanks to the Town of Cornelius for partnering with us in this true public/private process and investing a lot of valuable time and effort in working through the approvals. MUMPO, NCDOT (North Carolina Department of Transportation), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) members have also supported us to get where we are today, and we thank them.”

MUMPO and its TCC (Technical Coordinating Committee) have until May 2010 to complete a LRTP (Long Range Transportation Plan) to be in compliance with federal mandates for the region. Rector noted that “Augustalee has numerous pro-environment features and, according to engineering studies to date, would actually help reduce regional air pollution by reducing congestion, gridlock and idling on a significant stretch of I-77. This is further reason that it is critical to have these projects added to the LRTP in the 2015 horizon year.”

Meanwhile Cornelius Bromont and its transportation engineers, Kimley-Horn & Associates, will be advancing the construction drawings, Environmental Assessment (EA), Interchange Justification Report (IJR) and other applicable studies to meet all federal requirements for interstate widening and a new interchange, plus other associated roadway projects.

“We cannot get final approval of the EA, IJR or related plans until the LRTP is finalized by the MUMPO and TCC,” Rector said. “We hope by advancing them all on parallel tracks, we can get all of the items approved in the spring of 2010 so the real work and job creation can begin and boost the regional economy in the right direction.

“This MUMPO approval also opens the door to start discussions on financing for the project through the Synthetic TIF, which would reimburse the developers for all the interstate improvements using property taxes generated by the new Augustalee projects,” Rector said.

A map of the six Augustalee transportation improvements is available at:
<http://www.augustalee.com/news/images/AugustaleeImprovements-STIP.pdf>

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