

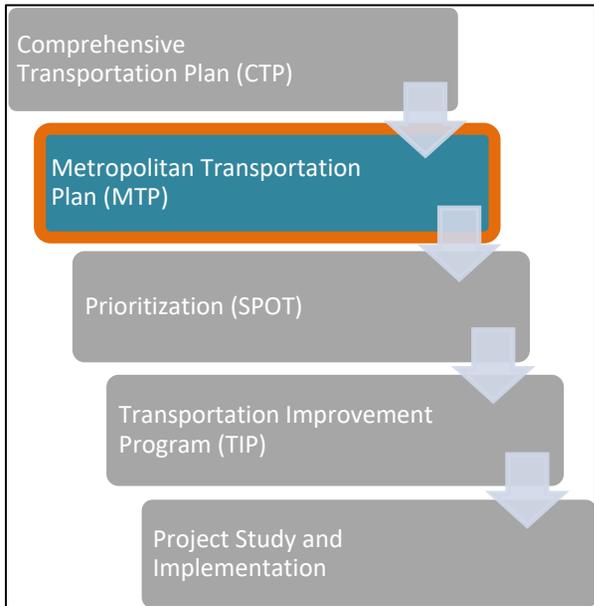
# MTP Amendment #2

TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE FRENCH BROAD RIVER MPO BOARD ON JANUARY 27TH, 2022

FRENCH BROAD RIVER MPO

**Very Brief Overview**

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is a federally-required planning document that MPOs are required to update and maintain to reflect planned transportation investments in the region over the next twenty-five years. The MTP is required to be fiscally constrained, meaning that projects in the MTP have to be reasonably expected to work within projected revenues. The French Broad River MPO is required to update its MTP every five years with the last update completed in September, 2020. NOTE: an amendment was made in June, 2021.



**Amendment Summary**

- Add a new interchange to I-26 in Buncombe County near milemarker 35, between Exit 33 (NC 191/Brevard Road) and Exit 37 (NC 146/Long Shoals Road), to connect to an access road to the Pratt & Whitney site and NC 191. The project’s TIP ID is HE-0001.

MTP ID	TIP ID	Route	From/To	Improvement	Estimated Cost	Amendment Detail
HD134532	HE-0001	I-26	Near Milemarker 35	Construct New Interchange and Access Road to Fredrick Law Olmsted Way East	\$30,000,000	Add Project to the MTP at the request of NCDOT

## **Project Background**

### **HE-0001 Project Background**

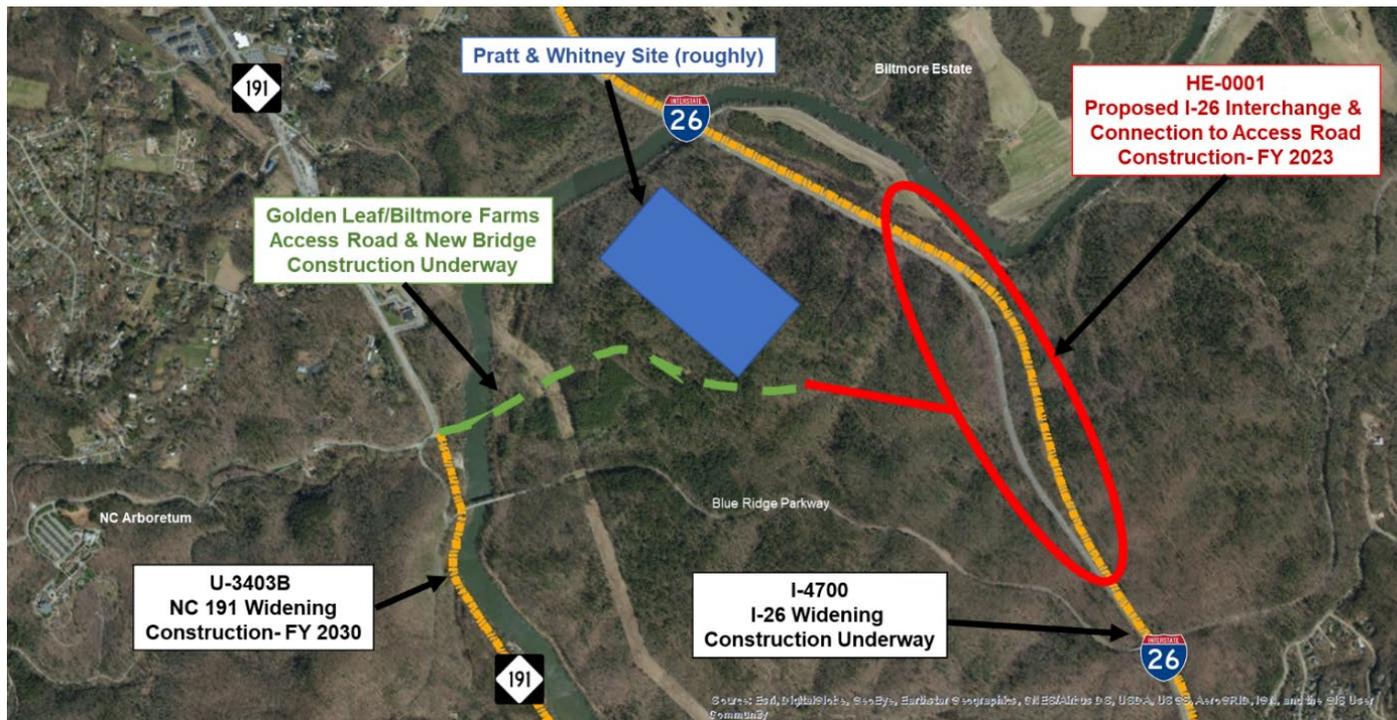
In January, 2021, Pratt & Whitney announced that it would be building a new 1.2 million square foot manufacturing facility in southern Buncombe County that will employ roughly 800 people and include an investment of up to \$650 million. Overall, the economic impact of the new facility's employment and wages is projected to be roughly \$72 million with several of Buncombe County's economic development goals being met. The County also agreed to up to \$27 million in economic incentives, to be provided over time, if goals are met.

At roughly the same time the development was announced, work began on an access road (Project Ranger) to the site that includes a new bridge over the French Broad River to NC 191, funded by the Golden Leaf Foundation and Biltmore Farms. This project would provide access between NC 191 and the Pratt & Whitney facility.

As part of the Pratt & Whitney site development, NCDOT has started design work on a new interchange on I-26 (**HE-0001**) to access the future industrial site. This interchange would connect to the access road that would connect across

the French Broad River to NC 191. The project is currently estimated to cost approximately \$30 million but that cost may change based on a number of factors to be determined during design, including potential impacts to the Biltmore Estate.

TO BE CLEAR: the proposed amendment to the MTP is only



considering the interstate interchange and roadway connection outlined in the map above, not the new bridge over the French Broad River connecting to the Pratt and Whitney facility.

### **Project Details**

The new interchange at the Pratt & Whitney site would provide a new interchange in the four mile stretch between Exit 37 (NC 146/Long Shoals Road) and Exit 33 (NC 191/Brevard Road), mostly (potentially entirely) on land currently owned by Biltmore Farms.

Several alternatives are currently being considered by NCDOT and the Merger Team for the interchange but all alternatives include an interstate interchange that would provide a two-lane road accessing development to the west of I-26 and connecting to the access road that would allow travelers to access NC 191, providing more east-west connectivity in the area.

The HE-0001 has an aggressive timetable, with plans to let the project in fall/winter of 2022 and environmental documentation already underway.

### **About the Funding**

(Updated Since August, 2021)

The North Carolina budget was passed in November, 2021 and included \$30 million for the interchange project. This funding is considered to be coming from Commerce, not Transportation, so the \$30 million should NOT impact existing transportation budgets. As currently estimated, the \$30 million is expected to cover the costs of the project.

However, in addition to the \$30 million allotted in the State budget, the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) awarded funding to the project and an application has been submitted to the Economic Development Administration (EDA) for additional funding as well.

Another application was made to USDOT for a RAISE grant. This was discussed at the June, 2021 MPO Board meeting. However, this application was NOT successful and funds were not awarded.

Currently Available Funding for the Project:

<b>Funding Program</b>	<b>Amount Awarded to HE-0001</b>
North Carolina Budget/Commerce Funds	\$30,000,000
Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)	\$2,300,000

Should costs increase significantly, NCDOT has the option to utilize an additional \$10,000,000 from the Division Needs “pot” of funds. As noted in previous meetings, this is allowable under the Strategic Transportation Investments (STI) Law but would require the MPO’s approval of a TIP Amendment. At this time, NCDOT believes that the project should be feasible without having to utilize these funds.

For reference, this section of the STI law provides the types of funds that would be accounted for in the Division Needs tier-

§ 136-189.11.D.4: *Projects requested from the Department in support of a time-critical job creation opportunity, when the opportunity would be classified as transformative under the Job Development Investment Grant program established pursuant to G.S. 143B-437.52, provided that the State investment for all projects funded under this sub-sub-subdivision in any five-year period shall not exceed one hundred million dollars (\$100,000,000) in the aggregate and ten million dollars (\$10,000,000) per project. Upon the release of a State Transportation Improvement Program, the Department shall submit a report to the Joint Legislative Transportation Oversight Committee detailing the projects funded under this sub-sub-subdivision.*

To note: utilizing funding from Division Needs may result in schedule changes to other committed projects in Division 13.



