

# The Wilson Times

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## State on right course so far with I-95 changes

Interstate 95 finally gets its due from the state as an exhaustive, two-year study is launching. This major north-south corridor helped shape this region. Its value and importance can't be understated. Its future viability - one avoiding gridlock - is important.

We're impressed by how the N.C. Department of Transportation is going about this \$6.4 million study. They are reaching out in what appears to be a methodical manner. They want to keep people informed, they tell us. They'll hold community meetings. They make the case they don't want to dictate a plan of action and then get feedback. That's pointless and would be offensive to residents.

Exactly what changes will be made to I-95 are not known. It could be widened to include six lanes or even eight lanes. Interchanges will be evaluated and improved. Paving and surface improvement will no doubt take place.

And while state officials don't necessarily envision new interchanges, they aren't taking anything off the table prior to the study being conducted and also before they get the chance to speak to residents about what's important to us.

Kristine O'Connor, project planning engineer with the Project Development and Environmental Analysis Branch of DOT, said something needs to be done to address safety and capacity issues.

I-95 is at capacity in terms of the number of vehicles traveling on it each day, officials said.

Funding the eventual plan of action will be where this process can get sticky, particularly if toll roads become a major consideration. But it's quite premature to assess that notion as funding issues are much farther down the road.

If DOT continues their efforts to stay open on this issue, they'll certainly win over a lot of folks. Officials came to The Times office recently to lay out this study process for the newsroom. Certainly their hope was we would tell you about it. See Page 1A today for the full report. We fired dozens of questions at them and nothing stayed out of bounds. Let's keep it that way.

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