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## **U.S. Department of Transportation Gives Green Light to Proposed Winston-Salem Northern Beltway**

WASHINGTON – North Carolina’s plans to build the Winston-Salem Northern Beltway in Forsyth County can now move forward, U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary E. Peters announced today.

The approval – known as a “record of decision” (ROD) – represents the final clearance of the project’s environmental review and allows the state to begin right-of-way acquisition and construction planning, once a pending legal challenge is resolved.

“For Triad area drivers routinely stuck in traffic, this day couldn’t come soon enough,” said Secretary Peters. The project, estimated to cost more than \$1 billion, has long been considered a priority by the Federal Highway Administration and the North Carolina Department of Transportation.

While the environmental review process for a project this size typically takes seven to eight years, the review for this project was completed in about half that time, the Secretary noted. The project’s current environmental review began with the publication of its “notice of intent” in the Federal Register on March 17, 2004.

“The effort put forth in reaching this major milestone was well worth it,” said FHWA Administrator Rick Capka. “The time-saving lessons learned in this project’s environmental review will bring relief to drivers nationwide who are frustrated by traffic congestion.”

The Northern Beltway consists of a western portion, which will extend from U.S. 158 north to U.S. 52, and an eastern portion, which will extend from U.S. 52 north of Winston-Salem to U.S. 311 southeast of Winston-Salem.

When completed, the beltway will improve roadway connectivity in Forsyth County, reduce traffic congestion and help fulfill the state’s land-use and transportation plans.

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