



State of Mississippi
MISSISSIPPI TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

CHAIRMAN
COMMISSIONER DICK HALL
CENTRAL DISTRICT

September 24, 2014

Supervisor Ronnie Lott
District 2, Madison County Board of Supervisors
Post Office Box 608
Canton, Mississippi 39046

Dear Supervisor Lott:

I am in receipt of your letter wherein Madison County is requesting funding assistance with the County's proposed SR 463 – Stribling Road Intersection Improvement project. SR 463, like so many other highways across the state, is experiencing traffic congestion. Unfortunately, MDOT does not have the funds available to address all of those needs, but instead must concentrate its limited resources in maintaining the state's current highway infrastructure.

As for SR 463, prior to 2000, studies performed by MDOT indicated that projected traffic volumes along the SR 463 Corridor would result in the need for additional capacity. To address those anticipated needs, a meeting was held in September 2000 with representatives from Madison County, the City of Madison, and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in attendance. The purpose of the meeting was to inform everyone present of MDOT's intentions to improve SR 463 and solicit input and support from local officials prior to MDOT initiating the environmental phase of the proposed project's development. During the course of the meeting, MDOT informed everyone of its intentions to initiate an environmental study that would extend from Highland Colony Parkway to SR 22. Even though it was not known at that time how much of the corridor would require improvement, the entire length had to be studied to ensure compliance with the federal requirement that an environmental study begin and end with logical termini. The Department presented possible conceptual roadway typical sections, potential right-of-way widths that could be expected with the various typical section alternates, and probable cost estimates that could be expected with each concept. City and County representatives were in agreement that the required environmental study should produce alternates with narrow median widths to minimize right-of-way impacts, but wider median widths would definitely be necessary at school locations to accommodate school buses. The representatives supported MDOT's proposed plan of action and agreed that project development be expedited. At the meeting, MDOT referenced the possibility of completing an environmental study, acquiring right-of-way, and completing construction as early as 2008.

As MDOT proceeded with early conceptual project development prior to initiating an environmental study, it met with various individuals and groups to ensure that the proposed study would incorporate the needs of citizenry along the corridor. At each of the meetings, MDOT informed those present that projected traffic volumes would create congestion if something wasn't done and that the purpose of environmental study was to see what was needed. One of the groups MDOT met with was the Mannsdale Heritage Association, a group of individuals opposed to any improvements to SR 463. During the course of a September 2001 meeting with the Association, MDOT informed everyone present that the environmental study had not yet started, no alternate had been proposed; and that MDOT was still gathering information to be used in the project's upcoming environmental study. Everyone was told that public input was welcomed, and that there would be ample opportunities to provide input during the public meetings that would be held during the aforementioned environmental study.

In January 2002 having gathered necessary information to initiate the environmental phase, MDOT retained the services of a qualified consultant to oversee the project's environmental study. The first public meeting was held in March 2002 at which a representative from the Central Mississippi Planning and Development District (CMPDD) presented projected traffic counts compiled for/by CMPDD that indicated anticipated traffic growth would not approach the level requiring additional capacity to SR 463 beyond Annandale. Despite the conflicting traffic information, MDOT continued with the environmental study while at the same time trying to resolve the traffic disparity. A second public meeting was held in May 2002, and a third was held in February 2003.

The conflicting traffic data remained a point of contention between March 2002 and February 2003. In a March 2003 meeting, with members of the Madison County Board of Supervisors and CMPDD present, MDOT informed everyone that the Department was halting the environmental study until a consensus on the traffic projections could be reached. A verbal agreement was reached in May 2003, and MDOT resumed the environmental study. The study continued until early 2005, and in February the Madison County Board of Supervisors requested a meeting to discuss the County's proposed Reunion Parkway project and its potential traffic projection impacts to the SR 463 study. This time the information presented to MDOT indicated no additional capacity was needed beyond Reunion Parkway. With no resolution of the differing anticipated traffic projections, MDOT terminated the contract with its environmental consultant.

As traffic volumes continued to increase along the SR 463 Corridor and sporadic congestion began to occur, MDOT initiated the process to hire another consultant to complete the environmental study. In May 2006, the Jackson Metropolitan Organization (MPO) voted to stop any consideration of 4-laning SR 463 beyond its intersection with Reunion Parkway; and that the MPO's Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) reflects their decision. Since the MPO's TIP is incorporated in MDOT's State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP), the MPO also requested MDOT to change its STIP to reflect this change. Recognizing that the intersection of SR 463 and Reunion Parkway did not meet the logical termini requirement of an environmental study, MDOT did not change its STIP. Due to the disagreement in the TIP and the STIP, MDOT again halted work on the environmental study. In June 2006 FHWA informed MDOT, Madison County, and the Jackson MPO that an environmental document could not be approved unless the TIP and the STIP agreed.

In September 2006, the CMPDD informed MDOT that their projected traffic counts then showed that any 4-laning of SR 463 should be extended to Stribling Road because of subdivisions being added to that area. In spite of the CMPDD and MDOT agreed traffic volumes, the Madison County Board of Supervisors at its December 4, 2006, meeting voted 4-1 to limit any proposed 4-laning to SR 463 to its intersection with Reunion Parkway. In light of this vote and the requirement that an environmental study have logical termini, MDOT ceased its environmental study.

Even though the Department recognizes that traffic volumes along SR 463 continue to grow as was predicted in 2000, there is little the Department can do without additional funding and a change in the position of the Madison County Board of Supervisors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dick Hall", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dick Hall
Commissioner, Central District