



# THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

July 29, 2025

## 2025-2026 Board Members

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- Pres Elect** Bill Bartee
- Past Pres** Kim Brattain
- Secretary** Bill Gill
- Treasurer** Craig Field
- Exec Dir** Christine Cipriano

### Directors 2024-2026

- Benton Bragg
- John Cantrell
- Tish Atkins Charles
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- Lori Keeton
- Michael Orzech
- Elizabeth Teagarden
- Mike Wollinger

### Membership Co-Chairs:

- Linwood Bolles & Shelley Dean

### Foundation Stuart Hair

- Programs** Elizabeth Teagarden



**Jenny Noonkester, AICP**  
Regional Discipline Leader,  
Transportation Development  
RS&H



**Felix Obregon, PE**  
Division 10 Engineer  
NCDOT

## I-77 South Express Lanes Project Update

by **Paul Bartholomy**

Charlotte Rotary members gathered for an important and forward-looking presentation detailing the transformative I-77 South Express Lanes Project — a \$3.2 billion infrastructure initiative designed to improve mobility, safety, and reliability across a critical corridor.

Felix Obregon, PE, Division 10 Engineer with NCDOT, opened with a bold statement: "This is the most expensive project the North Carolina DOT has ever undertaken" — and for good reason. With Charlotte now ranked the 14th largest city in the United States, growth has brought undeniable traffic challenges.

The I-77 South Express Lanes Project spans 11 miles from the South Carolina state line to Uptown's Brookshire Freeway, introducing two express lanes in each direction, reconstructing 11 major interchanges, replacing bridges, and

directly connecting to the I-485 Express Lanes system.

Jenny Noonkester, AICP, Project Manager with RS&H, painted a vivid picture of the problem: "We spend about 41 hours a year sitting in traffic — that's your full week of vacation lost in your car." Travel times on I-77 South vary wildly: a 12-minute drive at midnight can stretch to nearly an hour during peak rush.

Without this project, traffic volumes could swell by 2050 and result in daily congestion lasting around 15–17 hours. With nearly 10,000 crashes recorded in a five-year period — 85% congestion-related — the project also targets serious safety improvements. It plans to bring updated roadway design standards, wider shoulders, turn lanes, and new sidewalks and bike lanes in collaboration with the City of Charlotte. Jenny explained how it's about more than just adding lanes — it's about improving the entire corridor experience.

"There are always lessons learned," Felix said, addressing concerns about past project delays. He assured attendees that contract provisions will be strengthened to reduce future disruptions. With 22 small group meetings already completed, outreach is scaling up. Public workshops are slated for the fall, where community members will see more detailed maps, design alternatives, and offer feedback.

Due to the \$3.2 billion price tag, the project will be delivered via a Public Private Partnership (P3). This allows NCDOT to collaborate with a private partner to help fund the project. The room was all ears as it was suggested that 2030 seems realistic for when construction could begin on the corridor. With explosive regional growth ahead, the I-77 South Express Lanes Project represents an investment in connectivity, efficiency, and the day-to-day quality of life for thousands of commuters.

A recording of the meeting can be found here:

This one is without the slides: <https://vimeo.com/1105612418?fl=pl&fe=sh>

This one is with the slides: <https://vimeo.com/1105610649?fl=pl&fe=sh>

The program introduction starts at 26 minutes and 55 seconds.