

Meeting Summary

Project: I-77 Corridor Study

Subject: Advisory & Steering Committee Kick-Off Meeting

Date and time: Friday, September 13, 2019, 9:00 AM

Meeting place: CMGC Room 886 – Innovation Station

Attendees

Matthew Todd, Iredell County
Sherry Ashley, City of Statesville
Gary Fournier, Town of Cornelius
Hisham Abdelaziz, CDM Smith
Jessica Hill, CCOG
Judy Dellert-O'Keef, CRTPO
James Parkhill, Atkins
George Berger, Town of Troutman
Bill Coxe, Town of Huntersville
Anna Gallup, City of Charlotte (CDOT/MRM)
J. Travis Johnson, Town of Davidson
Martin Kinnaman, City of Charlotte (CDOT)
Kathy Cornett, City of Charlotte (Planning)
Anil Panicker, NCDOT
Dean Goodison, Atkins
Stuart Basham, NCDOT
Dominique Boyd, NCDOT
Brandon Brezeah, City of Charlotte (CDOT)

Warren Cooksey, NCTA
Tim Gibbs, City of Charlotte (CDOT)
Michael Johnson, CRTPO Chair
David McDonald, City of Charlotte (CATS)
Bob Cook, CRTPO
Catherine Mahoney, CRTPO
Adam Howell, Atkins
Agustin Rodriguez, CRTPO
Loretta Barren, FHWA
David Hooper, RFATS
Kelly Robertson, BowStern
Jennifer Graf, CDM Smith
Jenny Humphreys, CDM Smith
Gene Conti, The Conti Group
Jenny Noonkester, RS&H
Radha Swayampakala, RS&H
Hillary DeLong, NCDOT
John Cook, NCDOT

Purpose:

- **The meeting was held to serve as a kick-off for the I-77 Corridor Study with the proposed Advisory/Steering Committee members.**

Discussion:

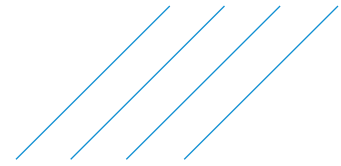
Welcome & Introductions

Bob Cook welcomed the group and introduced the study concept. He explained that this project is more than just Interstate 77 itself. This study will inform future planning efforts in the region and has the opportunity to change way the region conducts transportation planning initiatives.

I-77 Study Overview

Agustin Rodriguez provided an overview the project and history leading up to the current state of the corridor.

Mr. Rodriguez stated that after MUMPO approved the inclusion of the I-77 managed lanes project, they also recommended that a strategic study of the corridor from Charlotte to Statesville begin as soon as possible. The extent of this study is from Exit 77 near Rock Hill, South Carolina to Exit 54 just north of Statesville, North Carolina



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Adam Howell introduced the core team who will be working on the study over the 2-year period.

Mr. Rodriguez reviewed the project approach and emphasis, whereas this study is to summarize all past/present efforts, engage all communities and recommend multimodal improvements (including major routes).

Planned Scope of the Project and Project Milestones & Anticipated Deliverables

Mr. Howell defined the general approach for the project. The entire process includes extensive public involvement.

Tasks 1 (Project Management) & 2 (Community Engagement & Project Organization) will run in parallel over the course of the project. There is a goal to attempt to accelerate where and when appropriate. There will be a key visioning workshop prior to starting Task 5 (Needs Assessment and Study Strategies). All tasks, committees and stakeholders are anticipated to experience a collaborative process and the team will work to reduce/eliminate silos during the planning process. The goal is to have solutions feed into the MTP process for future years.

Bill Coxe asked where land use gets integrated into the question. Would it be phase 3 (Determining and assembling the parts to achieve the vision – Task 5 – Needs Assessment and Study Strategies)? Mr. Coxe also asked how a loop cycle of communication and modeling occur as different scenarios are evaluated. The group recognizes the importance of transportation connecting and complementing land use goals. Mr. Howell stated the team will make room to incorporate the feedback to occur when evaluating land use scenarios as provided by jurisdictions along the corridor.

A question came up about if North Mecklenburg will be constrained by managed lanes rules and be limited to that being the only mobility solution available to those living north of I-485. CRTPO staff stated that this would initially not be a constrained process. This process will allow the region to plan from a clean slate.

Kelly Robertson discussed that through the initial phase of the project, it would involve coming up with a new name for the study and help with public understanding about what this project would be about. Phase 2 involves feedback from Advisory & Steering Committee, as well as Key Stakeholders and learn from collected data. In Phase 4, as we begin to realize solutions along the corridor, we will review initial collected feedback, and revisit with all aforementioned groups for additional feedback on proposed solutions and then engage with the public through a comprehensive meeting schedule.

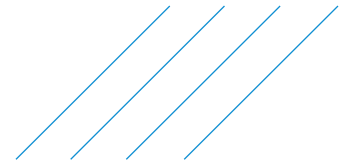
Consultation with Additional Resource Agencies

Mr. Howell first listed the agencies represented in the room for this meeting. Then, the question was posed as to what additional agencies would need to be involved in this process – either as a stakeholder or through committee membership.

The group indicated that other transit agencies beyond CATS need to be included in the conversation if they operate near or along the defined corridor.

Lake Norman Transportation Commission (LNTC) should be engaged.

The group then stated that Davidson College should be engaged – where as Mr. Howell suggested that LNTC and Davidson College (along with other high education institutions) should be engaged as a Stakeholder and not necessarily a resource agency.



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Anil Panicker asked if this study would include the western side of Lake Norman. He highlighted that NC 150 and NC 16 are being taken by different groups people as an alternate route to travel through Mecklenburg County. CRTPO staff initially indicated that that side of the lake is outside of a reasonable study area but would discuss further before beginning data collection for the project.

Identification of Key Stakeholders

Mr. Howell then opened the floor for what additional key stakeholders should be at the table for this planning process. He showcased an image of different types of stakeholders already recognized.

The group indicated that the image as a part of the presentation was a good list to start with. The also suggested the following groups be engaged:

- Southern Environmental Law Center
- 77 Mobility Partners
- Railroads – NCR, Norfolk Southern & CSX
- Major Distribution/Warehousing entities (Council on Supply Chain Logistics)
- Economic Development Offices
- Chambers of Commerce (i.e. Lake Norman, local and regional jurisdiction chambers)
- Community colleges
- Advocacy organizations for persons with disabilities
- School districts
- Local logistics/last mile freight companies (i.e. UPS, FedEx, Amazon)

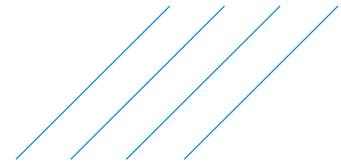
A question was posed as to how stakeholder and public engagement meetings would be organized across such a large region. Mr. Howell stated that the process will avoid isolationism and will be hosted at geographically strategic regional locations. The meetings will be open invitations (for each audience as stakeholders and the public as separate entities) to encourage attendance at all, but also providing convenience to those living/working closer to one meeting location versus another.

New Name Dialogue

As a part of the effort to help BowStern (public engagement firm) develop branding and communications elements for the project, Mr. Howell introduced an exercise to help BowStern better understand the region as it relates to the corridor. First, the group was asked what positive and/or negative words/phrases they hear or know are sentiments related to the corridor. The group was asked to write as many of each on sticky notes and place on separate walls labeled positive and negative. Images of those walls are at the end of these minutes, but the information is also summarized below:

Positive

- Connectivity (common)
- Access
- North Mecklenburg main street (due to lack of other connections)
- Used for local mobility
- Growth opportunity
- Community defined by exit number in North Mecklenburg, especially by newcomers
- The highway is or can help bring cross streets/adjacent communities back to prominence



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Negative

- Congestion
- Toll lanes
- Less reliable
- Ramp design in uptown outdated, too many connections
- Environmental justice issues
- Improve emergency response/need alternatives to the highway for emergency needs
- Lack of alternatives (lack of connectivity on the north side)

The conversation then evolved into a word or phrase association session with the group to better understand regional and localized sentiments related to the corridor and help BowStern create a new name for the project that steered away from 'study' and 'corridor,' with the goal being to allow the public to relate and understand without it sounding too government-y.

Some suggestions are as follows:

- Phrase as community connectivity study (not just I-77)
- Alternatives Analysis instead of Corridor Study
- Somehow need to articulate the 5-mile-wide portion of the study so they public knows it is not just focused on the highway itself.
- The corridor is like a mini metro area in and of itself – consisting of Rock Hill, Charlotte, Mooresville and Statesville (among others in between along the corridor)
- There is a strong sense and need to build community along and across this entire corridor to be seen as one
- A question was asked as to how many people are along the corridor – and the need to portray as community study for 'x' million people.

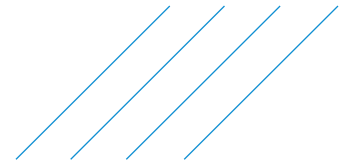
Comments were made regarding the need to build capacity – as in redundancy amongst jurisdictional partners. There should be the willingness of municipalities/counties to collectively plan. There is a realization that land use is key, and there is a need to sell empirical data. It was also suggested to create perspective of cumulative impact (of a build vs. no-build scenario based on initial proposed solutions).

Regarding public relations, there is a historical perspective to the corridor. The group identified the need to address negativity head on with marketing/communications. Residents should know they can make an impact through being involved. The marketing/communications effort should make this feel like a high-profile project to the public so they recognize the importance of engaging with the process – both through social media and through in-person meetings (when the time comes).

The group identified that there is a sour taste towards the corridor – specifically due to the fast lanes project (and associated regional study that occurred).

The group also highlighted that everything is connected/related for residents (in terms of how the region has conducted planning for future projects), but they recognize a need to truly set this study apart and help the public understand it is intended to truly set the stage for next several decades of transportation improvements throughout the corridor.

The group recognized certain buckets of people who may not need to use the corridor once particular alternatives/improvements are implemented (i.e. parents taking students to school where buses may not be provided or unreliable choice). It was also suggested that land use policies would impact people's choices to move around the region/corridor. The group reiterated that land use programs/policies are just as important as transportation facilities.



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Jessica Hill asked how the final product of this study will be used. CRTPO staff responded by saying MPO's will use to build and prioritize MTP.

Ms. Hill also asked how the study process would 'sell' land use to local governments/jurisdictions, and how/when will it emerge during the project. CRTPO staff responded by saying the involvement of technical staff from all jurisdictions who serve on the CRTPO TCC are invited to be a part of this process. It is their responsibility to relay study updates to their respective jurisdiction management and bring feedback back to the table as the study progresses.

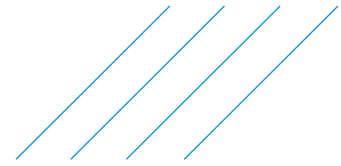
The group iterated that the results of this study need to become embedded into the culture of the region as it continues to grow and evolve. Creative messaging/branding is key, and collective buy-in from all municipalities/jurisdictions along the corridor should adopt common messaging and display of brand through communications as related to the corridor.

The group cautioned the project team through marketing/communications exercises when it comes to the managed lanes project. While the fast lanes study was positive, there is a negative perception to public-private partnerships (P3) due to the one pursued with the construction/operations of the managed lanes project. Seeking approval on P3 opportunities became tough due to increased opposition (learn from I-77 managed lanes, as well as the I-95 toll plan in NC). With this in mind, and a positive communications/marketing effort, the group emphasized the need for a vibrant public engagement process, and support board members, elected officials for implementation of proposed solutions.

The group also cautioned against study fatigue. There should be a coordinated effort to avoid duplication. This corridor has been studied A LOT. Effective branding and education are an essential part of this project. Even though there have been multiple studies along this corridor, it should be communicated that there is a constant need to continue studying it so we don't fall behind, especially during times of incredible growth. The language should contain phrases like 'adding to' and not 'doing another;' that there is consistent evolution with the opportunity of growth. There is merit in the act of being up-front with the public and stakeholders by highlighting past study efforts and indicate how this is different (i.e. recognize/respect/remember the past, while looking towards to the future).

Mr. Howell recognized the dialogue was mostly about the corridor north of Charlotte and asked about the corridor south of the City. The group responded by saying that it served as a central corridor for movement – both of people and goods in and out of South Carolina. The corridor serves as a critical connection between the port of Charleston and the new/growing intermodal container facility at Charlotte-Douglas International Airport. The group also stated to take into consideration the 77 South project and the impacts of the recent NCDOT delay on the planned construction for widening/managed toll lanes.

Regarding the South Carolina perspective, there is the opportunity to shift from traditional planning to innovative – which also applies to engagement in that state. The group stated there is opportunity to extract efficiency from the basic layout of infrastructure in SC leading to NC, but then people slow down as they get closer to Charlotte. The group also stated there is an opportunity to coalesce individuals and residents across borders (i.e. state, county and municipal). It was also stated, regarding the south side of the corridor, that the light rail parallel to the highway facility affected development, and in-turn, commute times (i.e. not all new residents that moved into the new development due to the light rail are using light rail for commute purposes).



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Loretta Barren stated that ‘alternatives’ doesn’t always bring land use or transit options to mind. With a growth in population, it is important to consider emerging technology that can be scalable with such growth. The horizon of the study was questioned. CRTPO staff responded it to be long-term, enough to fill future MTP’s.

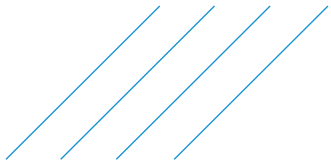
Regarding the growth that Ms. Barren mentioned, the group stated that communities that were once dying around Charlotte are now growing again. There is the appearance of more balance on a regional scale with respect to population distribution and job concentrations. It is not just focused on Charlotte. Surrounding communities have started, and should continue, to participate in planning dialogues at an equal level. The growth was quantified to say that by 2050, Charlotte is expected to grow by 2 Raleigh’s and 1 more Charlotte (based on 2018 population estimates).

Members of the group reminded all that this is not a focus on parts/pieces of the corridor, but the entire corridor. It is also not a study of the operations of the highway facility itself.

Finally, the group began to piece together the words, phrases and comments from the prior exercise and vocalized a couple different brand tag-lines:
Community building mobility
Mobility beyond 77

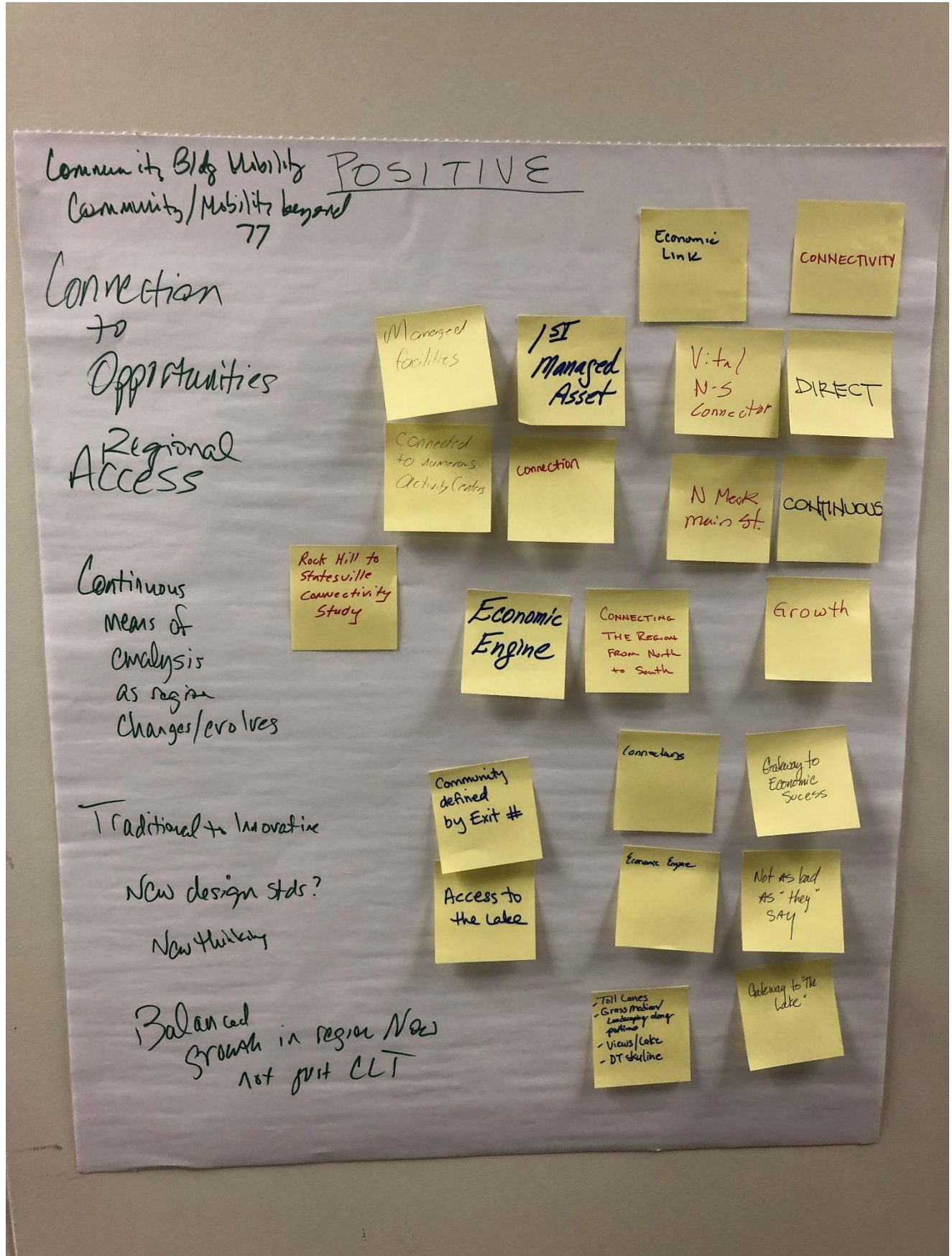
Next Steps

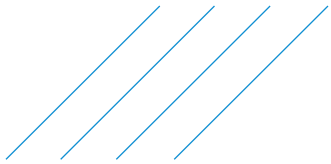
Mr. Howell stated that the project consultant team will start collecting data. Stakeholder meetings will be scheduled in the coming months. A detailed schedule of meetings will be released for Advisory and Steering Committees on the project by Agustin once finalized.



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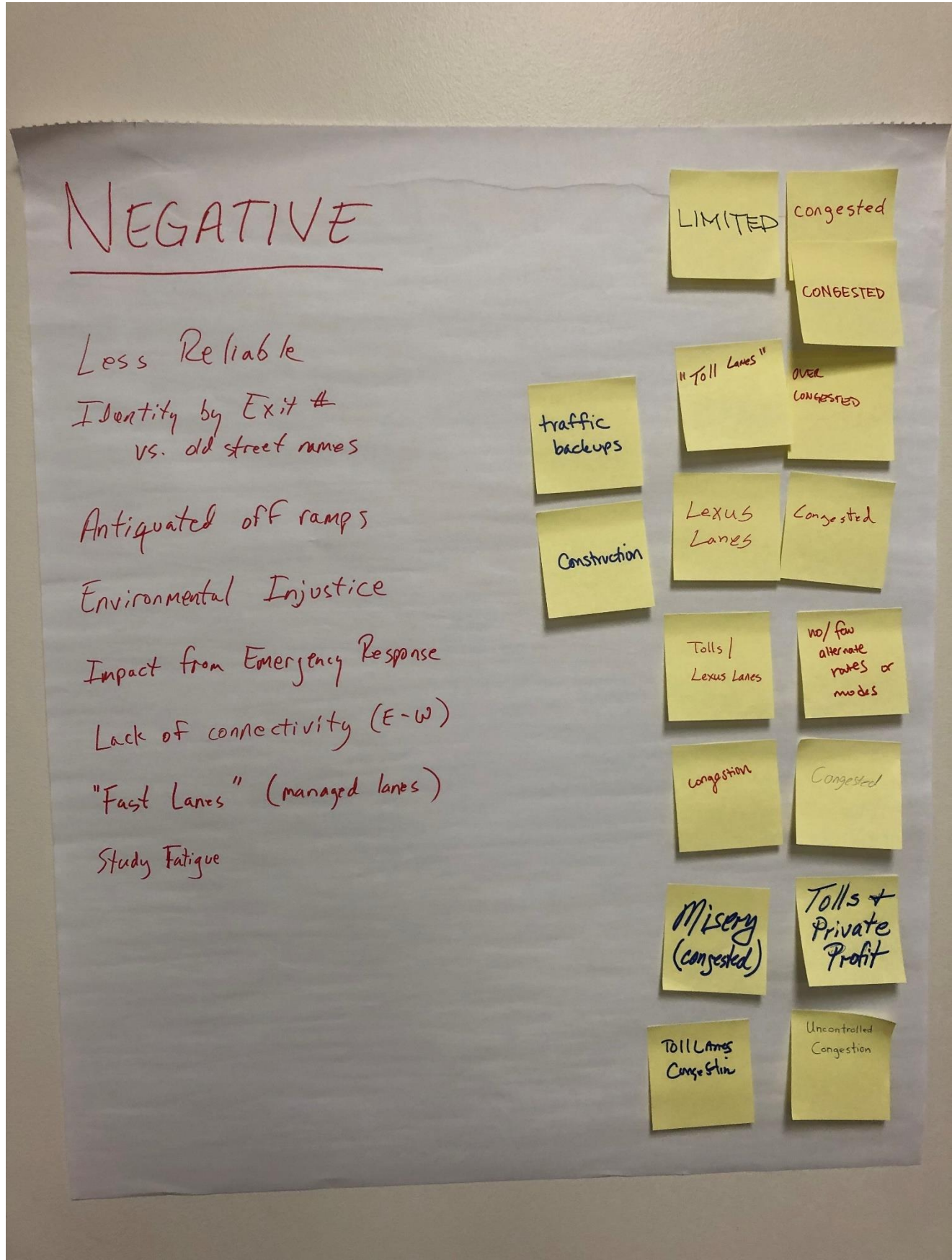
Pictures of wall exercises:





Meeting Summary

Negative



NEGATIVE

Less Reliable

Identity by Exit #
vs. old street names

Antiquated off ramps

Environmental Injustice

Impact from Emergency Response

Lack of connectivity (E-W)

"Fast Lanes" (managed lanes)

Study Fatigue

LIMITED

congested

CONGESTED

traffic
backups

"Toll Lanes"

OVER
CONGESTED

Construction

Lexus
Lanes

Congested

Tolls /
Lexus Lanes

no / few
alternate
routes or
modes

congestion

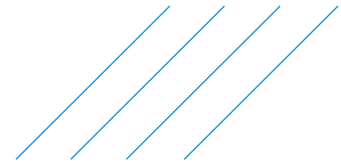
Congested

Misery
(congested)

Tolls +
Private
Profit

Toll Lanes
Congestion

Uncontrolled
Congestion



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Distribution: Meeting attendees, I-77 Corridor Study Sharepoint

Date issued: 10/04/2019

NOTE TO RECIPIENTS:

These meeting minutes record Atkins understanding of the meeting and intended actions arising therefrom. Your agreement that the notes form a true record of the discussion will be assumed unless adverse comments are received in writing within five days of receipt