

# THE COUNTY EDGE

## DOT could add another bypass

### Marshville could become industrial linchpin

By Ritchie E. Starnes

MARSHVILLE - Although the ink has not dried on the latest design for the Monroe bypass, a new and separate N.C. Department of Transportation plan has surfaced that shows a Marshville bypass.

Marshville business owners and residents might be surprised to learn that a DOT Comprehensive Transportation Plan depicts a proposed bypass traveling south of the downtown district roughly one mile away.

Susan Drake, a downtown resident and business owner who also serves on the town's planning board, said she was shocked by both the plan and the fact that few knew of the proposal.

"It was my understanding that Highway 74 was going to be amended to a boulevard effect and run through Marshville," Drake said.

Carl Webber, town administrator, said that while he is familiar with the map that shows a bypass, he warned that the concept remains in its infancy stage and years away from fruition.

"I think we could start the 27-year clock now before we would see a bypass around Marshville," said Webber, comparing the draft to the long-awaited Monroe bypass. "I expect long-term there will be a bypass around Marshville or a change with how U.S. 74 runs through town. But, I don't expect to see any changes east of Cuddy Drive before I retire."

Between the bypass moving closer to fruition as a toll road and long-term efforts to create an interstate quality route from Wilmington to Charlotte, there would likely be a push to quicken traffic around Marshville rather than rush through it. Webber warned that a super-street design with limited access along U.S. 74 would be far more detrimental to Marshville than a bypass.

"What good is being feet away from traffic that whizzes by and can't get to your business," Webber said.

"If you're moving freight, you don't want to have to go through these little towns," he added.

While Marshville's economic development still suffers from a lack of water and sewer, county projections show the town as a key industrial corridor. Webber said some large parcels fronting the railroad have been identified as potential industrial sites. Consultants have already been conducting site analysis, he added.

County officials are in negotiations with neighboring Anson County about increasing its incoming water supply. The county plans to improve its infrastructure to carry more water. Talks include building a new wastewater treatment plant in northern Union County that could also serve Marshville. The town already gets its water from Anson in an independent agreement.

The project Monroe bypass would spill into U.S. 74 west of Marshville. Eastbound traffic would still have to reduce speed and navigate traffic signals in downtown Marshville.

But, Drake said that she understood that would be the case. She fears a nearby bypass would destroy the town's character.

"My biggest concern right now is that it's too close to downtown Marshville and its residential area, but I haven't seen the map," Drake said. "People came out here for the land. They don't want it taken away from them."

DOT officials are slated to introduce the Comprehensive Transportation Plan Oct. 23, from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. with an informational meeting at the Marshville Town Hall.