WaysSouth's (draft) thoughts on new Corridor K proposal

NC DOT STIP Project A-0009
February 26 2019

Information from NCDOT (Feb 2019)

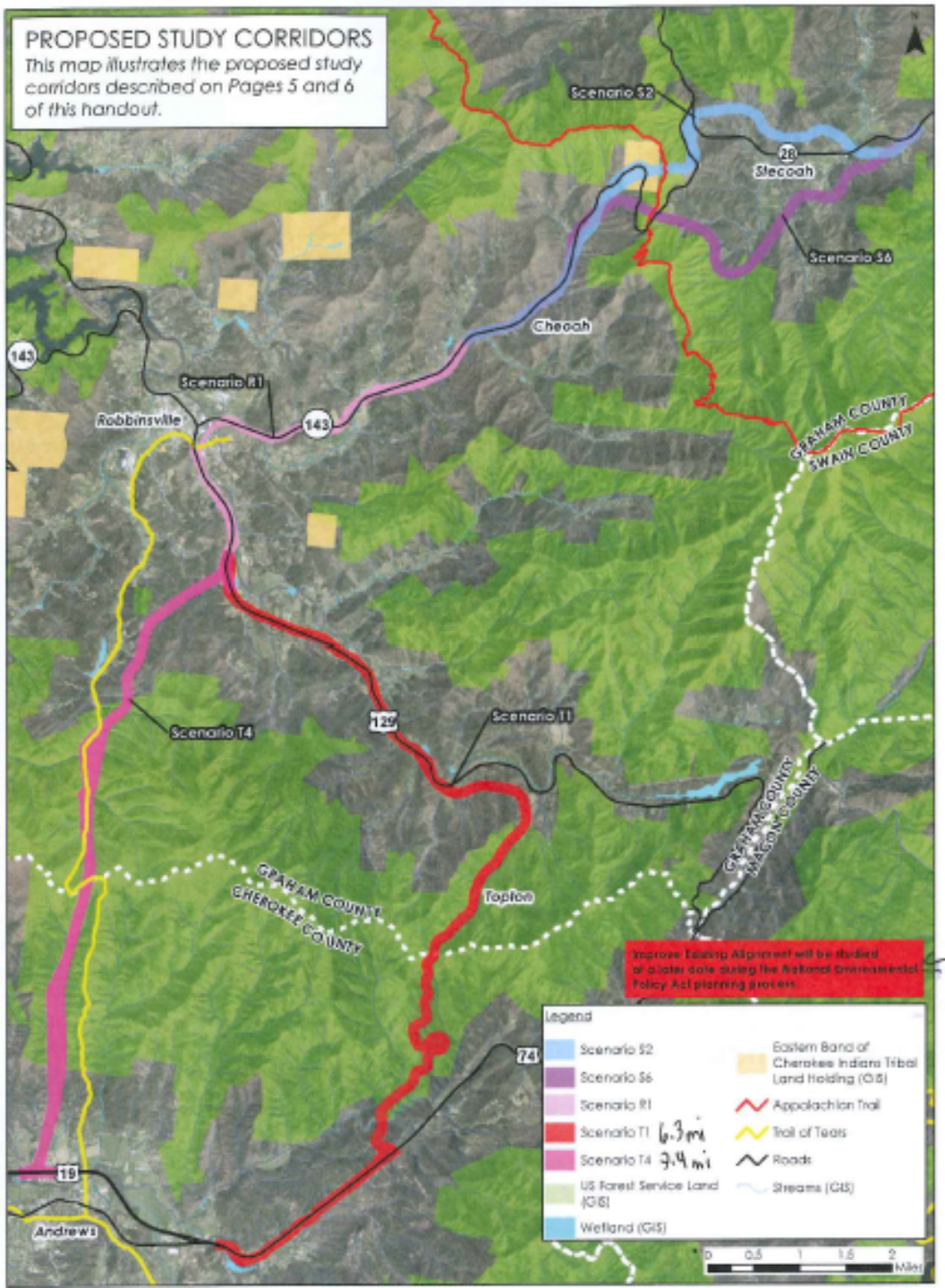
- Public meeting handout https://www.ncdot.gov/projects/corridor-k/Documents/february-2019-meeting-handout.pdf
- Draft design study report https://www.ncdot.gov/projects/corridor-k/Documents/corridor-k-design-study-report.pdf
- Detailed maps https://www.ncdot.gov/projects/corridor-k/Pages/february-2019-meeting-maps.aspx
- Maps can be viewed in person at NCDOT District 3 office, 191 Robbinsville Rd, Andrews NC 28901 or NCDOT Graham Co Maintenance Yard, 2447 Tallulah Road, Robbinsville NC 28771

What you can do

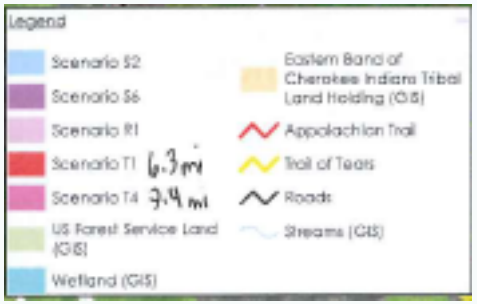
- **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD UNTIL MARCH 15 2019**
- Provide comments to CorridorK@tgsengineers.com
- Tell them which of the proposed routes you like best, and why
- If you don't like the proposed routes, tell them why.
- Describe how they harm you, your property, your business, your mountain views, your recreational opportunities, your streams, etc. Be specific!

NCDOT's Scenarios

- S2 (blue) and S6 (purple) from Stecoah to Cheoah
- R1 (pink) from Cheoah to south of Robbinsville
- T1 (red) and T4 (dark pink) from south of Robbinsville to Andrews
- More scenarios are in design report, but NCDOT offered these in the public meetings

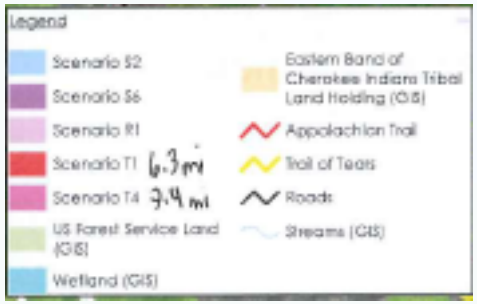


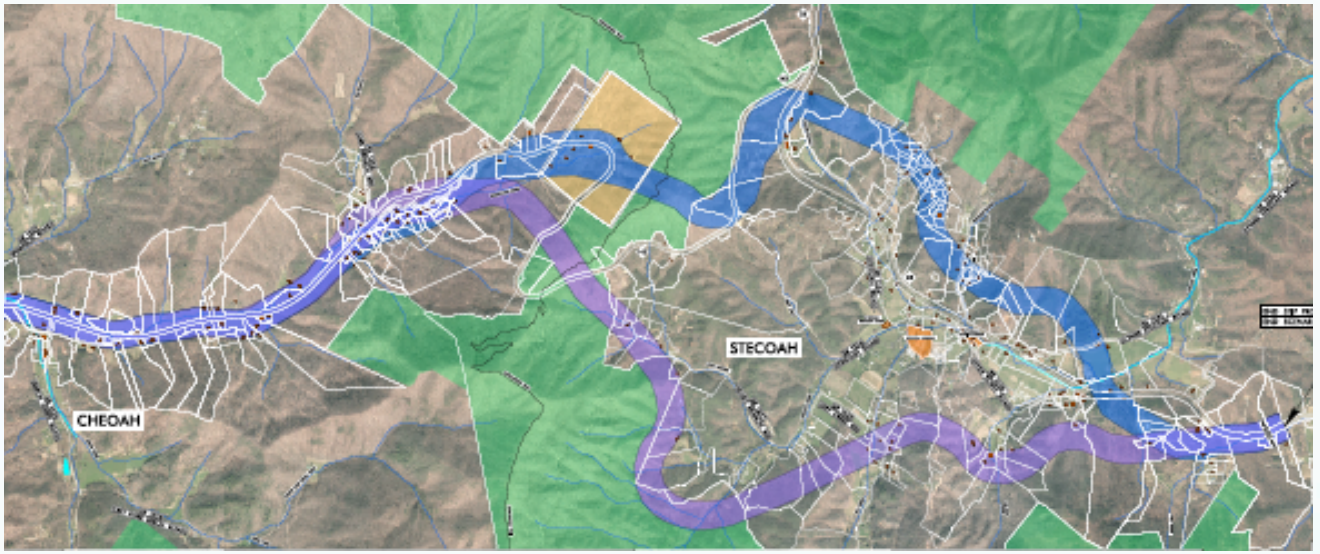
The good



- Proposal is a 2-lane which is less destructive, cheaper, and more appropriate for the landscape than a 4-lane
- The “R1” route goes through Robbinsville, preserving commercial businesses
- Most AT crossings involve tunnels
- NCDOT claims that “**Improve Existing**” will be a viable alternative in the NEPA evaluation

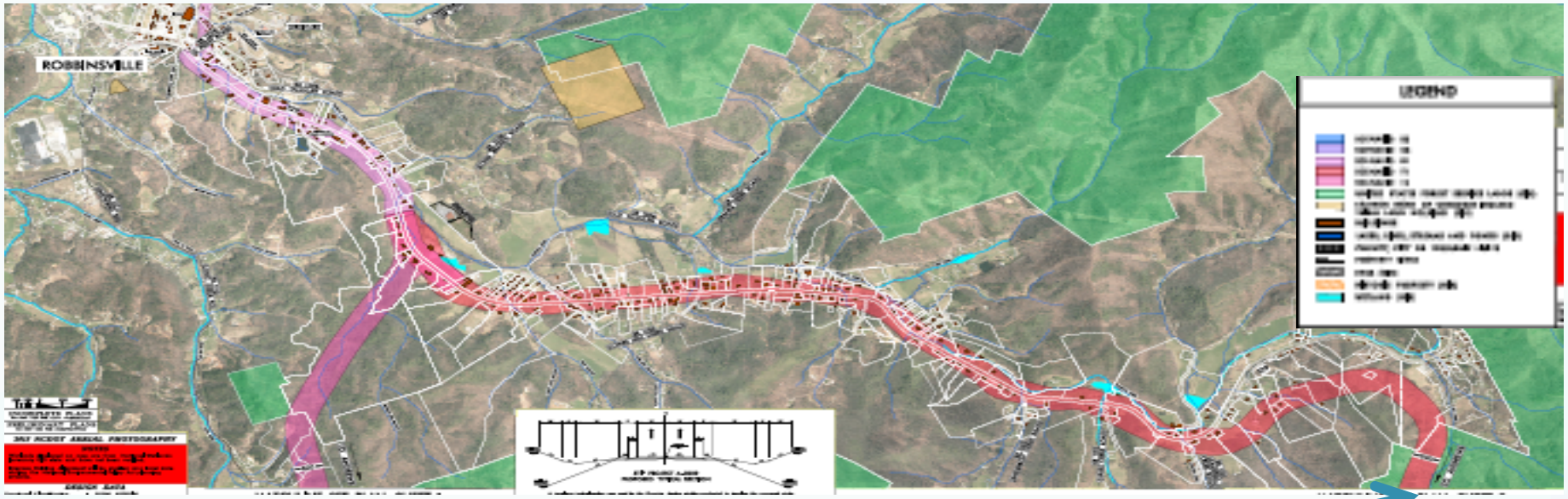
Stecoah





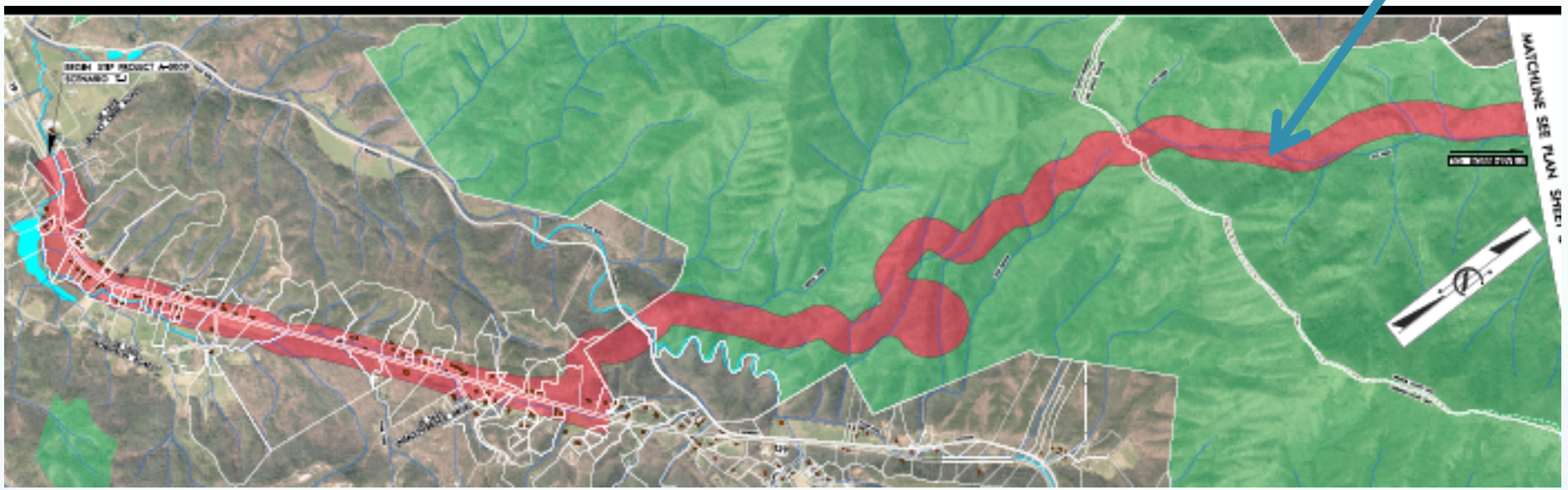
- Scenario S2 goes north of existing route, and S6 goes south more into the forest
- Both are stated as having “high impacts” to residences
- S6 disturbs a lot more of the forest than S2, but S2 may disturb more residences

US129 to US74 – T1 Scenario



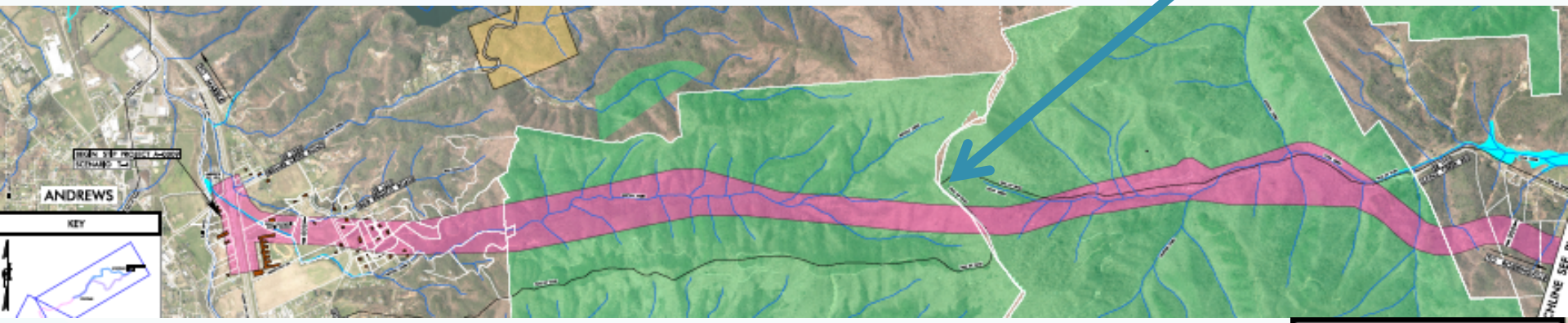
- This section of T1 will disturb a lot of residences, where it stays on existing 129 route
- A tunnel is proposed where the road curves just before Jutts Creek, and the road cuts through the mountain by following Jutts Creek (Jutts Creek is not visible in these maps, only the intersection w/129)
- The impacts to Jutts Creek, the fragmentation of the forest in T1, and the disruption to residences, are unacceptable

US74 from Jutts Creek to Andrews – Scenario T1



- Scenario T1 fragments a huge amount of undisturbed forest
- It will create an eyesore that will ruin the natural character of the area
- It has a very steep grade with many impacts to local streams
- It does not improve transportation along US74 in the gorge

T4 Scenario: Robbinsville to Andrews



- This section is entirely new roadbed which follows the Trail of Tears and crosses it
- Roughly follows Long Creek which is water supply for Robbinsville
- Fragments undisturbed forest land
- This route is also completely unacceptable due to fragmentation, Trail of Tears route, and impacts to Long Creek

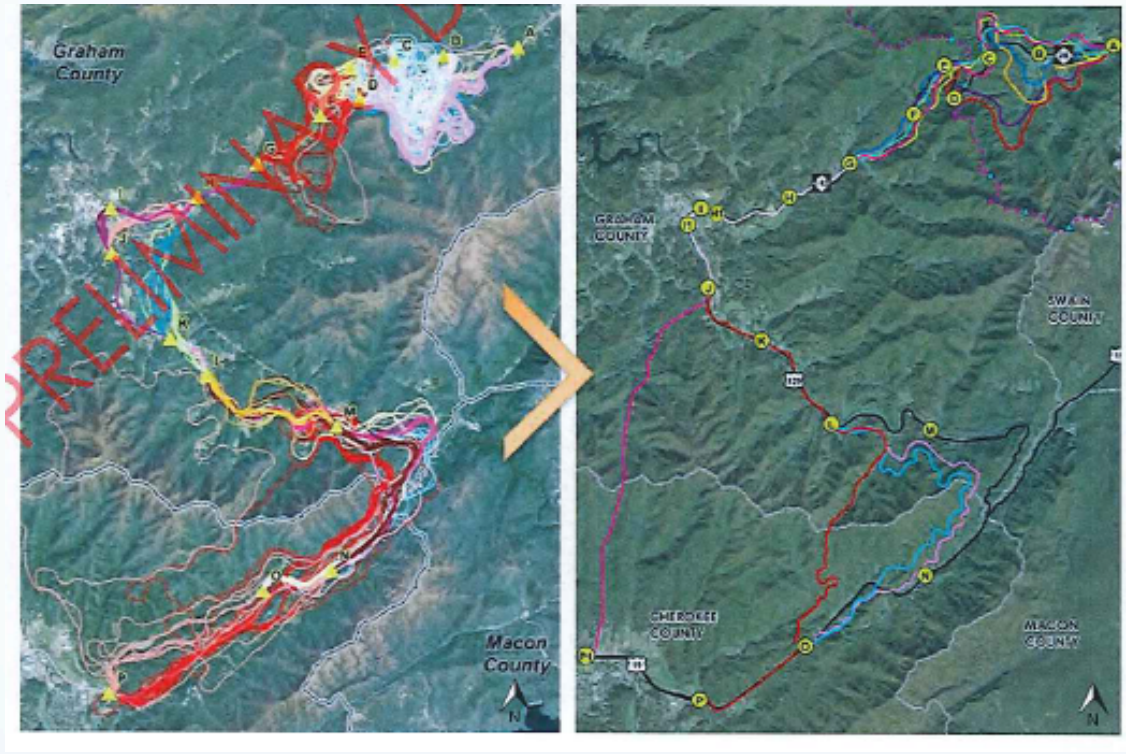
Summary

- We support the project where it follows existing routes (R1 section)
- We appreciate the road being 2-lane, with passing lanes where needed, and tunnels under AT.
- We prefer the S2 scenario (compared to the S6 scenario) near Stecoah if the damage to existing residences can be minimized
- We do not support the T1 or T4 scenario, as both have unacceptable impacts to the Trail of Tears, and valuable water sources like Long Creek & Jutts Creek
- We have grave concerns about the residences along US129 where following existing route

What's wrong with T1 & T4?

- NCDOT used "Quantm" software which chooses routes mostly on engineering needs (mostly, % grade and curve speeds)
- Environmental and archaeological concerns were not considered in inputs to Quantm
  - This is shocking given the value of the mountains to the local tourism economy!
  - The routes through Jutts Creek and Long Creek could contaminate the streams due to acid rock found in the mountains
- **Good news: NCDOT will refine their choices based on input from you! So make those comments by March 15!**

Quantm software most often identified the existing route along 129 to 74



- The Quantm software scenarios on the left mostly fall on the existing route between US129 and 74
- NCDOT's scenarios T1 and T4 highlighted in the public meetings (right figure) are not the scenarios most frequently identified by Quantm

What should be done to improve the process?

- NCDOT should (of course!) include environmental and archaeological concerns during the choice of routes
  - Not sure if acid rock was used to avoid routes, so needs consideration too
- NCDOT should follow most of the Quantm software outputs and improve existing US129 across the mountain to Topton – and keep it OUT of Jutts Creek and Long Creek!
  - This is important since acid-bearing rocks could contaminate the creeks during construction and for decades afterwards
- Work on the curve on US129 near Bear Creek – a tunnel perhaps?
- **We recommend to improve the existing route between Robbinsville and Andrews, while minimizing impacts to residences**