North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources

State Historic Preservation Office

Ramona M. Bartos, Administrator

Governor Pat McCrory
Secretary Susan Kluttz

Office of Archives and History
Deputy Secretary Kevin Cherry

October 16, 2014

Wayne Hyatt
Moffatt & Nichol
1616 East Millbrook Road
Raleigh, NC 27609

RE: National Register Evaluation of Murphy Branch Linear Historic District, Western NC Railroad-Southern Railway Andrews-to-Murphy Segment, Cherokee County, ER 14-2255

Dear Mr. Hyatt:

Thank you for transmitting the above-referenced report to us on September 29, 2014. We have reviewed the evaluation and offer the following comments.

This is a thorough report, which provides a good historical context and analysis of the extant line between Andrews and Murphy. **We concur that the 14.1-mile section of the Murphy Branch of the WNCRR is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C**. The proposed boundary appears appropriate.

As only the CD was supplied, please provide a color, hard copy of the report for our library.

The above comments are made pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's Regulations for Compliance with Section 106 codified at 36 CFR Part 800.

Thank you for your cooperation and consideration. If you have questions concerning the above comment, contact Renee Gledhill-Earley, environmental review coordinator, at 919-807-6579 or environmental.review@ncdcr.gov. In all future communication concerning this project, please cite the above referenced tracking number.

Sincerely,

Renee Gledhill-Earley

for Ramona M. Bartos

cc: Marc Hamel, NCDOT Rails mhamel@ncdot.gov

DETERMINATION OF NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY REPORT

MURPHY BRANCH LINEAR HISTORIC DISTRICT
WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA RAILROAD-SOUTHERN RAILWAY
ANDREWS-TO-MURPHY SEGMENT

MURPHY BRANCH REACTIVATION PROJECT
CHEROKEE COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

WBS No. 42891
Rail Division Fiscal No. 14-PL-001

Prepared for:

North Carolina Department of Transportation, Rail Division
1553 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1553

and

Moffatt and Nichol, Inc.
1616 East Millbrook Road
Suite 160
Raleigh, North Carolina 27609

Prepared by:

Mattson, Alexander and Associates, Inc.
2228 Winter Street
Charlotte, North Carolina 28205
(704) 358-9841/(704) 376-0985

9 April 2014

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9 April 2014

MATTSON, ALEXANDER AND ASSOCIATES, INC.

Frances P Alexander	9 April 2014
Frances P. Alexander, M.A.	**Date**
_____	_____
Richard L. Mattson, Ph.D.	**Date**
_____	_____
North Carolina Department of Transportation	**Date**

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II. INTRODUCTION

This North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), Rail Division project is entitled, *Murphy Branch Reactivation*. The WBS Number is 42891. Located in Cherokee County, the project would encompass the reactivation of a fourteen-mile segment of the Murphy Branch of the former Western North Carolina Railroad (WNCRR) between Andrews and Murphy, North Carolina. The entire Murphy Branch stretches 123 miles from the French Broad River in Asheville southwest to the Hiwassee River in the center of Murphy. The NCDOT, Rail Division owns the segment of the rail corridor between Mile Post 100.1, just west of Andrews, and Mile Post 114.2 in the center of Murphy, the seat of Cherokee County. Only the Andrews to Murphy section owned by NCDOT is proposed for reactivation under this project. The project location is shown in **Figure 1**.

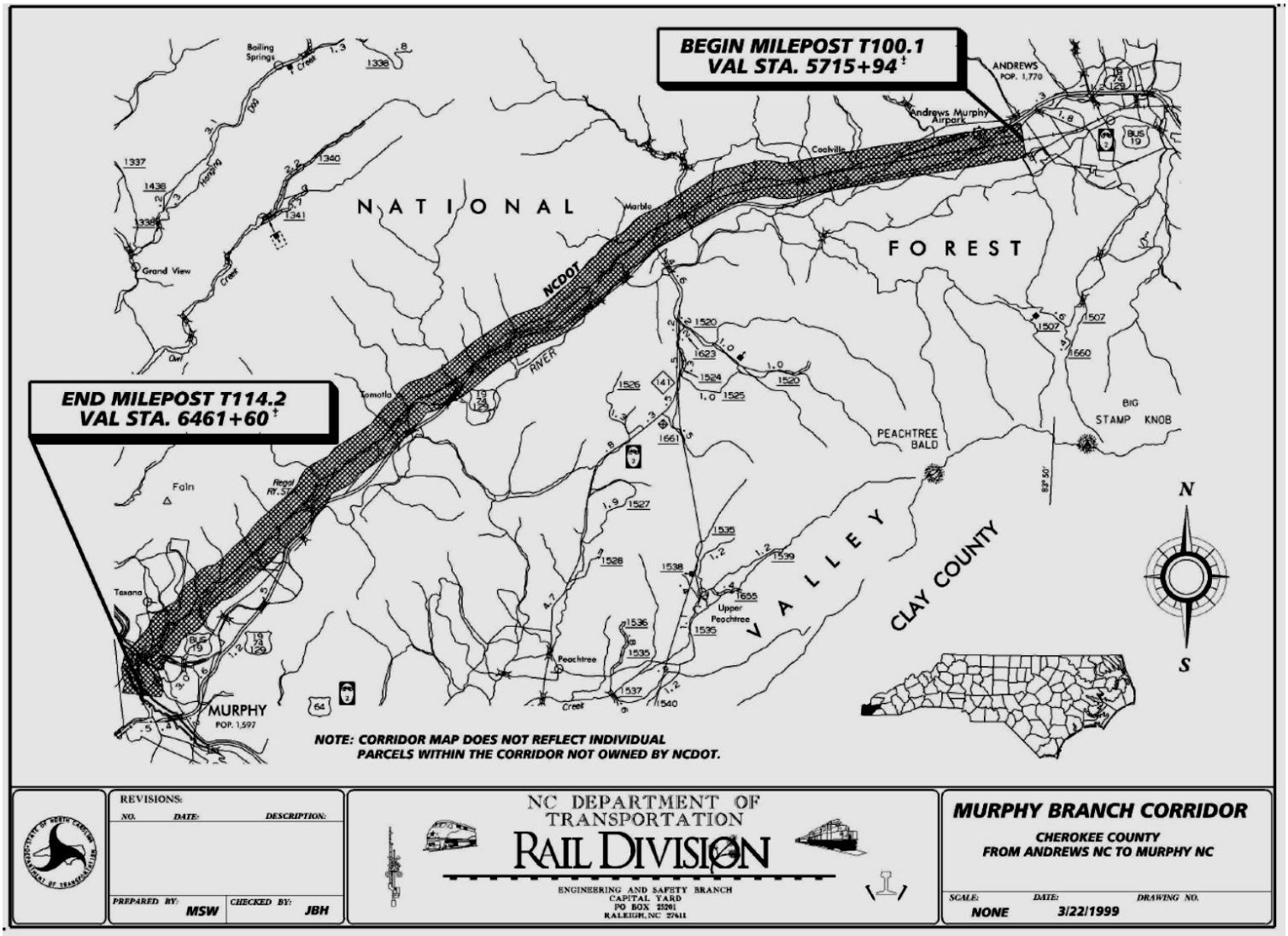
The Andrews-to-Murphy segment ceased operation in 1988 but the tracks remain intact. The section of the Murphy Branch between the towns of Dillsboro and Andrews (approximately fifty-two miles) is now owned by the Smoky Mountain Railroad Company which runs tourist excursion trains. The remainder of the route is owned by the Norfolk Southern Corporation and remains an active freight railroad line.

A Phase II (intensive-level) investigation was conducted to evaluate the Murphy Branch of the Western North Carolina Railroad (WNCRR)-Southern Railway for National Register eligibility. The study consisted of historical background research into the development of the WNCRR and particularly the 123-mile Murphy Branch of the railroad between Asheville and Murphy. The subject of this project, however, is only the westernmost, fourteen-mile section of the Murphy Branch between Andrews and Murphy. A field survey was conducted of this segment to evaluate the integrity of the rail corridor itself and to identify all remaining features associated the construction and operation of the rail line. Specifically, the principal investigators traversed this stretch on a high-rail truck to examine the railroad alignment, bridges, sign posts, and cuts and fills. The rail corridor and rail-related features are shown on the proposed National Register boundary maps provided by the project engineers, Moffatt and Nichol, Inc. (see **Appendix A**). The field survey was conducted December 3 2013, and one hundred percent of the rail corridor between Andrews and Murphy was surveyed.

This determination of eligibility is part of the environmental studies conducted by NCDOT, Rail Division and is on file at the North Carolina Department of Transportation, Raleigh, North Carolina. The documentation complies with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (36 CFR 800) and the National Register criteria set forth in 36 CFR 61. Federal regulations require federal agencies to take into account the effect of federally funded, licensed, or permitted undertakings on properties included in, or eligible for inclusion in, the National Register of Historic Places. Furthermore, the agencies must afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the North Carolina Historic Preservation Office a reasonable opportunity to comment on such undertakings.

Figure 1

Project Location Map



Source: NCDOT, Rail Division

III. METHODOLOGY

This determination of National Register eligibility was undertaken pursuant to the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's, Protection of Historic Properties (36 CFR 800). Specifically, the evaluation of eligibility followed the requirements set forth in the guidelines for architectural surveys established by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (October 2003) and satisfies the requirements for National Register eligibility under 36 CFR 61.

The methodology consisted of historical research into the construction of the Western North Carolina Railroad-Southern Railway, Murphy Branch and the role the line played in the development of the region. The project also included field work along the fourteen-mile Andrews to Murphy segment of the Murphy Branch to locate all intact rail-related features. The historical research focused on the history of the WNCRR and its westernmost segment, the Murphy Branch. The principal published railroad histories are: 1) *Southern Railway's Murphy Branch* (1996); *A History of Railroading in Western North Carolina* (1995); and 2) *Railroad through the "Back of Beyond": The Story of the Historic Murphy Branch* (1997). The railroad's economic and cultural influences on the region were addressed in a number of state and county architectural inventories, most notably *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina* (1999); *Marble and Log: History and Architecture of Cherokee County, North Carolina* (1984)*;Cabins and Castles: History and Architecture of Buncombe County, North Carolina* (1981); *Canton: The Architecture of Our Home Town* (1985); and *Mountain Gables: A History of Haywood County Architecture* (2001).

Prior to the field survey, the North Carolina Historic Preservation Office GIS Web Service (HPOWEB) was searched to identify any previously surveyed rail-related resources within the project area. NCDOT bridge reports and valuation maps were also useful in dating bridges and tracing changes to the railroad over time. In addition, Ms. Wanda Stalcup, Director of the Cherokee County Historical Museum in Murphy, provided helpful information on several potential historic resources along the railroad corridor in Murphy.

Defined by the project area, the field work was limited to the fourteen-mile stretch of the Murphy Branch between Andrews and Murphy. On December 3, 2013, the principal investigators, accompanied by staff from NCDOT, Rail Division, and Moffatt and Nichol, Inc., traveled the railroad corridor via a high-rail truck to examine the integrity of the rail line and surviving historic resources directly related to the operation of the railroad. One hundred percent of the rail corridor between Andrews and Murphy was surveyed. Proposed National Register boundaries were defined during this field inspection. Owned by NCDOT, this segment of the Murphy Branch is out of service, but the tracks remain intact.

The evaluation of significance and integrity is found in the following chapter of this report. The proposed National Register boundaries were defined primarily by the original construction limits of the rail line to include toes of fill and the tops of cuts along the corridor, generally extending to around twenty feet on either side of the track center line. These boundaries were expanded where necessary to encompass either construction limits or surviving historic resources.

V. PROPERTY EVALUATION
MURPHY BRANCH LINEAR HISTORIC DISTRICT, WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA RAILROAD-SOUTHERN RAILWAY

Historical Background/Transportation and Engineering Contexts

Introduction

The Western North Carolina Railroad (WNCRR) and its westernmost Murphy Branch transformed the mountain region of the state. In the words of historian Ronald Eller, the arrival of the WNCRR was "the major event in the history of western North Carolina in the late nineteenth century . . ." Chartered in 1855 and completed to Murphy in 1891, the WNCRR was the earliest and longest rail line through the western part of the state. The line formed an east-west spine of rail beds, tracks, trestles, and tunnels that stretched—with some hairpin turns—nearly 300 miles from Salisbury in the Piedmont, through the mountain city of Asheville, to Paint Rock and Murphy. The Murphy Branch extended approximately 123 miles from Asheville to the Cherokee County seat of Murphy. The final leg of the railroad, the Murphy Branch opened the long remote western reaches of North Carolina to the outside world (Eller 1982: 99-101).

The coming of trains to the North Carolina mountains spurred town growth, tourism, cash-crop farming, and large-scale industries. Breaching both the steep Blue Ridge east of Asheville and the Balsam Mountains east of Murphy, the WNCRR and its Murphy Branch were also feats of engineering virtuosity and triumphs of courage and tenacity. The construction of both the main line and the final segment to Murphy demanded high levels of engineering skill and ingenuity, but such feats came at great cost. The lives of many workers, mostly convict laborers, were lost in the construction of the line (Van Noppen 1973: 256-262; Gilbert 1982: 6; Poole 1995: 2-12).

With its terminus in Salisbury, the WNCRR was extended to the outskirts of Morganton in Burke County by 1861. Plagued by financial scandal and chronic monetary woes after the Civil War, the line eventually reached Old Fort on the eastern side of the Blue Ridge in 1877. The railroad crossed the Blue Ridge and the Eastern Continental Divide to Asheville in 1880. Two years later, workers completed the track northwest from Asheville to Paint Rock at the Tennessee border. In 1891 the westward Murphy Branch was finally completed (Poole 1995: 4-5, 22-29; George 1996: 9-18).

The WNCRR line was constructed and operated by a series of owners. Originally funded through state bonds, the railroad was owned by the State of North Carolina between 1875 and 1880. In 1880, shortly after completion of track to Asheville, the WNCRR was sold to a northern syndicate led by William J. Best. During Best's brief tenure, the line was extended northwest to Paint Rock at the Tennessee border. The Richmond and Danville Railroad (R&D) acquired the WNCRR in 1886 and completed the Murphy Branch. Between 1894 and 1982, the railroad was owned and operated by the Southern Railway, which had subsumed the Richmond and Danville, and the WNCRR was integrated into its vast transportation network. In 1982, the railroad became part of the Norfolk Southern Railway, created through the merger of the Norfolk and Western Railroad and the Southern Railway. Today the Norfolk Southern continues to operate most of the line except for sixty-seven miles of the Murphy Branch between Dillsboro and Murphy. The state purchased this segment in 1988 and subsequently sold the Dillsboro to Andrews leg to the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad which runs tourist excursion trains along its roughly fifty-two-mile route. The state continues to own the westernmost segment from Andrews to Murphy (approximately fourteen miles) which has not been in service since 1988 (George 1996: 10-11, 113-118; Bishir et al. 1999: 35, 356).

Other Mountain Railroads: 1880s-1920s

While every North Carolina mountain county but Allegheny had some train service by the 1920s, the WNCRR stood out as the region's principal railroad. The line was the first to reach Asheville and to penetrate the state's rugged western highlands to Murphy. The railroad was the major carrier of freight and passengers through western North Carolina. The region's other major rail lines were the Asheville and Spartanburg Railroad and the Carolina, Clinchfield and Ohio Railway. The north-south Asheville and Spartanburg crossed the precipitous Saluda Gap to join Spartanburg, South Carolina, to Asheville in 1886. Like the WNCRR, the Asheville and Spartanburg was later absorbed into the Southern Railway. Not completed until 1909, the Carolina, Clinchfield and Ohio Railway cut north-south through the North Carolina mountains to join the coal fields of Kentucky and Tennessee with the cotton mills of Upstate South Carolina. The railroad intersected with the WNCRR near Marion, North Carolina (Poole 1995: 12-19; 77-95).

Other smaller, regional lines were typically a mix of standard and narrow-gauge operations that either served lumber or mining companies or tied Piedmont cities to nearby mountain destinations. By the late 1880s, short railroads extended westward into the mountains from the cities of Hickory, Statesville, Shelby, and Winston-Salem. By World War I, the narrow-gauge Virginia-Carolina Railway joined Abington, Virginia, with lumber mills in Ashe County, North Carolina. Numerous narrow-gauge spurs extended from the main WNCRR line into timbering areas. For example, along the Murphy Branch, the Kanawha Hardwood Company built the narrow Snowbird Valley Railway in 1897. The eighteen-mile track was used to haul timber from Graham County forests to the Kanawah lumber mill at Andrews. Other short lines built for timbering along the Murphy Branch included the Alarka Valley Railroad, a three-foot-gauge line near Bryson City, the Appalachian, the Smoky Mountain, the Blackwood, and the Ritter. All enjoyed their heydays in the 1910s and 1920s and were gradually abandoned with depletion of the forests and the onset of the Depression in the 1930s (Poole 1995: 96-188; Bishir 1999: 33-35, 407; Dockery 1984: 66-73; George 1996: 16).

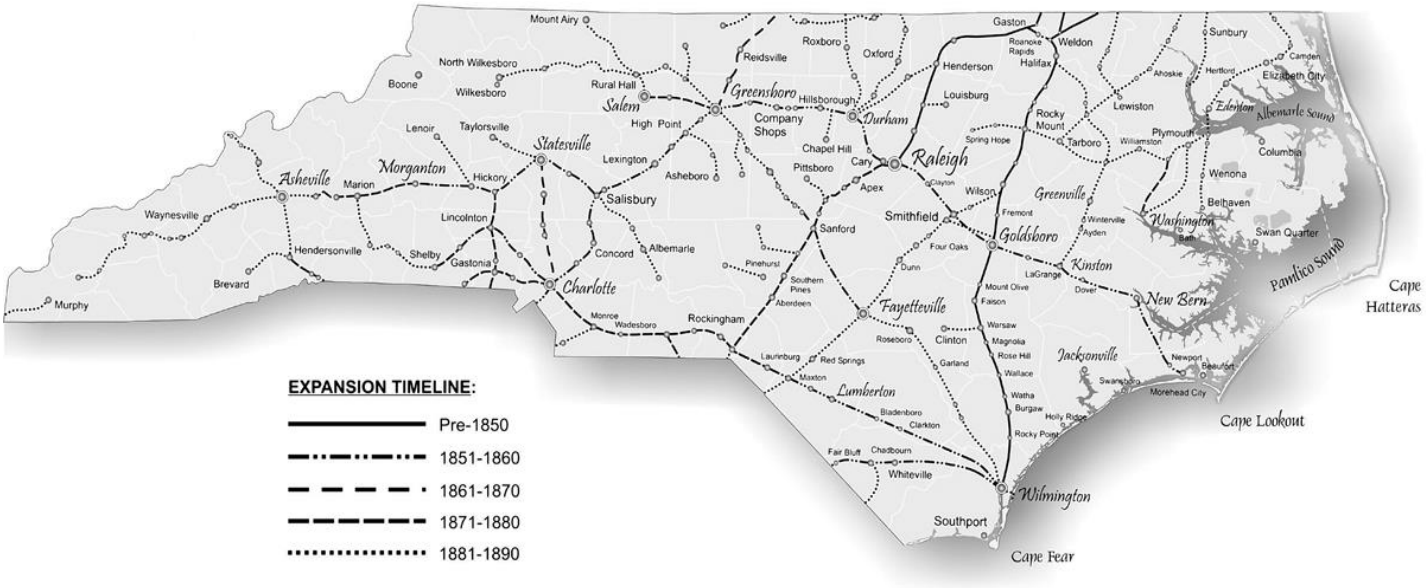
Building the WNCRR before the Civil War: Salisbury to Morganton, 1855-1861 (**Figure 2**)

Marked by forested mountains, fast rivers unsuited for long distance trade, and rough roads, western North Carolina remained an especially isolated part of the state through the antebellum period. Local leaders called for internal improvements as prerequisites for progress. As early as 1828, boosters promoted--albeit unsuccessfully--a coast-to-mountain railway to link the port cities of New Bern and Beaufort to the Tennessee line. That same year, the Buncombe Turnpike was completed, running north and west from Greenville, South Carolina, to Greenville, Tennessee, via Asheville. This road and the 1850s Western Turnpike were the major overland routes from the mountains to eastern markets. The turnpikes opened the region to trade and commerce and drew wealthy summer visitors from the South Carolina Low Country. But mountain travel remained slow and costly for commercial purposes, and towns were few. On the eve of the Civil War, Asheville, the region's largest urban place, had a population of just 1,100. While a coterie of larger farmers successfully raised crops for coastal markets, the pre-railroad economy was mainly defined by self-sustaining farms of modest size and small-scale manufactories (Bishir et al 1999: 18-32).

The railroad era began in the North Carolina mountains in 1854-1855 when the General Assembly chartered the Western North Carolina Railroad Company as the western extension of a statewide system of railroads. The Wilmington and Raleigh Railroad (later the Wilmington and Weldon) had been completed through the coastal plain in 1840, and the North Carolina Railroad connected Goldsboro with Charlotte in the Piedmont by 1856. The State of North Carolina purchased generous shares of capital stock in these railroads as well as the WNCRR. By the Civil War, state aid

Figure 2

Principal North Carolina Railroads, Pre-1850 to 1890



Source: North Carolina Division of Archives and History. Available at http://ncpedia.org/railroads, 2013.

had helped construct approximately 900 miles of railroad track throughout North Carolina (Stover 1955: 30-32).

These North Carolina rail lines were part of a national railroad construction boom before the Civil War. During the 1850s, the nation's rail network tripled in size with the addition of 21,000 miles of track. In the South, over 7,000 miles of track were added in the 1850s for a total of some 9,000 miles. Virginia, the largest and most populous southern state, had the most extensive rail system in the region with 1,771 miles of track (and sixteen railroads) by the Civil War. North Carolina gained 640 miles of rail line in the 1850s, an increase of over 250% from the previous decade. Technological improvements in grading, tunneling, and bridge building boosted rail construction, and steam locomotives, passenger coaches, and various types of freight cars became standardized. In North Carolina, as well as in other southern states, the new railroads often provided the first reliable transportation for cotton, tobacco, timber, and grain and took many interior areas of the regions from subsistence to cash-crop economies (Stover 1955: 3-5; Chandler 1977: 82-83).

The 1854-1855 charter for the WNCRR specified that the railroad's overall objective was to provide rail access to the Mississippi and Ohio River valleys. The charter stated that the route would begin at the junction with the North Carolina Railroad in Salisbury, and head west, "passing by or as near as practicable to Statesville, in the County of Iredell, to some point on the French Broad River, beyond the Blue Ridge." Asheville was to be the railroad's principal western destination. Construction began in 1857, and in 1861 the line stretched some seventy miles from Salisbury to Morganton in Burke County. However, the Civil War abruptly halted further work (N.C. General Assembly, Public Laws of North Carolina, Session of 1854-55; George 1996: 9; Stover 1955: 235).

Building the WNCRR after the Civil War: Scaling the Blue Ridge to Asheville, 1871 to 1880

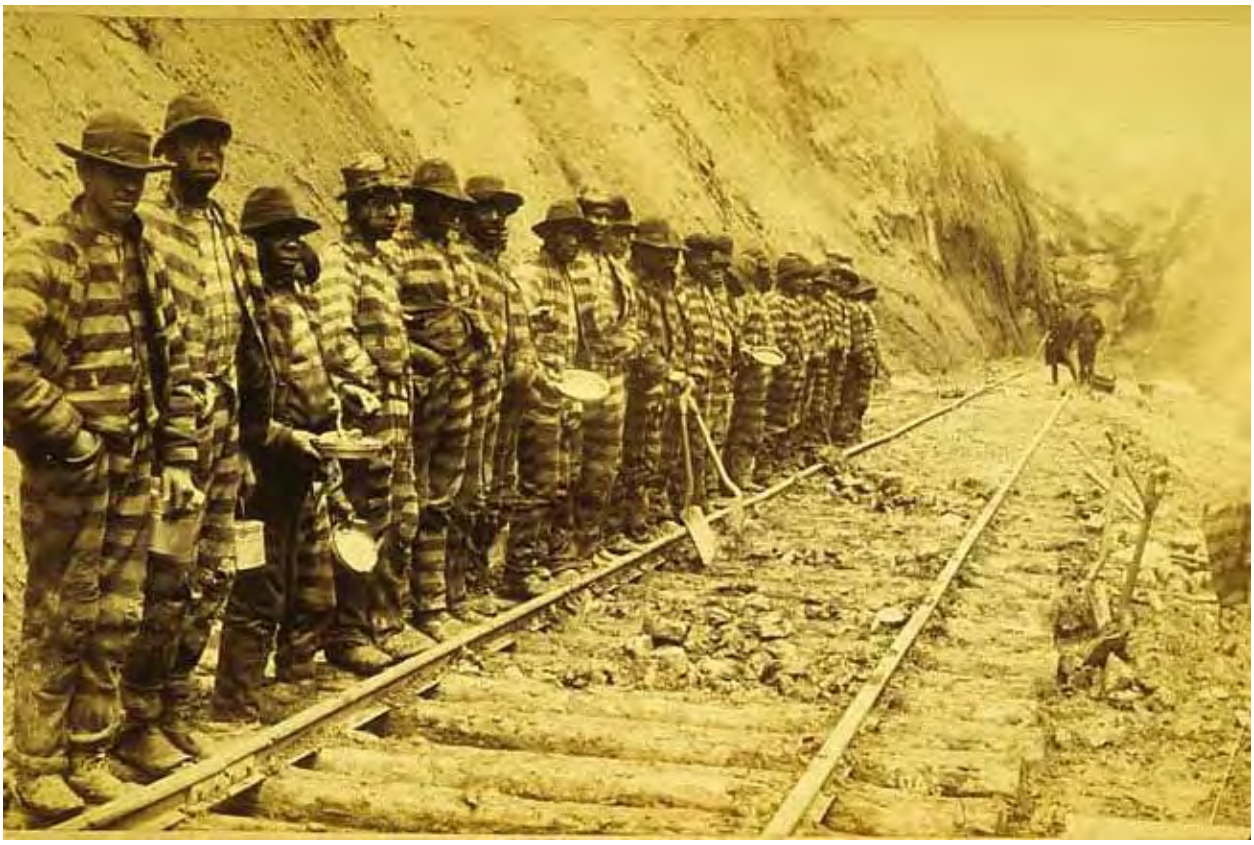
Union forces under General George Stoneman destroyed most of the existing WNCRR tracks in April 1865. The damaged line was gradually repaired, and the railroad reached Old Fort on the eastern slope of the Blue Ridge in 1869. The construction during the early postwar years was beset by a number of problems including a dearth of capital, poor management, and a notorious railroad bonds scandal in which the two major stockholders defrauded North Carolina of millions of dollars in state bonds. In 1872, the railroad went into receivership, and three years later, the State of North Carolina purchased the line. Under state ownership the WNCRR was confronted with its first major engineering challenge—to breach the Blue Ridge and the Eastern Continental Divide east of Asheville (Stover 1955: 70-74; Parce 1997: 18-19; George 1999: 9-10).

Building the railroad over the Blue Ridge to Asheville was a formidable challenge, but the line was completed despite shortages of labor, capital, and materials. Landslides were frequent and weather severe. Work crews used hand tools and oxen and with scant training handled dangerous explosives. To save money, most of the workers were African American convict laborers who were often harshly treated. Between 1875 and the completion of the entire line in 1892, 3,644 North Carolina inmates worked on the project, and 461 of them died from accidents or disease. At least 120 convict laborers lost their lives building the line across the Blue Ridge Mountains (Parce 1997: 20-21; Carson 2003: 2, 11-15) (**Figure 3**).

Scaling the Blue Ridge required the construction of seven tunnels (**Figure 4**). Gunpowder was scarce, and workers used volatile nitroglycerine mixed with sawdust and cornmeal as the principal explosive. The Blue Bridge tunnels were the first engineering projects in the South to employ nitroglycerine. The blasting of tunnel rock was usually undertaken by poorly trained inmates.

Figure 3

Convict Laborers on the WNCRR, Circa 1880



Source: Poole, Cary Franklin. *A History of Railroading in Western North Carolina*. Johnson City, Tennessee: Overmountain Press, 1995. (Courtesy of the North Carolina State Archives).

Figure 4

WNCRR Crosses the Blue Ridge
McElroy Tunnel in Foreground and Licklog Tunnel in Background, circa 1880

Source: Gilbert, John. Compiler and Editor. *Crossties Through North Carolina, The Story of North Carolina's Early Day Railroads.* Raleigh: The Crossties Press, 1982. (Courtesy of the North Carolina State Archives).

They tamped the nitro into sledgehammered holes and lit fuses consisting of lines of pine needles. Workers also cracked the layered rock faces by building huge pine-log pyres which were burned down to hot coals and then pouring buckets of cold water on the heated surfaces. The longest of the tunnels was the 1,832-foot Swannanoa Tunnel at the peak of the ascent. A temporary track was laid to pull a locomotive over Swannanoa Gap, and at great peril convict crews bore into the tunnel from both ends to meet at the middle. The tunnel was completed in March 1879, and the railroad reached Asheville the following year (Parce 1997: 21-22; Poole 1995: 3-5).

Climbing the treacherously steep grade also required a series of roadbed spirals, or "loops" (**Figure 5**). The twisting corridor contained some 3,000 degrees of curvature, the equivalent of eight complete circles. The three-mile linear distance from Old Fort to crest of the Blue Ridge route at Swannanoa Gap was covered by nine miles of looping track. Where the railroad circled around Round Knob west of Old Fort, railroad executives built a commodious frame hotel in 1880 (destroyed by fire in 1903) and Andrews Geyser in 1885 (**Figure 6**). The seventy-foot fountain was relocated a short distance in 1911 but otherwise remains extant. Named for WNCRR executive. Alexander Boyd Andrews, Andrews Geyser was one of the first big tourist attractions in the mountains. Travel writer, Charles Dudley Warner, was mesmerized. The fountain, he wrote, "disappeared and came to view, now on one side and now on the other, until our train seemed bewitched" (Gilbert 1982: 62-63; Poole 1995: 4-5; George 1996: 9-10; Quoted in Bishir et al. 1999: 170).

To contemporary travelers, the winding route skyward from Fort Mill through the Swannanoa Tunnel was ingenious as well as breathtaking. In his 1885 promotional brochure of the mountain region, homeopathist, Horatio P. Gatchell, M.D., described the railroad's Blue Ridge ascent.

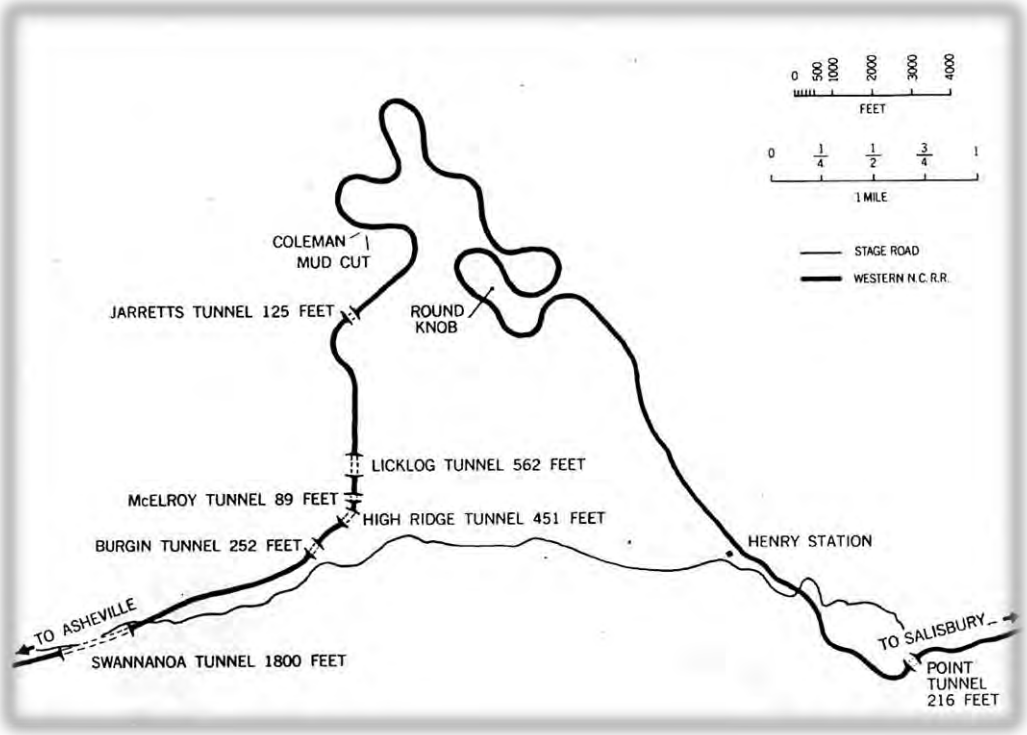
> "Here the railroad climbs by a tortuous path, winding over trestles, through tunnels, and along shelving rocks in its panting journey to the summit, where the waters part which flow to the Atlantic shore and to the Gulf. The line winds and doubles upon itself in such a manner than in places a series of four tracks can be seen one above another" (quoted in Bishir et al. 1999: 35).

The breach of the Blue Ridge had been accomplished under the supervision of chief engineer, James W. Wilson (1832-1910) (**Figure 7**). A native of Granville County, North Carolina, Wilson graduated from the University of North Carolina in 1852. He was an assistant engineer with the WNCRR before the Civil War, rising to the rank of major during the conflict. After the war, Wilson was active in the Democratic Party and a champion of the WNCRR. He was elected to the North Carolina legislature where he played an active role in the railroad's reorganization and purchase by the state. Wilson briefly served as WNCRR president and between 1877 and 1887 was the railroad's chief engineer and superintendent. Wilson was in charge of the railroad's major construction achievements, including crossing both the Blue Ridge on the main line and Balsam Gap on the Murphy Branch. Wilson later supervised the construction of the Knoxville, Cumberland, and Louisville Railroad in Tennessee and was consulting engineer for the Canadian Railway (Gilbert 1982: 26; Poole 1995: 4-7; Powell 1996).

In 1880, shortly after completion of the line to Asheville, the financially strapped WNCRR was sold to a group of northern investors led by William J. Best. Best agreed to extend the line to Paint Rock, North Carolina where it would connect with the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad. This winding route along the French Broad River was finished in early 1882. The riverside route

Figure 5

WNCRR across the Blue Ridge, 1879



Source: Gilbert, John. Compiler and Editor. *Crossties Through North Carolina, The Story of North Carolina's Early Day Railroads.* Raleigh: The Crossties Press, 1982. (Courtesy of the North Carolina State Archives).

Figure 6

Round Knob Hotel and Andrews Geyser, Circa. 1885

Source: Gilbert, John. Compiler and Editor. *Crossties Through North Carolina, The Story of North Carolina's Early Day Railroads.* Raleigh: The Crossties Press, 1982. (Courtesy of the North Carolina State Archives).

Figure 7

James W. Wilson, Chief Engineer, WNCRR

Source: Gilbert, John. Compiler and Editor. *Crossties Through North Carolina, The Story of North Carolina's Early Day Railroads.* Raleigh: The Crossties Press, 1982. (Courtesy of the North Carolina State Archives).

eliminated the need for tunnel construction or the many switchbacks that would be required on steep grades. Often known as the Knoxville Route, the line runs northwestward through the towns of Marshall and Hot Springs before entering Tennessee at Newport on the Pigeon River (George 1996: 10-11).

Unprecedented growth and prosperity followed the WNCRR to Asheville. The population of the city doubled to some 5,000 within three years, reaching 10,000 by 1890. Between 1880 and 1890, the population of Buncombe County jumped sixty percent to exceed 21,000. Profiting from rail connections, the value of farm property in the county also rose from $2,589,897 to $7,716,400 in the decade and surpassed $13,500,000 by 1900. The value of manufacturing also rose, increasing four-fold to over one million dollars between 1880 and 1890 (Swaim 1981: 21).

Building the Murphy Branch: Asheville to Murphy, 1882 to 1891

Running 123 miles from Asheville to Murphy, the Murphy Branch of the WNCRR took nine years to complete. The route traversed winding rivers that demanded numerous bridges and climbed a steep, four-percent grade to reach Balsam Gap. To span winding Hominy Creek, east of Canton, the railroad had to erect five bridges within a seven-mile span. As with the earlier crossing of the Blue Ridge, the work on the Murphy Branch was often dangerous and cost the lives of many African American inmate laborers. Construction began in 1882 under the ownership of the William J. Best syndicate which had bought the line from the State of North Carolina in 1880. Original plans called for this western branch to cross the state line and serve the large copper deposits at Ducktown, Tennessee. However, the route was shortened to Murphy when the Marietta and North Georgia Railway (later the Louisville and Nashville Railroad) outpaced the WNCRR and reached Ducktown in 1885 (George 1996: 10-11, 15).

Although work on the Murphy Branch had begun in 1882 under Best's ownership, the Richmond and Danville Railroad acquired the railroad in 1886 and completed the Murphy Branch in 1891. With new management, the existing track was converted from five-foot broad gauge to the standard four-foot, nine-inch gauge, a modification that delayed completion. The Murphy Branch route began on the west side of the French Broad River in Asheville and reached Waynesville and Canton on the Pigeon River in 1882. The following year, the line was extended to Sylva and in 1884 had reached Bryson City. In 1888, the Murphy Branch was completed to Andrews, and three years later in 1891, the branch entered Murphy. At its terminus in Murphy, the WNCRR would later connect with the Marietta and North Georgia Railroad which built a standard-gauge line from the south to Murphy in 1897 (Poole 1995: 22-35; George 1996: 10-11, 15).

The crossing of Balsam Gap on the Murphy Branch was chief engineer James W. Wilson's final major accomplishment on the WNCRR (**Figure 8**). At 3,351 feet, Balsam Gap has been recognized as the highest point east of the Rocky Mountains crossed by a standard gauge rail line. The elevation of Balsam Gap was not the only engineering challenge. Like the Blue Ridge ascent, scaling Balsam required steep railroad grades, many switchbacks, and the spanning of deep ravines. On Balsam's west slope, there is a dramatic 700 foot elevation change in just four miles. Furthermore, unstable soil conditions prevented the building of tunnels there but rather demanded deep cuts and fills along the mountain's difficult grade (George 1996: 11).

The mortality rate of the convict workers climbed with this region's unforgiving topography and weather conditions. West of Balsam Gap near the town of Dillsboro in Jackson County, prisoners built the 836-foot Cowee Tunnel to circumvent an acute turn in the Tuckasegee River. They completed the project in eighteen months. On December 30, 1883, a chain gang of nineteen inmates

Figure 8

Murphy Branch Crosses Balsam Gap, Circa 1890

BALSAM GAP.

Source: *The Western North Carolina Section at a Glance*. Issued by the Passenger Traffic Department, Southern Railway, Premier Carrier of the South, Washington, D.C., 1912. In http://www.wcu.edu/library/DigitalCollections/TravelWNC/1910s/index.html, 2013.

drowned when their flat-bottomed ferry capsized near the mouth of the tunnel. In the winter of 1885, nineteen more laborers perished from disease and exposure when stranded at a work camp above Nantahala Gorge (Carson 2003: 22-23; George 1996: 12-14).

Under the direction of project foreman, Will Sandlin, Jr., the steep route out of the Nantahala Gorge to Topton was completed in 1887. Known as the Red Marble Grade, the design called for a deep cut spanned by the 400-foot-long Hawknest trestle. The unstable areas known at the time as "white mud" (wet clay and kaolin) under Red Marble Gap caused mud slides and made the installation of rail beds and track difficult. Crews had to stabilize the white mud deposits with heavy railroad ties before construction. Trains negotiating the five-percent grade to Topton moved along at barely ten miles per hour. Foreman Sandlin also supervised the later addition of ballast and the building of stone culverts along the entire Murphy Branch once it had entered Murphy in 1891. The Hawknest trestle was razed and the cut filled in the late 1940s (Poole 1995: 31; George 1996: 14-15; Parce 1997: 31, 88-95).

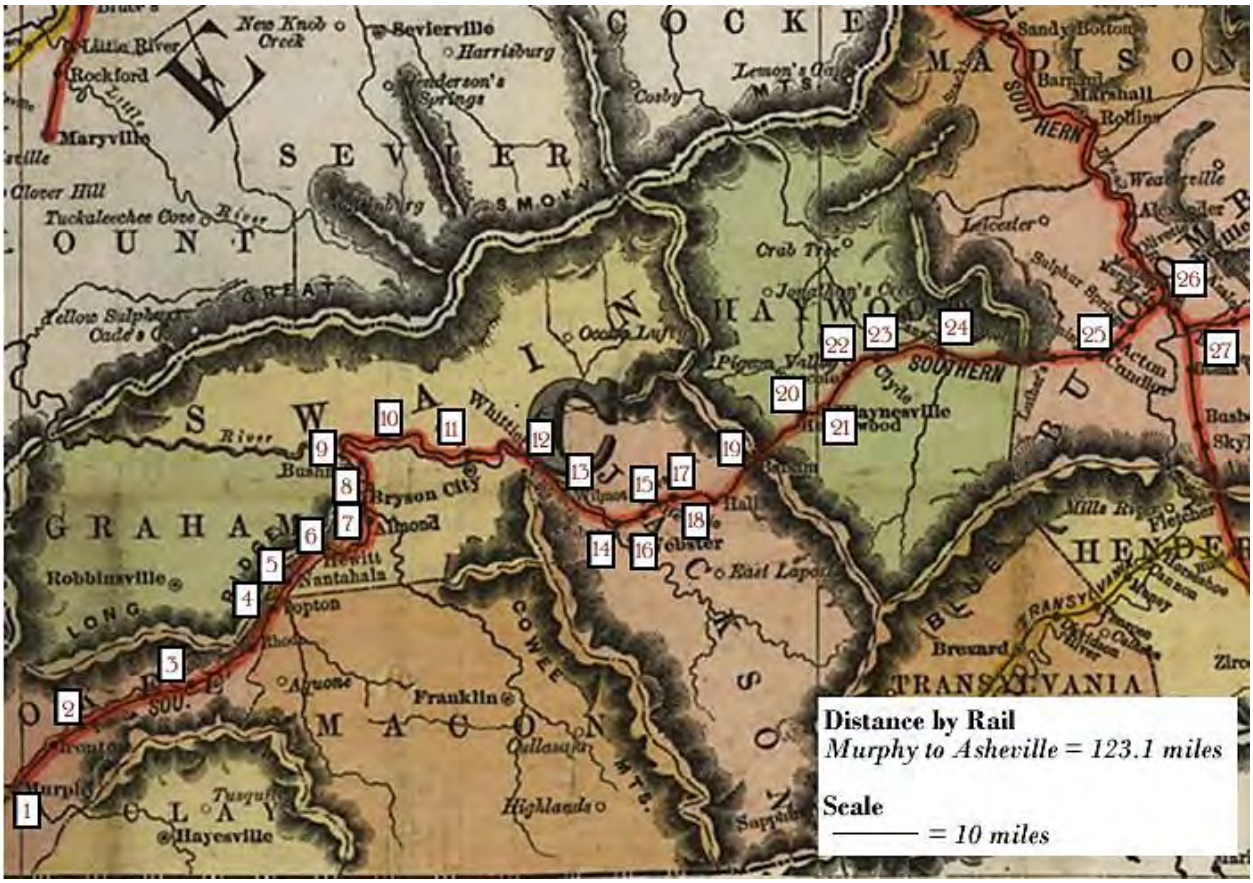
The completion of the line to Murphy in Cherokee County spurred immediate growth. The line included twenty-seven principal station sites and many other smaller shipping points for lumber, minerals, and farming products (**Figure 9**). In 1893, J. S. Mauney, publisher of the *Cherokee Scout* in Murphy, marveled that, "more than half a century has passed like a dream, we are living in the fast age." With population growth and prosperity, Cherokee County decided to build a new courthouse which was completed in 1893. The courthouse would be rebuilt two more times before the Depression, each one grander than its predecessor. Brick commercial buildings shouldered aside wooden ones along the railroad tracks. In the wooded mountains outside Murphy, Northern and Midwestern capitalists invested in thousands of acres of timberlands for exploitation. In 1892, the Crosby Lumber Company of Greenville, Michigan, bought 47,000 acres of forests in Graham County, and in 1894, New York and Illinois land companies purchased 112,000 acres in Swain County. Another New York syndicate, Tuckasegee Timber Company, acquired some 75,000 acres of land in Swain, Jackson, and Macon counties in that year. Thus, by 1894 when the WNCRR came under the ownership of the mighty Southern Railway, the mountain towns and coves along the Murphy Branch and the entire WNCRR line were poised for transformation (Eller 1982: 99-102; Dockery 1984: 53-61; Bishir 1999: 379, 403, 407).

Southern Railway Takes Control: The Railroad Transforms the Region, 1894 to World War II (**Figures 10-11**)

In 1894, just three years after the Murphy Branch had been finished by the Richmond and Danville, the Southern Railway purchased the R&D which was in receivership. Created during the Depression of the early 1890s, the Southern Railway was one of the large, regional railroads that emerged from the near collapse of the national rail system. With the failure of so many small, usually undercapitalized railroad companies during the economic turmoil, Wall Street financiers reorganized and consolidated much of the national system into a network of fewer, but larger, well-financed regional lines. Like the other new railroads, the Southern was comprised of numerous small companies, including the Richmond and Danville. By the turn of the twentieth century, thirty-two railroads operated close to eighty percent of the nation's rail mileage. In North Carolina, the consolidation movement resulted in three predominant lines: the Atlantic Coast Line; the Seaboard Air Line; and the Southern Railway. Formed in 1894 under the direction of financier, J. P. Morgan, the mighty Southern connected New Orleans to New York, and tied the former WNCRR to a vast network of railroads nationwide (Stover 1955: 257; Chandler 1977: 165, 172, 175; Vance 1995: 109-110).

Figure 9

Murphy Branch Line and its Principal Station Sites*, 1900

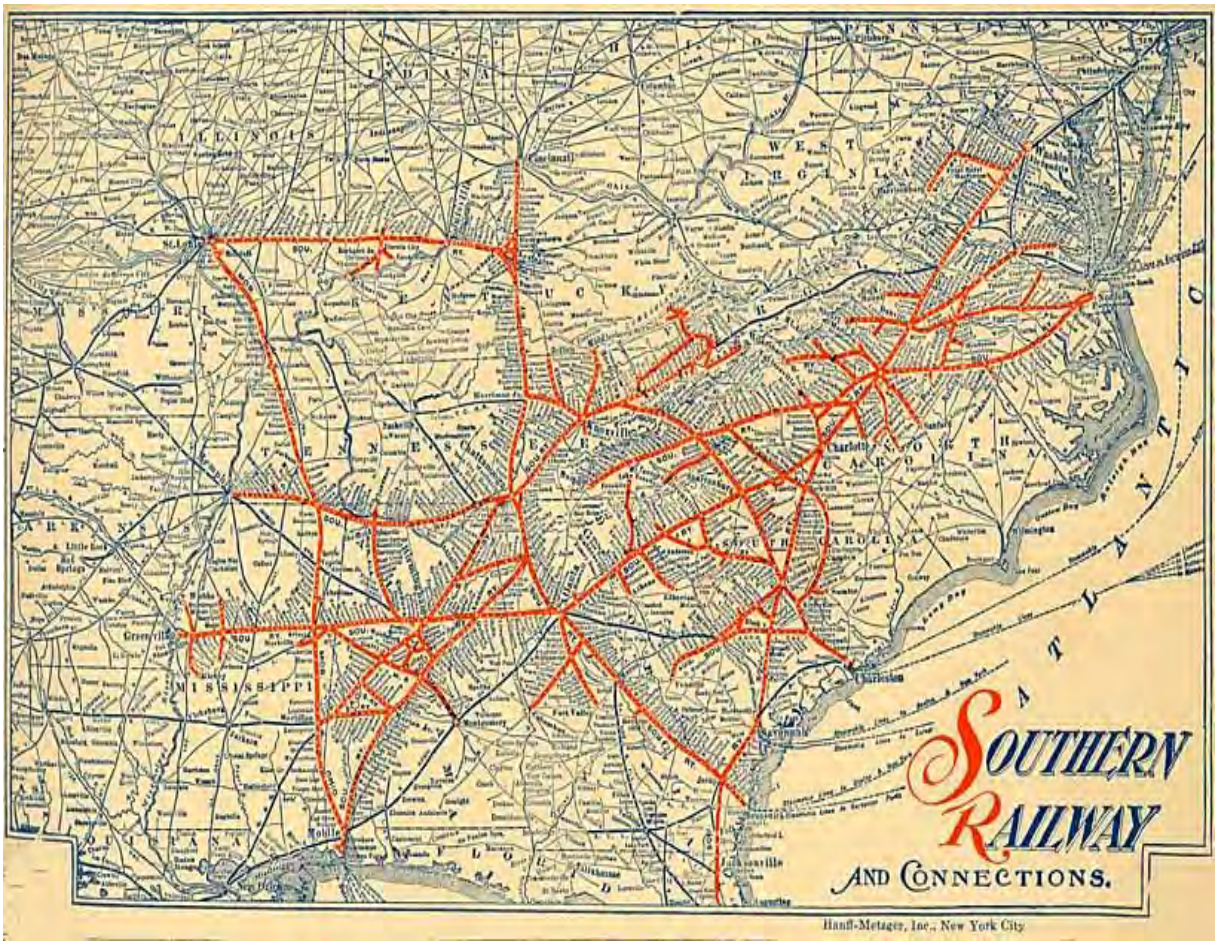


Source: "Railroad Map of North Carolina, 1900, examined and authorized by the North Carolina Corporation Commission." Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress Geography and Map Division. Available at http://www.wcu.edu/library/DigitalCollections/TravelWNC/1910s/index.html, 2013.

* 1-Murphy; 2-Regal; 3-Andrews; 4-Topton; 5-Nantahala; 6-Hewitt; 7-Almond; 8-Whiting; 9-Bushnell; 10-Forney; 11-Bryson City; 12-Whittier; 13-Wilmot; 14-Dillsboro; 15-Sylva; 16-Beta; 17-Addie; 18-Willits; 19-Balsam; 20-Hazelwood; 21-Waynesville; 22-Tuscola; 23-Clyde; 24-Canton; 25-Candler; 26-Asheville; 27-Biltmore

Figure 10

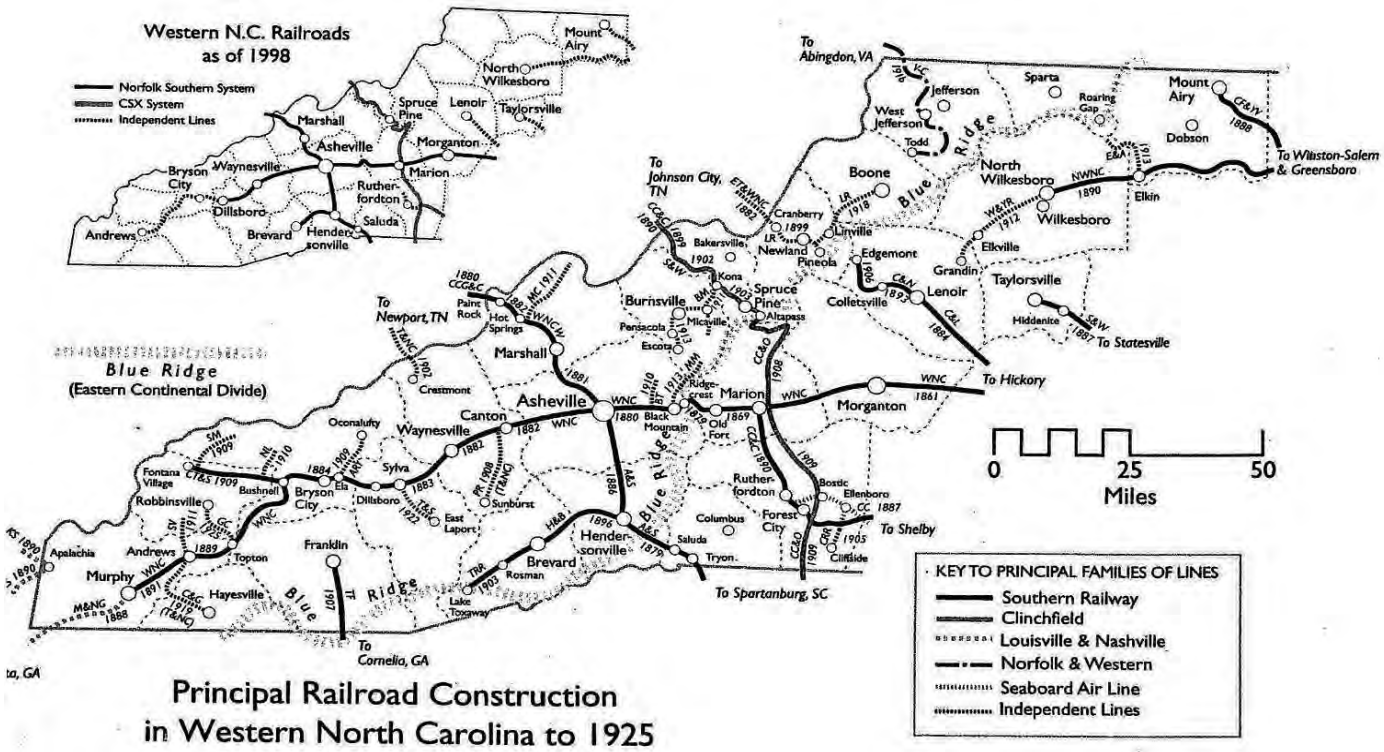
Southern Railway System, circa 1915



Source: Southern Railway Company Passenger Traffic Department, 1915 (?). North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Figure 11

Principal Railroads in Western North Carolina to 1925



Source: Bishir, Catherine W. et al. *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.

Under the control of the Southern Railway, the former WNCRR line brought a whirlwind of change to the region. Between the 1890s and the Depression of the 1930s, enormous, well-capitalized mining and lumbering concerns followed the railroad into the forests, revolutionizing the economy while denuding the land. Before the railroad, the 1880 census revealed a remote region of widely dispersed, rural settlements. By 1920, the majority of the population of the Southern Appalachians was concentrated in industrial communities. Farm acreage had declined, and agricultural production dropped as a source of family income. Such timbering businesses as Ritter Lumber Company and Champion Fibre Company purchased hundreds of thousands of acres of old-growth forests around Swain County and created expansive sawmilling complexes and logging camps that employed thousands of workers. By 1920, timber production in the county was valued at two million dollars. Along the Murphy Branch in western Macon County, impressive logging and milling operations filled the Nantahala community. Employing aggressive, clear-cut timbering methods, these companies and others across the Southern Appalachians produced as much as four billion board feet of lumber per year in the early 1900s, an astounding forty percent of the national total (Eller 1982: 230; Wells 1985: 330; Poole 1995: 164-165, 185-186; Bishir et al. 1999: 44-47; 379-380; Martin 1995: E: 46-47).

Along the entire Murphy Branch, new towns appeared and remote hamlets became marshalling points for farm products, lumber, and ore. When the railroad tracks were laid near a rich marble deposit in Cherokee County, the eponymous town arose. By 1910, the town of Marble was prospering from the extraction of marble and the shipping of lumber, talc, gold, and iron ore. The farming community of Bryson City on the Tuckasegee River grew during the 1910s with the addition of several large saw mills and a railroad yard. Lumber mills and related industries, including tanneries and furniture plants, filled the rail corridors in Murphy, Andrews, and Waynesville. Located just east of Murphy, Andrews had been incorporated in 1904 and contained 1,000 residents by 1910. The town's rail connections drew the Kanawha Lumber Company in 1897 which purchased a sizable tract of land along the rail line for its sprawling sawmilling complex. In 1905, Kanawha built the Snow Bird Valley Railway from Andrews deep into adjacent Graham County for hauling timber (Dockery 19: 66-73; Poole 1995: 164-165; Oliver 2001: 37).

Supporting the lumber industry, large tanneries opened at Andrews, Sylva, Hazelwood (near Waynesville), and Asheville. These factories used tannic acid extracted from logged chestnut and oak trees to tan hides into leather. The C. J. Harris Tannery in Sylva was later converted to a paper mill using boiled wood chips, a tanning byproduct. The mill manufactured cardboard as well as tannic acid, and employed some 300 workers into the mid-twentieth century (Bishir et al. 1999: 355).

At the town of Canton, where the Murphy Branch crosses the Pigeon River, the Champion Fibre Company was established in 1908. A subsidiary of the Ohio-based Champion Coated Paper Company, Champion Fibre would become the world's largest paper manufacturing plant and the largest customer on the entire Southern Railway network. The company constructed a flourishing paper plant and pulp mill in Canton. The town's population of mainly Champion employees skyrocketed from 230 in 1900 to some 3,000 by the 1910, and 5,000 by the Depression, the largest town along the Murphy Branch (Wells 1985: 28-32; Bishir et al. 1999: 345-347; George 1996: 21-22).

Passenger service also soared under the ownership of the Southern Railway. By 1900, the Murphy Branch had six trains carrying visitors daily to Lake Junaluska, and four ran daily the entire length of the line from Asheville to Murphy. By the 1910s and 1920s, the Southern's wide network of lines

and connections to other railroads opened Asheville and other mountain towns to visitors nationwide. The North Carolina mountains were located within a day's journey of New York, Philadelphia, Savannah, New Orleans, and Chicago, and long-distance travelers arrived on trains fully equipped with coaches, sleeping cars, and dining cars (George 1996: 109-110; digitalheritage.org/2010/08/railroads-in-western-north-carolina).

Many of these travelers were pleasure seekers—tourists searching for spectacular views, restful getaways from urban life, or invigorating mountain pursuits. A number of other travelers were seeking the perceived restorative qualities of the mountain air and mineral springs. Some journeyed from nearby areas, but most came from the industrial cities of the North. Promotional travel brochures, including many published by the Southern Railway, trumpeted the region's scenery and salubrious climate as a sharp contrast to conditions in the urban North (**Figures 12-13**). Visitors suffering from respiratory problems poured into Asheville by the thousands. By World War I, some 3.000 patients a year were arriving in the mountain city for tubercular care. By 1930, fueled by tourism and speculators, booming Asheville boasted a population of 50,000 (Bishir et al. 1999: 56-58, 259-296; Swaim 1981: 38-48).

While Asheville became the epicenter of the mountain tourist trade, nearby small towns also promoted themselves to visitors. On the WNCRR line to Paint Rock, Hot Springs (originally Warm Springs) took shape as a curative retreat near natural mineral baths. In 1907, Presbyterians established the religious center of Montreat at scenic Black Mountain in Buncombe County. Two years later the Methodists followed suit at Lake Junaluska near Waynesville. Waynesville contained not only sawmills, a tannery, and furniture plants in the industrial subdivision of Hazelwood but also hotels and rooming houses for vacationers. Between 1880 and 1930, Waynesville grew from only 225 residents to 9,000. In Jackson County, the town of Dillsboro profited comfortably as a summer resort and farming center. At the highest point on the Murphy Branch, the commodious Balsam Inn was opened at Balsam Gap in 1907. That same year, the nearby town of Clyde contained eight tourist boarding houses and hotels, and at Canton, breezy tourist hotels arose along the hillside overlooking Main Street and the Pigeon River (Wells 1982: 25; Parce 1997: 51; Bishir et al. 1999: 39-41, 339-343, 355-356; Oliver 2001: 55-69).

Imbued with rail-inspired optimism, the leaders of these mountain towns advanced a host of civic improvements. Between the 1900s and 1920s, bond issues funded libraries, water and sewer works, paved roads, fire stations, town halls, and electric street lights. In Canton, the same bond that paved the streets in 1907 also supported the construction of its first public school. The citizens of Andrews built a town hall and library in 1914. In Murphy, Valley River Avenue north of the Valley River became the neighborhood of choice for the well-to-do. At the center of town, a tree-shaded square was developed soon after the courthouse was rebuilt on a nearby tract. With fanfare, the citizens of Murphy dedicated a new fountain on the square in 1917, and in 1922, a Carnegie library was opened. In Bryson City, the seat of Swain County, the stylish Neoclassical Revival courthouse was built in 1908 as was the two-story, red-brick Bryson City Bank, the centerpiece of a main street filled with new masonry architecture (Wells 1985: 38; Dockery 1984: 59-75; Bishir et al. 1999: 379-380).

<u>Repairing and Improving the Railroad Infrastructure</u>

In common with all major railroads, the Murphy Branch and the entire WNCRR line required a steady schedule of repairs and improvements. The railroad's diverse infrastructure was updated regularly to suit new technologies, business strategies, and practical concerns. In 1907, the

Figure 12

Promoting Tourism in Western North Carolina:
Southern Railway's *The Official Railway Guide* (circa 1910)

Source: Poole, Cary Franklin. *A History of Railroading in Western North Carolina*. Johnson City, Tennessee: Overmountain Press, 1995. Courtesy of the North Carolina State Archives.

Figure 13

"Asheville--The Ideal Autumn and Winter Resort"
Tourist Brochure Published by the Southern Railway Company Passenger Department
(circa 1900)

Source: Southern Railway Company Passenger Traffic Department, circa 1900. North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Southern Railway opened new headquarters for the Murphy Branch (renamed the Murphy Division) in Bryson City in Swain County. That same year, the line underwent a major renovation with the construction of new, heavier track and improved roadbeds. Some trestles, including Hawknest, were replaced with fills to carry heavier loads of timber and milled lumber. The Southern Railway replaced rails, ties, ballast, water tanks, coal chutes, flagstop sheds, and a variety of other rail-related equipment on a regular basis. At Bryson City and Clyde, the Southern Railway erected fenced cattle pens for shipping livestock. Railroad stations were built or remodeled along the line to serve passengers and freight. Wood or steel trestles and steel truss bridges were routinely rehabilitated or replaced, and tunnels were reinforced for safety or enlarged to accommodate bigger railroad cars. In 1924, for example, twelve modern bridges replaced earlier spans along an especially busy forty-mile stretch of the Murphy Branch between Asheville and Addie in Jackson County. These steel, deck-truss or deck plate girder bridges could support heavier, 100-ton engines (George 1996: 5, 16-17, 21-26, 101; Parce 1997: 46-50).

The Southern Railway also installed railroad sidings, repair yards, and wyes for turning trains, where necessary. The Southern built wyes in Asheville, Murphy, Addie and Balsam in Jackson County, and Bryson City. The wye at the outskirts of Bryson City replaced an earlier turntable. By the mid-1920s, Asheville boasted a sizable rail yard with a modern roundhouse and repair sheds. In 1943, the Southern Railway built a sawmill on the yard for repairing bridges. The Asheville yard was extensively renovated in 1951. The town of Murphy contained a rail yard at the junction of the Murphy Branch and Louisville and Nashville Railroad in the center of town. In Canton, the Southern Railway opened its largest yard on the Murphy Branch to accommodate the operations of the Champion paper plant and pulp mill. Small, frame flagstop sheds were built at numerous, small shipping points along the line, including Boswell, Hominy, Willits, Noland, Rhodo, Wesser Creek, Fry's Siding, and Tomotla. The Southern Railway also constructed boarding houses for employees, including two boarding houses in Whittier near Bryson City and one near the terminus of the line in Murphy (Poole 1995: 29-35; George 1996: 19-80, 108) (**Plate 27** on page 47).

At the Nantahala stop, an engine servicing yard was created that included a water tank, coal chute, and sand tower. Locomotives used sand stored in sand towers to gain traction on the steeper grades. In the early 1940s, the Southern Railway also laid a mile-long spur from Nantahala to the Nantahala Power and Light Company. The spur carried materials to the site for the construction of the powerhouse (George 1996: 67-68; Martin 1995: E: 94).

The catastrophic flood of 1916, triggered by the convergence of two tropical cyclones, caused millions of dollars of property damage and destroyed major sections of the mountain railways. In areas where clear-cut logging had stripped the forested mountainsides, torrential waters destroyed bridges and roadbeds. Logs and mud consumed entire fills. Along the former WNCRR, the section from Old Fort to Asheville suffered extensive damage. However, the Murphy Branch remained substantially intact, and consequently, the line between Asheville and Murphy became the area's principal transportation artery immediately after the flood, carrying emergency supplies and the equipment needed to rebuild other rail lines (George 1996: 11-112; Poole 1995: 24-29; Bishir et al. 1999: 49).

The Murphy Branch experienced its greatest workload during World War II. Between 1942 and 1944, the line played an integral part in the building of the Fontana Hydroelectric Dam and Lake in Swain and Graham counties. At 480 feet high, the massive Fontana Dam, the largest dam in the Tennessee Valley Authority system, was constructed to supply electricity to manufacturing plants producing aluminum for aircraft and processing uranium at Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Using a

Southern Railway line between Bushnell and Fontana, the railroad shipped thousands of carloads of cement and other materials to the mountainous dam site. This short track to Fontana was the thirteen-mile Carolina and Tennessee Southern Railway, built by the Southern Railway in 1909 to access timberlands and a copper mine in the area. The track was lost to the building of the dam and the flooding of 10,000 acres of the Little Tennessee River Valley to form Fontana Reservoir in 1944 (George 1996: 58, 81-98; Bishir et al. 1999: 381, 394-397).

Creation of the vast Fontana Reservoir permanently flooded farming communities throughout the valley near Fontana as well as twenty-four miles of the original Murphy Branch between Bryson City and Wesser. The communities of Almond and Bushnell, the railroad bed, and the Indian Ridge Tunnel at a horseshoe bend in the Little Tennessee River were all submerged under the new lake. The Southern Railway quickly relocated the line in this area (**Figure 14**). Completed in 1944, the new route was the last large-scale railroad project in the country until the 1980s and the development of the Powder River Basin coal fields in Montana and Wyoming. Because steel was scarce during the war, the roadbed required especially heavy grading and deep fills. When steel truss bridges were the only option, some were salvaged from the original route or from other relocation projects. The new segment from Bryson City southwest to Wesser was eight-and-a-half miles shorter than the original and followed the Nantahala and Little Tennessee rivers before entering the Nantahala Gorge at Wesser. At the Little Tennessee River near the town of Almond, an expansive 777-foot bridge was built with four 157-foot truss spans and two 67-foot deck plate girder bridges. At Bryson City, engineers salvaged the Nantahala No. 2 truss bridge from the original line to span the Tuckasegee River. The new 426-foot bridge also incorporated four deck-girder bridges (George 1996: 58, 81-87, 94).

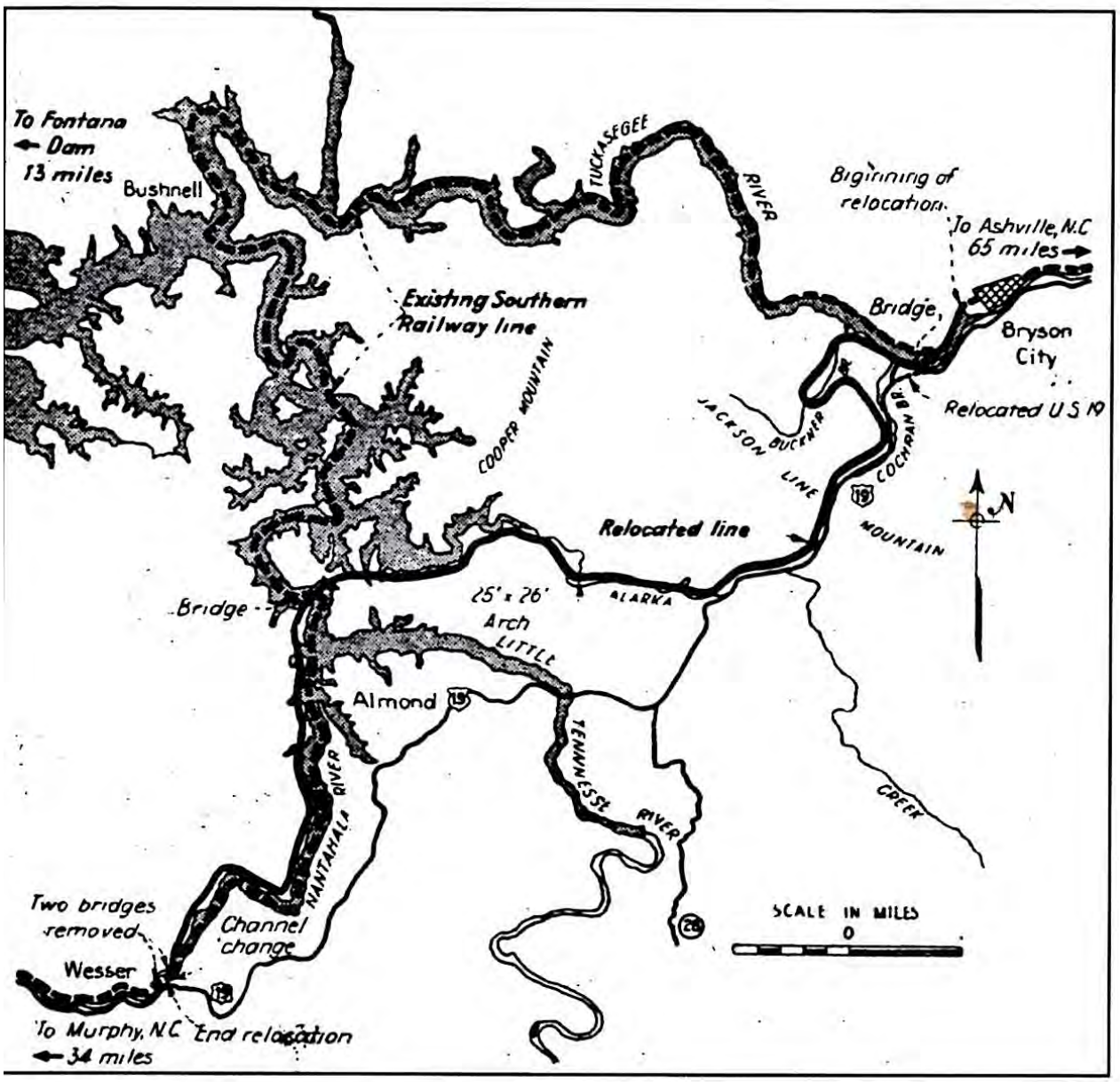
The Railroad after World War II: Shifting Gears, 1945 to the Present

In the postwar years, sharp increases in automobile use and trucking, compounded by technological changes and shifts in the regional industrial economy, affected both passenger and freight rail service. The Southern Railway began discontinuing passenger routes on the Murphy Branch in 1944 and ceased such service entirely in 1948. Freight traffic slowed after the war but remained steady. In 1952, diesel replaced steam power on the Murphy Branch to provide generally higher performance and lower operational costs. The conversion from steam to diesel was accompanied by an overall modernization of the infrastructure. During the ensuing years, diesel trains continued to haul a wide range of freight along the entire length of former WNCRR line. Between Salisbury and Asheville, for example, carloads of coal supplied electric power plants and industries in the Piedmont. The Murphy Branch in the postwar era served an assortment of essential mountain industries, including paper mills and sawmills, pulpwood plants, furniture companies, quarries, chemical companies, and fuel oil and coal distributors (George 1996: 109-110; digitalheritage.org/2010/08/railroads-in-western-north-carolina; Poole 1995: 36-44).

In 1982, the Murphy Branch became part of the Norfolk Southern system when the Southern and the Norfolk and Western railroads merged, and by the mid-1980s, freight traffic along the Murphy Branch had fallen significantly. A number of factors contributed to this drop in freight traffic: 1) the long and steady decline in logging: 2) the 1982 closing of the L & N Railroad to Murphy which restricted traffic to eastbound trains only; and 3) the 1984 conversion of the Champion paper mill to woodchips production. The tunnels at Dillsboro and Rhodo were not equipped to handle the taller woodchip cars. In 1988, the Norfolk Southern closed the sixty-seven-mile stretch of the Murphy Branch from Dillsboro to Murphy. The State of North Carolina purchased this section and subsequently sold the leg between Dillsboro and Andrews to the Great Smoky Mountains Railway

Figure 14

The Fontana Relocation Project:
Relocation of the Murphy Branch Line between Bryson City and Wesser, 1943-1944



Source: George, Michael. *Southern Railway's Murphy Branch.* Collegedale, Tennessee: The College Press, 1996.

(GSMR) which was purchased by American Heritage Railways in 1999. (The railway runs popular tourist excursion trains along this scenic route.) The Norfolk Southern continues to operate the Murphy Branch between Asheville and Dillsboro as well as other sections of the former WNCRR line. The westernmost state-owned track linking Andrews to Murphy is not currently in use (Poole 1995: 43-44; George 1996: 113-118; Bishir 1999: 356) (**Figure 15**).

Figure 15

North Carolina Railroad System, Western North Carolina, 2012

Source: North Carolina Department of Transportation, Rail Division, 2012

Narrative Description

Summary
Completed in 1891, the Murphy Branch of the WNCRR-Southern Railway extends approximately 123 miles from the west bank of the French Broad River in Asheville to downtown Murphy in Cherokee County. Heading westward from Asheville, the railroad passes through a series of small towns, including Canton, Waynesville, Dillsboro, Sylva, Bryson City, Andrews, and Murphy. The grades can be steep, "…more typical of a logging railroad than a common carrier…," states the railroad historian Michael George. Both the Red Marble grade between Nantahala and Topton and the Balsam Mountain grade exceed four percent. At Balsam Mountain the tracks reach their highest elevation at 3,351 feet. The line crosses the Pigeon, Little Tennessee, Tuckasegee, Nantahala, and Valley rivers as well as numerous creeks (George 1996: 5, 11).

For the present study, the evaluation of historic resources focuses exclusively on the fourteen-mile stretch of the Murphy Branch between Andrews and Murphy. The field survey was devoted strictly to this westernmost segment of the line. The railroad passes through the broad, agricultural Valley River valley and generally runs along the north side of present-day U.S. Highway 74-19/129. The evaluation of the rail corridor begins in the center of Andrews at the historic site of the depot where the rail line crosses Locust Street. The Andrews railroad depot, built in 1989 at the western terminus of the Great Smokey Mountain Railroad, stands on the east side of this intersection. Located on the south side of the railroad, this one-story, frame depot occupies the original site of the Southern Railway station (now gone), but the station tracks remains intact. Although Andrews no longer retains its historic industrial complexes along the tracks, the town comprises streets of dwellings and commercial buildings erected through the twentieth century. From Andrews, the railroad corridor heads southwestward, following a relatively straight route through Marble to Murphy. The small community of Marble is no longer a bustling mining center but contains a cluster of houses and commercial buildings overlooking the rail line. The railroad crosses numerous creeks as well as the Valley River where an 1890s, pin-connected, Pratt, though-truss bridge carries the tracks into Murphy. The town of Murphy is the seat of government in Cherokee County and its principal commercial and cultural center. The railroad corridor terminates here, on the east side of the Hiwassee River, where the Murphy Branch connected with the Louisville and Northern (L&N) Railroad. The 1913 L&N depot, a frame, bracketed station, still stands along the tracks near the western terminus of the line. The Southern Railway station and a small rail yard for the Murphy Branch originally stood to the northeast on Depot Street. The station no longer survives.

Railroad Corridor (**Plates 1-2, 4, 8, 14, 17, and 20-21**)
In common with other railroads, the principal resource within the proposed Murphy Branch Linear Historic District is the railroad corridor itself. Railroads are inherently dynamic operations, and the physical components that make up their systems, principally track and ballast, are altered or replaced on a regular basis. Thus, the corridor, comprised of the rail grades and alignments, is often the principal surviving historic feature. The 1927 *Right-of-Way and Track Map, Southern Railway, Murphy Division,* as well as numerous other North Carolina railroad maps, show that the entire original alignment of the 123-mile Murphy Branch is essentially unchanged. The major change to the alignment occurred in 1943-1944 (within the period of significance) when the route between Bryson City and Wesser in Swain County, approximately twenty-four miles, was relocated for the creation of Fontana Reservoir.

Although track and ballast had to be replaced periodically, these modifications were typical of all railroads and have not altered the overall appearance of the line. Notably, the original geography of

construction is intact and includes cuts and fills that were made through the valley to create a relatively level grade for the route. There are relatively few steep cuts just west of the Marble community and east of mile post 107 where the railroad skirts the sloping, wooded banks of the Valley River. For the majority of the route through the valley, the line is characterized by minor cuts and fills that form a corridor approximately forty feet wide (roughly twenty feet on either side of the center line). At the western terminus in Murphy, the nearly flat rail corridor ends near the L&N depot and Hiwassee River. The L&N railroad bridge over the river and L & N tracks westward no longer remain although the bridge piers remain.

Railway Yard (**Plate 26**)
At the western terminus of the Murphy Branch, a small rail yard was constructed near the railroad station on Depot Street. The 1927 right-of-way and track map shows diesel fuel facilities, a pump house, coal bins, scales, and sidetracks in the railway yard. Today only the sidetracks remain although the open space reflects the original dimensions of the yard.

Bridges and Culverts (**Plates 3, 5, 7-9, 12-13, 15-16, 18-19, 22-25**)
The Murphy Branch between Andrews and Murphy retains a series of bridges and culverts that carry the tracks over the Valley River as well as numerous creeks. All were constructed during the original or early phases of operation, primarily by the Southern Railway, and later improvements have not significantly altered their original construction or designs. The largest of the Murphy Branch bridges is the 1890s span over the Valley River at Murphy. This structure is a rare surviving example of a pin-connected, Pratt, through truss span with ashlar stone and reinforced concrete piers.

Also built during the early years of operation are ten smaller bridges that carry the rail line over creeks and a number of stone and concrete culverts (identified but inaccessible) that provide drainage. Some of the culverts were large enough to function as cattle crossings where the fill for the rail line divided existing farms. Most of the bridges are wooden trestles with solid, reinforced concrete abutments and wingwalls, but one is a plate girder bridge with reinforced concrete piers and cut stone abutments.

Finally, grade separation projects before World War II led to the construction of a roadway overpass over the Murphy Branch at the eastern outskirts of Murphy (just west of the Valley River). Erected by the Tennessee Valley Authority in 1940, the bridge is a reinforced concrete tee beam overpass with a continuous/cantilever design. The 108-foot span carries two-lane Joe Brown Highway over the railroad corridor. The bridge (ID No. 190222) was evaluated for the National Register during the 2005 state-wide historic bridge survey and was recommended as eligible under Criterion C for engineering and design.

Mile Posts, Switch Posts, and Whistle Posts (**Plates 6, 10-11, 21**)
The rail corridor between Andrews and Murphy includes the great majority of its original mile posts as well as a collection of original or early whistle posts and switch posts. All of the posts are original cast iron although the metal signage has been replaced at regular intervals.

Railroad Boarding House (**Plate 27**)
At the western end of the Murphy Branch, the town of Murphy is reputed to have a 1920s boarding house for railroad workers. The building stands on Depot Street adjacent to the site of the Southern Railway station and rail yard. While altered with replacement windows and other additions and modifications, the boarding house retains its original side-gable, rectangular form, and distinctive

cast-stone veneer. The 1921 Sanborn Map of Murphy identifies a smaller boarding house at the Depot Street location. The 1930 Sanborn Map depicts the larger, cast-stone building that stands on the site today.

Plate 1. Murphy Branch, Looking West from Andrews Depot, Showing Station Track (Left) and Main Track.

Plate 2. Murphy Branch, Rail Corridor Looking West, Andrews.

Plate 3. Murphy Branch, Railroad Bridge, Andrews Vicinity.

Plate 4. Murphy Branch, Rail Corridor, Andrews-Murphy Airport, Looking West.

Plate 5. Murphy Branch, Railroad Bridge, Andrews-Murphy Airport.

Plate 6. Murphy Branch, Mile Post 101, Looking East.

Plate 7. Murphy Branch, Railroad Bridge near Mile Post 102, Coalville Vicinity.

Plate 8. Murphy Branch, Railroad Bridge and Corridor, Marble Vicinity, Looking West.

Plate 9. Murphy Branch, Railroad Bridge at Mile Post 3, Marble Vicinity, Looking West.

Plate 10. Murphy Branch, Whistle Post, Marble, Looking East.

Plate 11. Murphy Branch, Switch Post at Spur Line, Marble, Looking West.

Plate 12. Murphy Branch, Railroad Bridge, East of Bluff Road, Marble, Looking West.

Plate 13. Murphy Branch, Railroad Bridge Detail (Plate 12).

Plate 14. Murphy Branch, Rail Corridor, Deep Cut, Looking West along Airport Road and Valley River, Marble Vicinity.

Plate 15. Murphy Branch, Railroad Bridge, Roadway Bridge, and Farm Crossing, Marble Vicinity, Looking West.

Plate 16. Murphy Branch, Railroad Bridge (Plate 15).

Plate 17. Murphy Branch, Rail Corridor passes circa 1850 George W. Hayes House (CE0067) (Study List 1979), Looking West, Tomotla Vicinity.

Plate 18. Murphy Branch, Railroad Bridge over Valley River, East of Ramsey Street, Looking West, Murphy Vicinity.

Plate 19. Murphy Branch, Railroad Bridge over Valley River (Plate 18), Looking North from Regal Street, Murphy Vicinity.

Plate 20. Murphy Branch, Rail Corridor along Ramsey Street, Looking West, Murphy Vicinity.

Plate 21. Murphy Branch, Rail Corridor and Switch Post near Ramsey Street, Looking West, Murphy Vicinity.

Plate 22. Murphy Branch, Pratt Truss Railroad Bridge over Valley River, Looking West, Murphy.

Plate 23. Murphy Branch, Pratt Truss Bridge over Valley River (Plate 22), Looking Northeast from Tennessee Street (Joe Brown Highway), Murphy.

Plate 24. 1940 Reinforced Concrete, Tee Beam Highway Bridge carries Tennessee Street (Joe Brown Highway) over Murphy Branch, Murphy, Looking North.

Plate 25. 1940 Reinforced Concrete, Tee Beam Highway Bridge (Plate 24).

Plate 26. Murphy Branch, Southern Railway Yard at Western Terminus, Looking West, Murphy.

Plate 27. Boarding House for Railroad Workers, Depot Street at the Southern Railway Yard, Looking South, Murphy.

Evaluation of Eligibility and Integrity

The Murphy Branch Linear Historic District, WNCRR-Southern Railway, is recommended for National Register eligibility under Criterion A for transportation and Criterion C for engineering and design. Opened for service between Asheville and Murphy in 1891, the Murphy Branch has statewide significance. The period of significance begins in 1891 and ends in 1964 in compliance with the fifty-year termination guideline for National Register eligibility. While the entire Murphy Branch remained in use until 1988, the period after 1964 does not possess the exceptional significance for eligibility under Criteria Consideration G. For the purposes of this report, the recommended National Register boundaries for the linear historic district are defined only for the fourteen-mile Andrews-to-Murphy segment of the line.

The Murphy Branch Linear Historic District retains the seven aspects of integrity needed for eligibility. Occupying its historic alignment and grade, the railroad line between Andrews and Murphy retains its integrity of location. The line's setting, feeling, and association are also well preserved. The broad valley terrain, the river and creek crossings, and the rail-oriented towns and communities continue to illustrate the railroad's major role in the development of the region and the exploitation of its natural resources. Finally, with its intact rail corridor and notable historic resources related to the operation of the line, the Murphy Branch retains its integrity of design, materials, and workmanship.

Under Criterion A for transportation, the entire, 123-mile railroad corridor played a pivotal part in the transformation of western North Carolina between the 1890s and the mid-twentieth century. Train service along the Murphy Branch provided the first rapid, reliable, all-weather transportation that not only triggered commercial and industrial development but, perhaps more importantly, allowed for the integration of the region into the capitalist national economy. The railroad made possible large-scale mining and timbering operations that revolutionized the economy albeit while denuding the forested mountainsides. The railroad also advanced urban growth, tourism, and commercial agriculture. Altogether, these events did eventually overwhelm traditional mountain culture, long sustained and nurtured by the remoteness and isolation of the region.

The Murphy Branch Linear Historic District also has significance under Criterion C for engineering and design. The surveyed stretch of the railroad between Andrews and Murphy contains well-preserved historic bridges and trestles, notably the 1890s, pin-connected, Pratt through-truss span over Valley River and the 1940, reinforced concrete, tee beam highway overpass, Bridge No. 190222, which was determined eligible for the National Register in 2005. The line's smaller, wooden trestles as well as stone and concrete arched culverts illustrate common types used by railroads during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for smaller crossings.

Through the mountainous terrain east of the Andrews-to-Murphy project area, the construction of the Murphy Branch demanded exceptional engineering skills. The chief engineer was James W. Wilson, who had previously supervised the building of the WNCRR over the Blue Ridge east of Asheville. Among the many challenges in constructing the Murphy Branch was the crossing of Balsam Mountain where poor soil conditions made tunneling impossible, thereby exacerbating the problem of constructing a rail line through steep grades. With fewer engineering options, the railroad had to scale the mountain's difficult grade through a series of switchbacks demanding deep cuts and fills and the spanning of dangerous ravines. Balsam Gap, elevation 3,351 feet, is the highest railroad pass east of the Rocky Mountains.

National Register Boundary

The proposed National Register historic district boundaries for the Andrews-to-Murphy segment are depicted on maps found in **Appendix A.** Along much of the line, the terrain is flat, and the proposed boundary follows the toes of fill and the tops of the short cuts along the route. The boundary generally extends approximately twenty feet on either side of the track center line to encompass the tracks, ballast, and construction contours. In some locations, the proposed boundaries extend beyond these limits to encompass contributing historic resources, such as bridges, additional tracks, and other features along the railway that were associated with the operation of the line. For example, the proposed historic district boundary were expanded at the western terminus to include the tax parcels on which the former rail yard and adjoining boarding house for railroad workers are located. At the eastern terminus in Andrews, the proposed boundary terminates where the station track for the Andrews depot began. Although modern, the extant depot occupies the historic location of the Andrews station. The modern Andrews railroad depot, a one-story, frame building erected in 1989 by the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad, is excluded from the historic district boundary.

The proposed National Register boundary encompasses the following contributing resources:

1) Rail Corridor between the depot site in Andrews to the branch terminus in Murphy;
2) Pratt Truss Bridge (1890s) over the Valley River ;
3) Bridge No. 190222 (DOE 2005), a 1940, reinforced-concrete, tee beam overpass that carries two-lane Joe Brown Highway over the railroad corridor;
4) Ten trestle and plate girder bridges;
5) Culverts;
6) Whistle Post Signs;
7) Mile Post Signs;
8) Switches; and
9) Boarding House (1920s) in Murphy

There are no noncontributing resources found within this proposed boundary.

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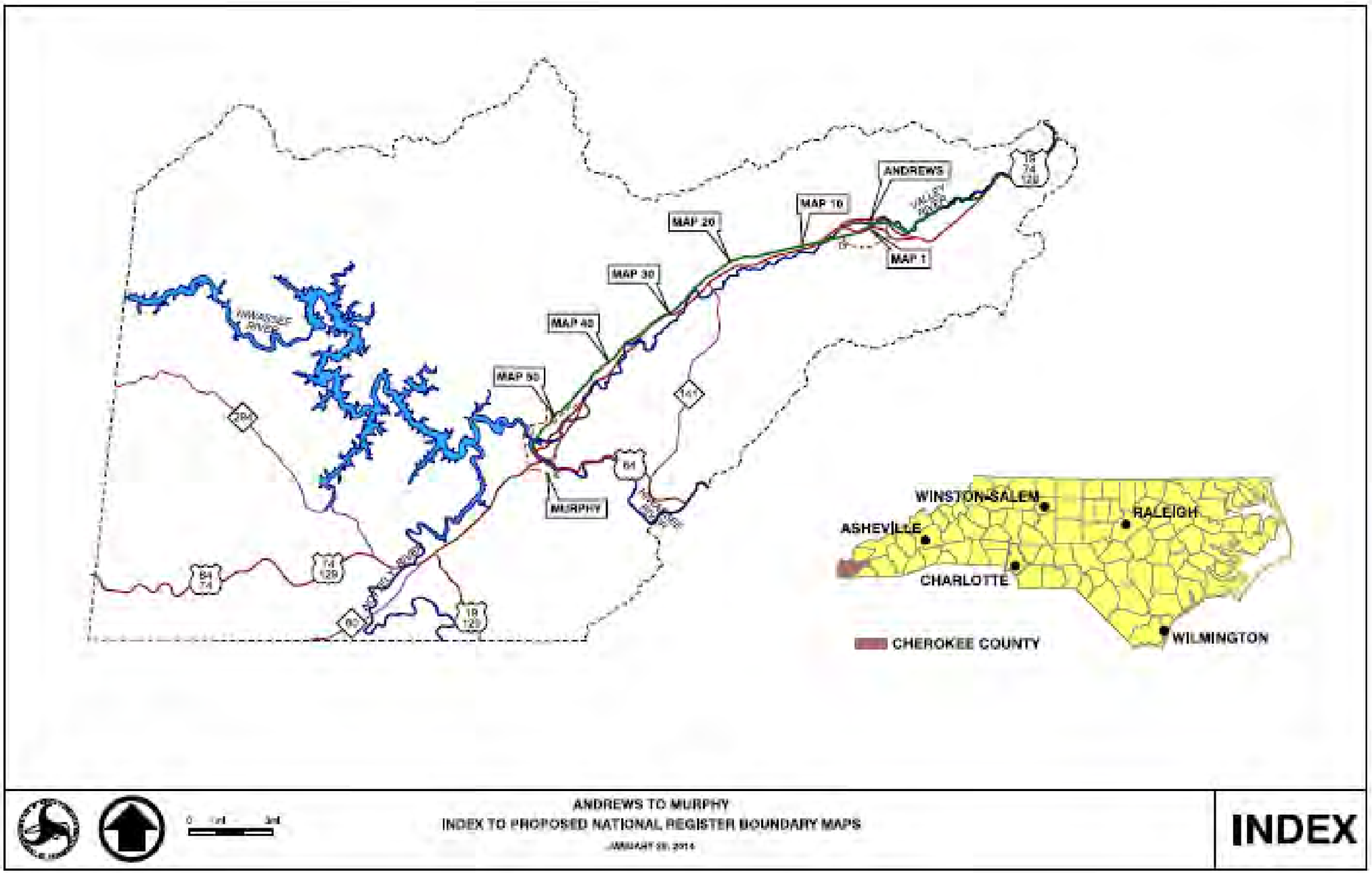
APPENDIX A:

Proposed National Register Boundary Maps
(Index Map and Sheets 1-55)



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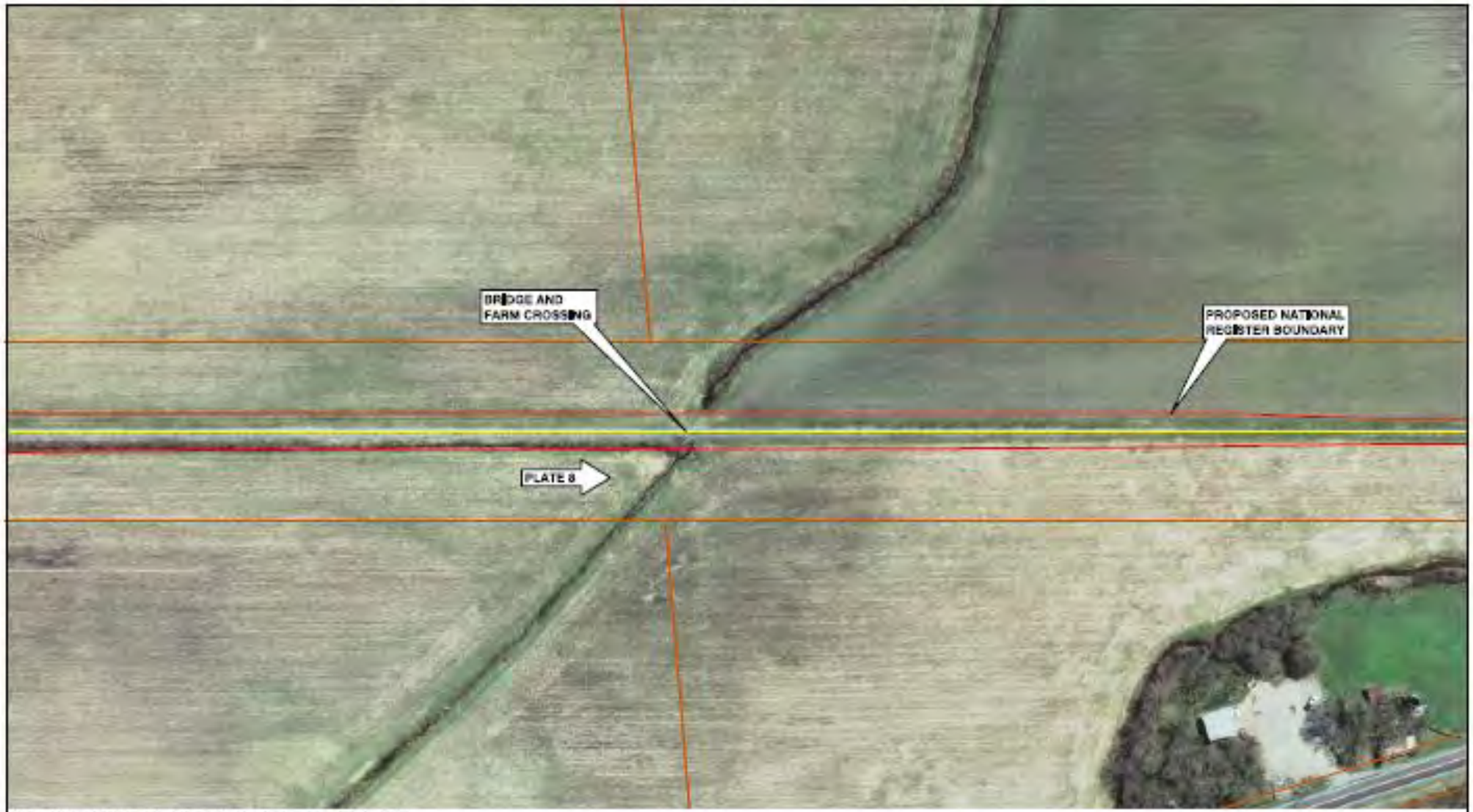

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0 50 100

APPROX. G|S PARCEL BOUNDARY
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MAP REFERENCES: NC ONEMAP GEOSPACIAL PORTAL, NOVEMBER 21, 2013
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0 50 100

APPROX. G.S. PARCEL BOUNDARY
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0 50' 100'

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MAP REFERENCES: NC ONEMAP GEOSPACIAL PORTAL, NOVEMBER 21, 2013
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0 50 100'

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MAP REFERENCES: NC ONEMAP GEOSPACIAL PORTAL, NOVEMBER 21, 2013
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MAP REFERENCES: NC ONEMAP GEOSPACIAL PORTAL, NOVEMBER 21, 2013
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MAP REFERENCES: NC ONEMAP GEOSPACIAL PORTAL, NOVEMBER 21, 2013
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0 50' 100'

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MAP REFERENCES: NC ONEMAP GEOSPACIAL PORTAL, NOVEMBER 01, 2013
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0 50' 100'

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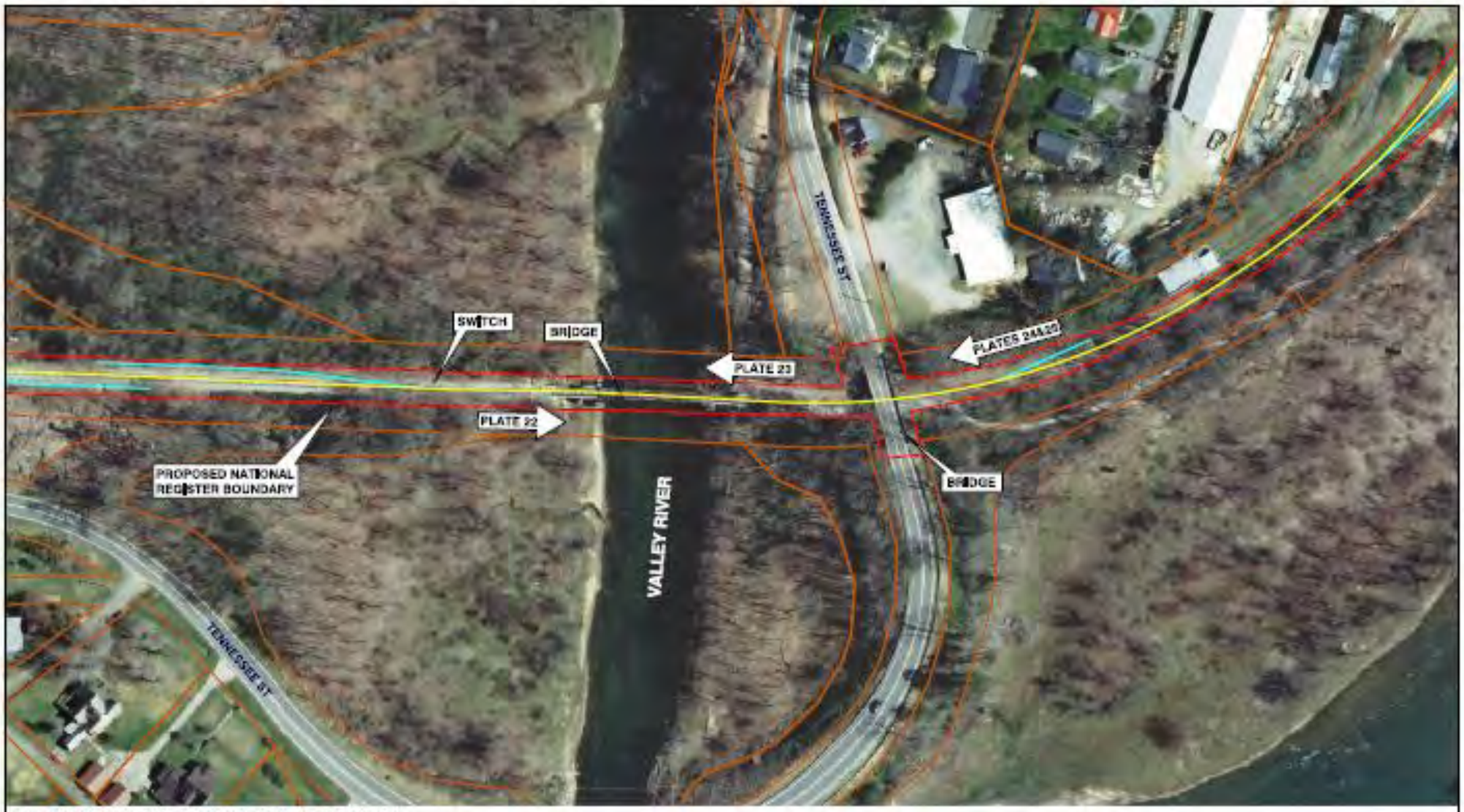

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APPENDIX C:

Professional Qualifications

Richard L. Mattson, Ph.D.
Historical Geographer

Education

1988	Ph.D. Geography University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois
1980	M.A. Geography University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois
1976	B.A. History, Phi Beta Kappa University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois

Relevant Work Experience

1991-date	Historical Geographer, Mattson, Alexander and Associates, Inc. Charlotte, North Carolina
1991	Visiting Professor, History Department, Queens College Charlotte, North Carolina
1989-1991	Mattson and Associates, Historic Preservation Consulting Charlotte, North Carolina
1988	Visiting Professor, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois
1984-1989	Private Historic Preservation Consultant, Raleigh, North Carolina
1981-1984	Academic Advisor, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois
1981	Instructor, Department of Geography, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois
1978-1980	Private Historic Preservation Consultant, Champaign, Illinois

Frances P. Alexander
Architectural Historian

Education

1991 M.A. American Civilization-Architectural History
George Washington University
Washington, D.C.

1981 B.A. History with High Honors
Guilford College
Greensboro, North Carolina

Relevant Work Experience

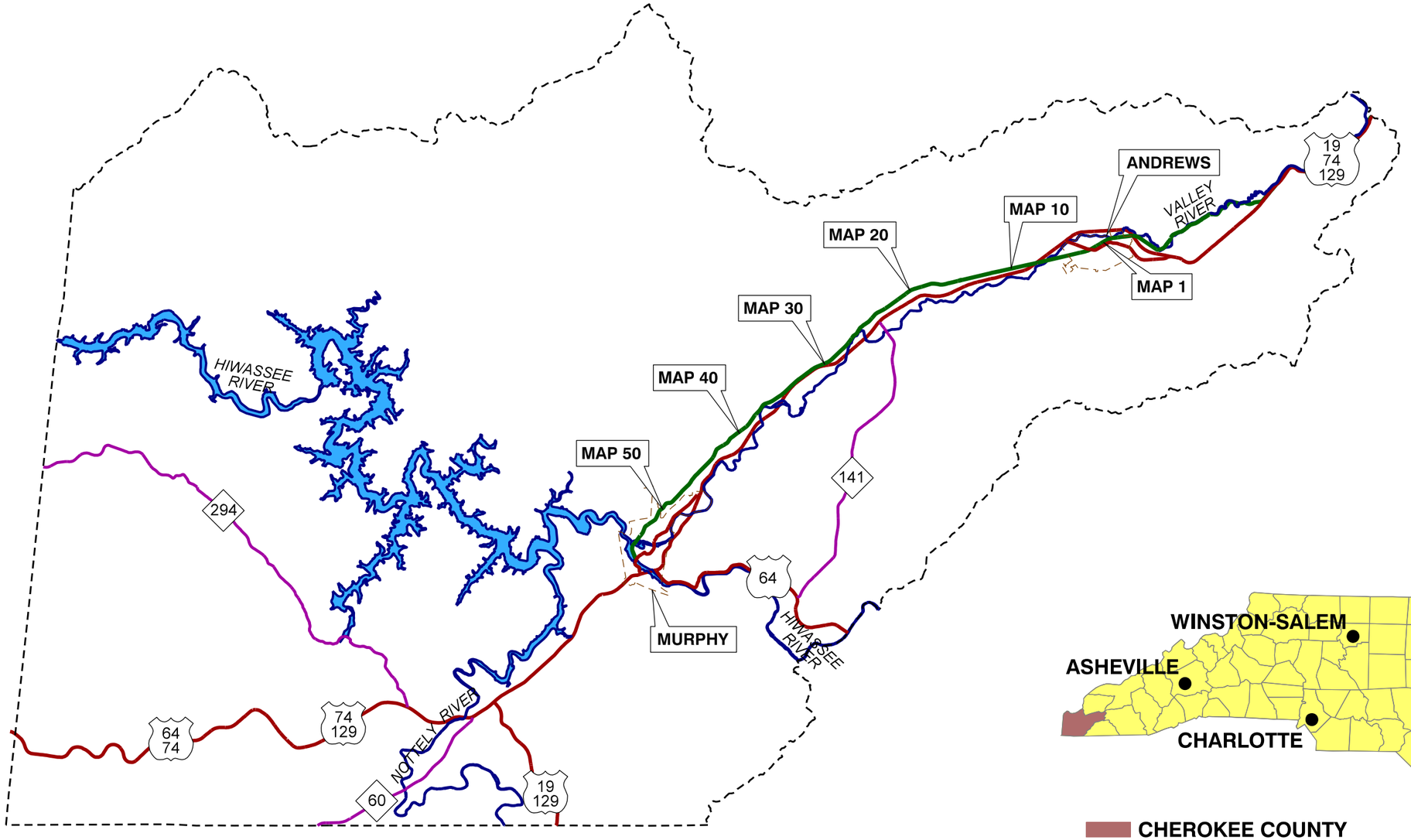
1991-date Architectural Historian, Mattson, Alexander and Associates, Inc.
Charlotte, North Carolina

1988-1991 Department Head, Architectural History Department
Engineering-Science, Inc., Washington, D.C.

1987-1988 Architectural Historian, Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service, Washington, D.C.

1986-1987 Historian, National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, Washington, D.C.

1986 Historian, Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service, Chicago, Illinois



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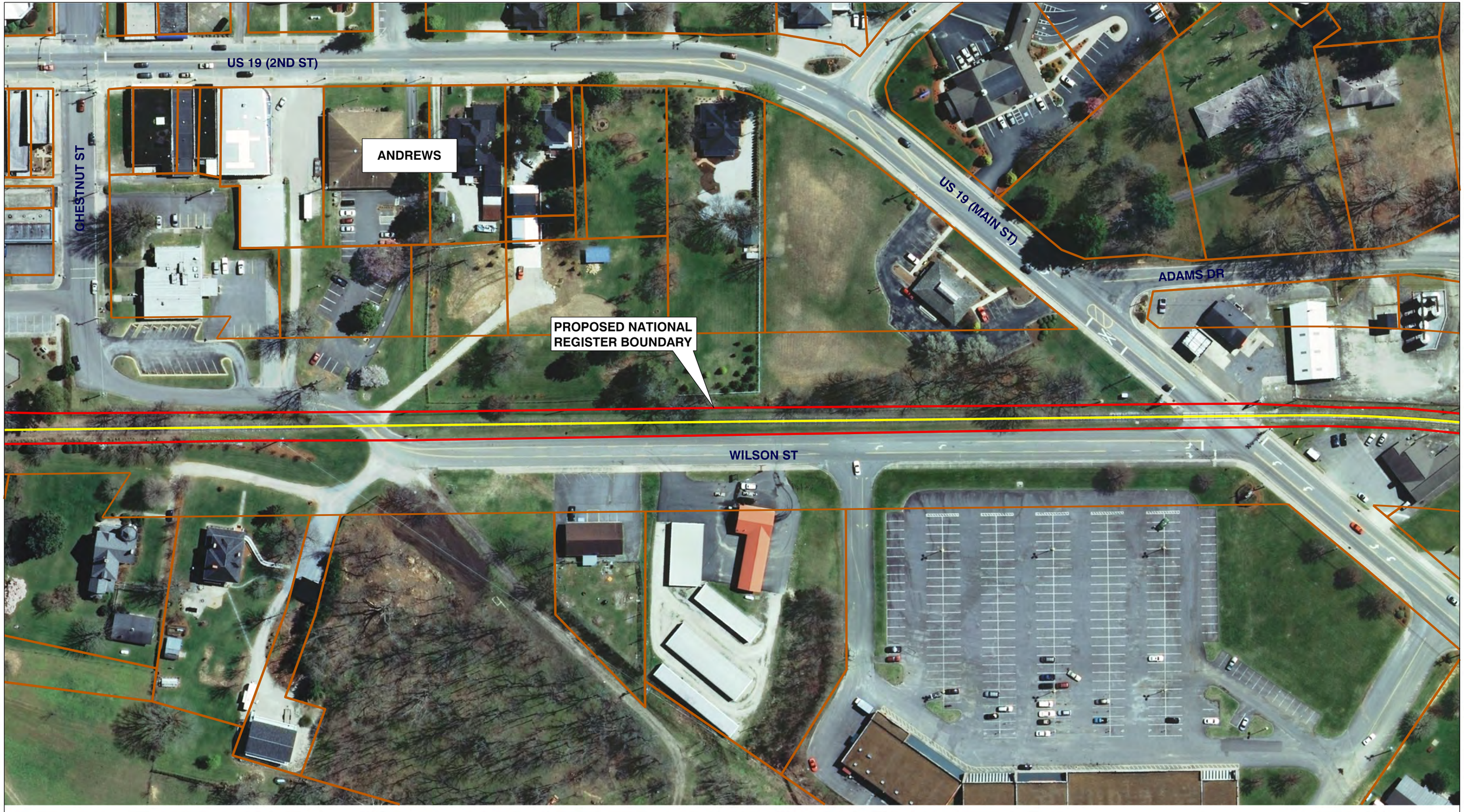

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HEATON CIR

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REAGAN AVE

PLATE 2

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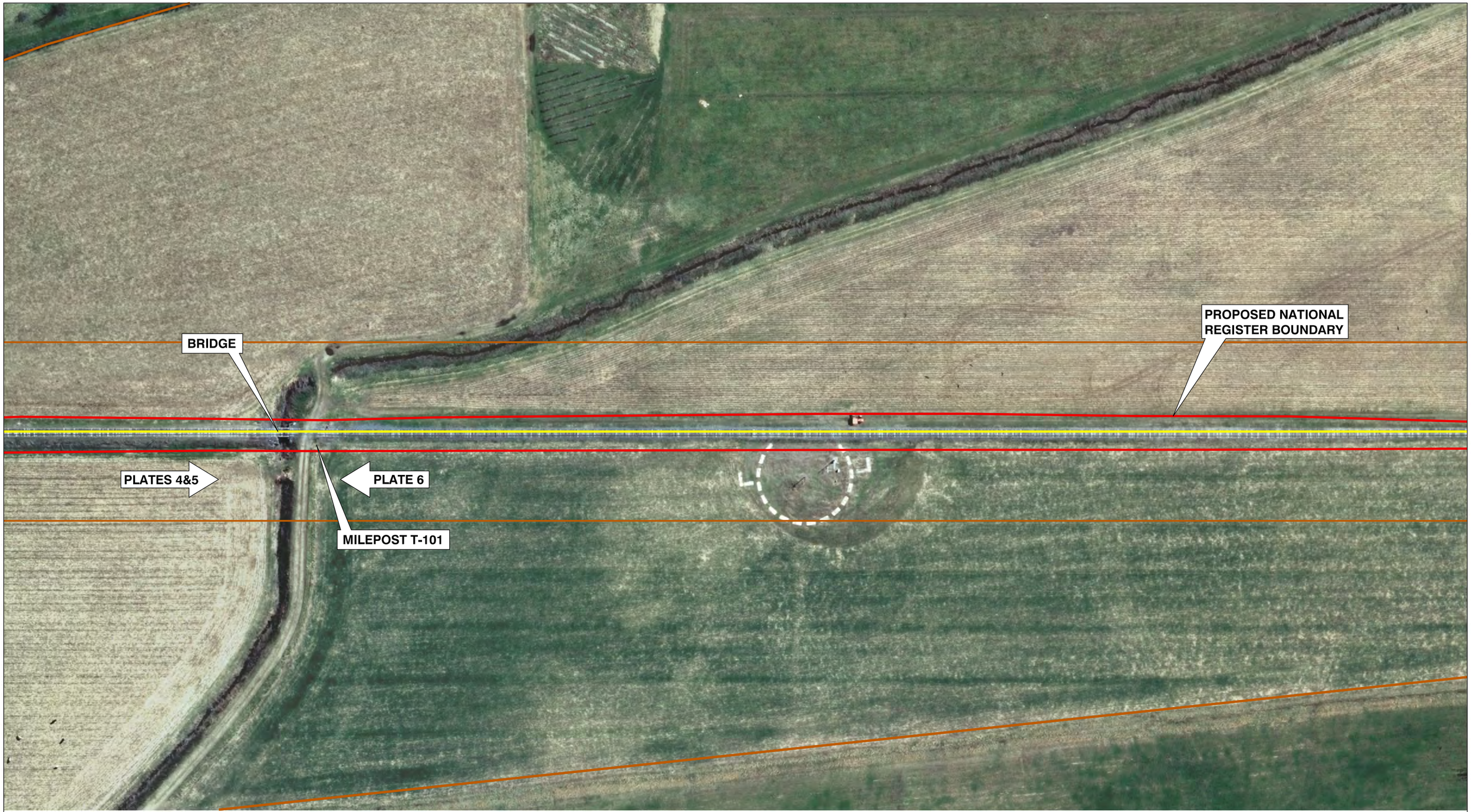

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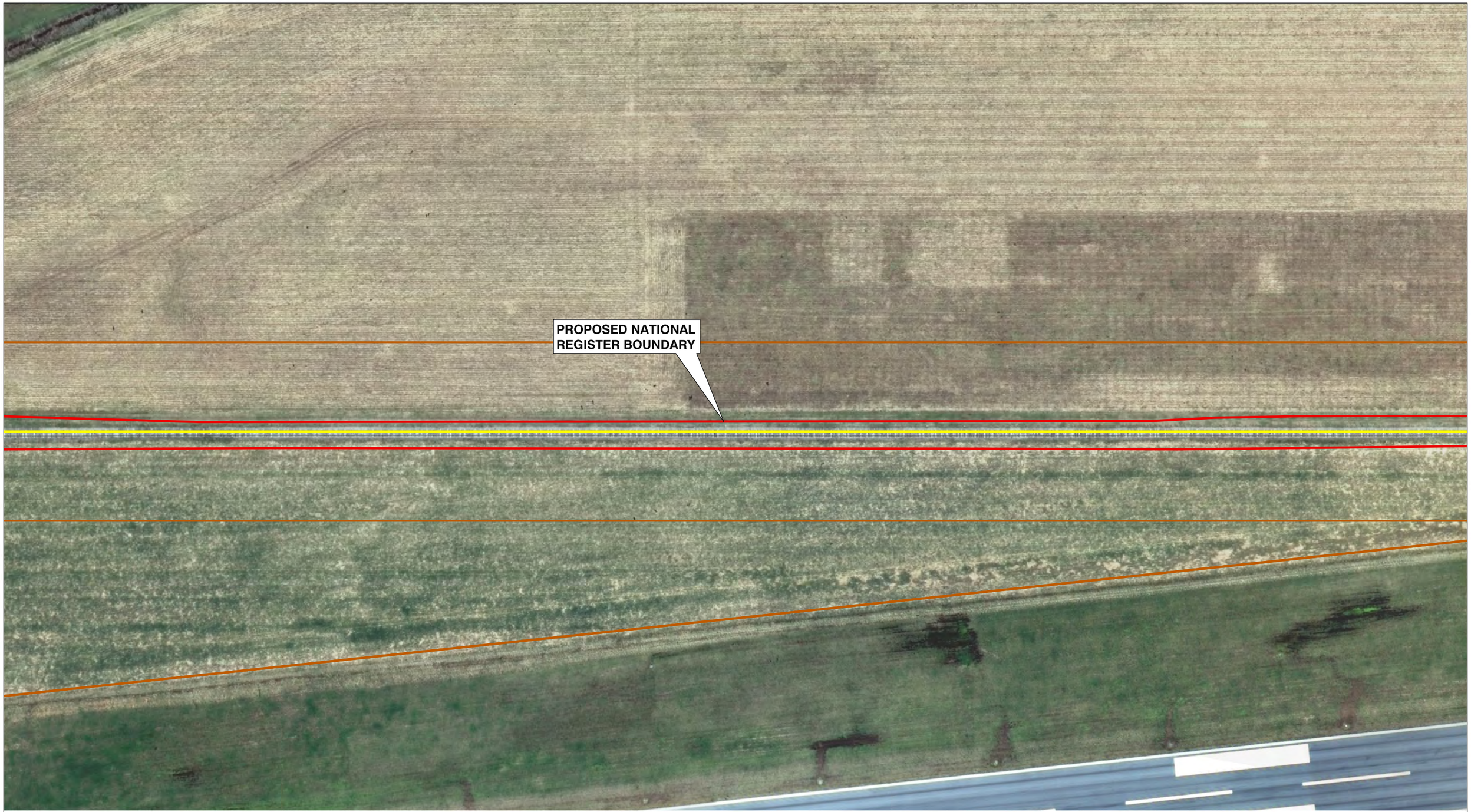

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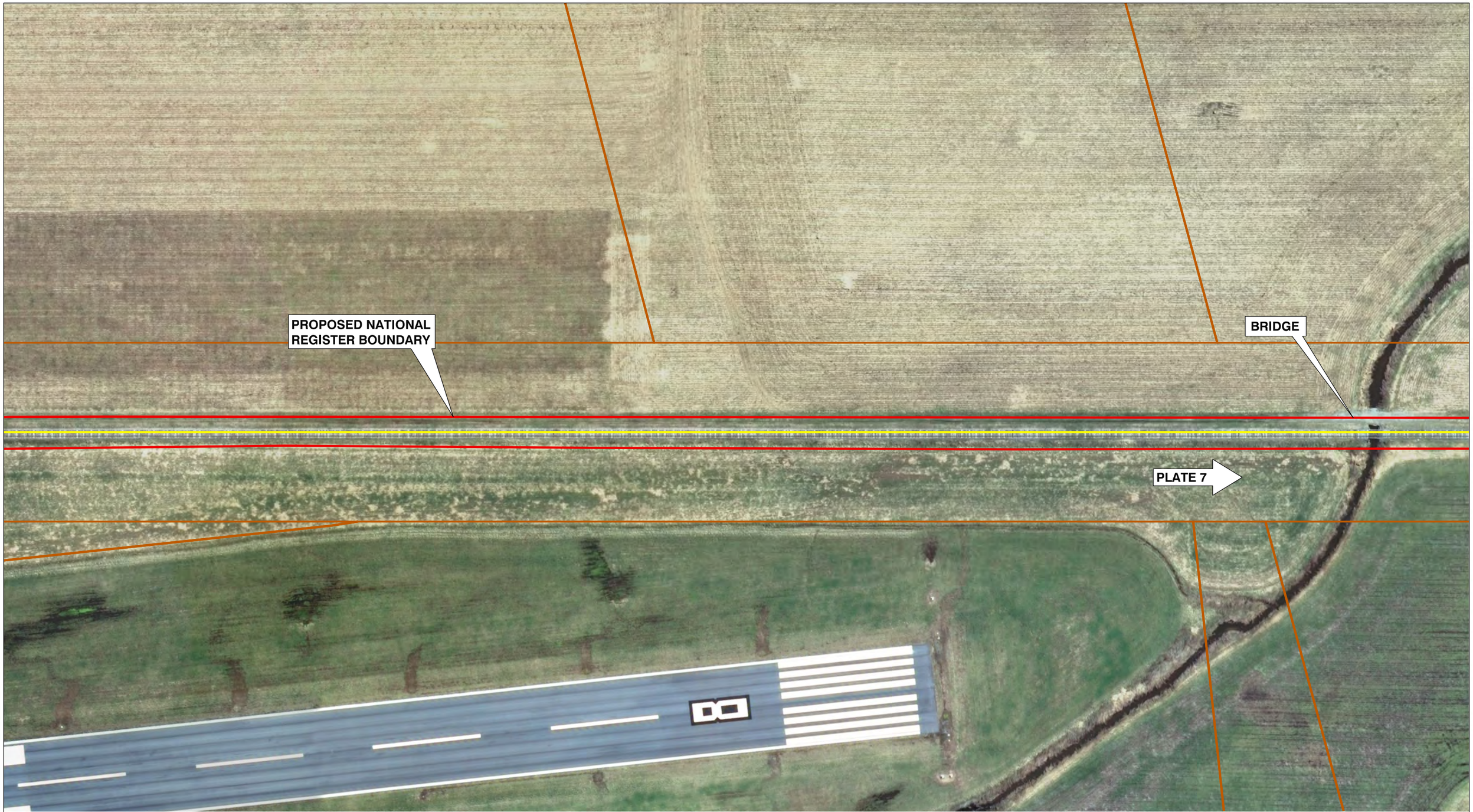

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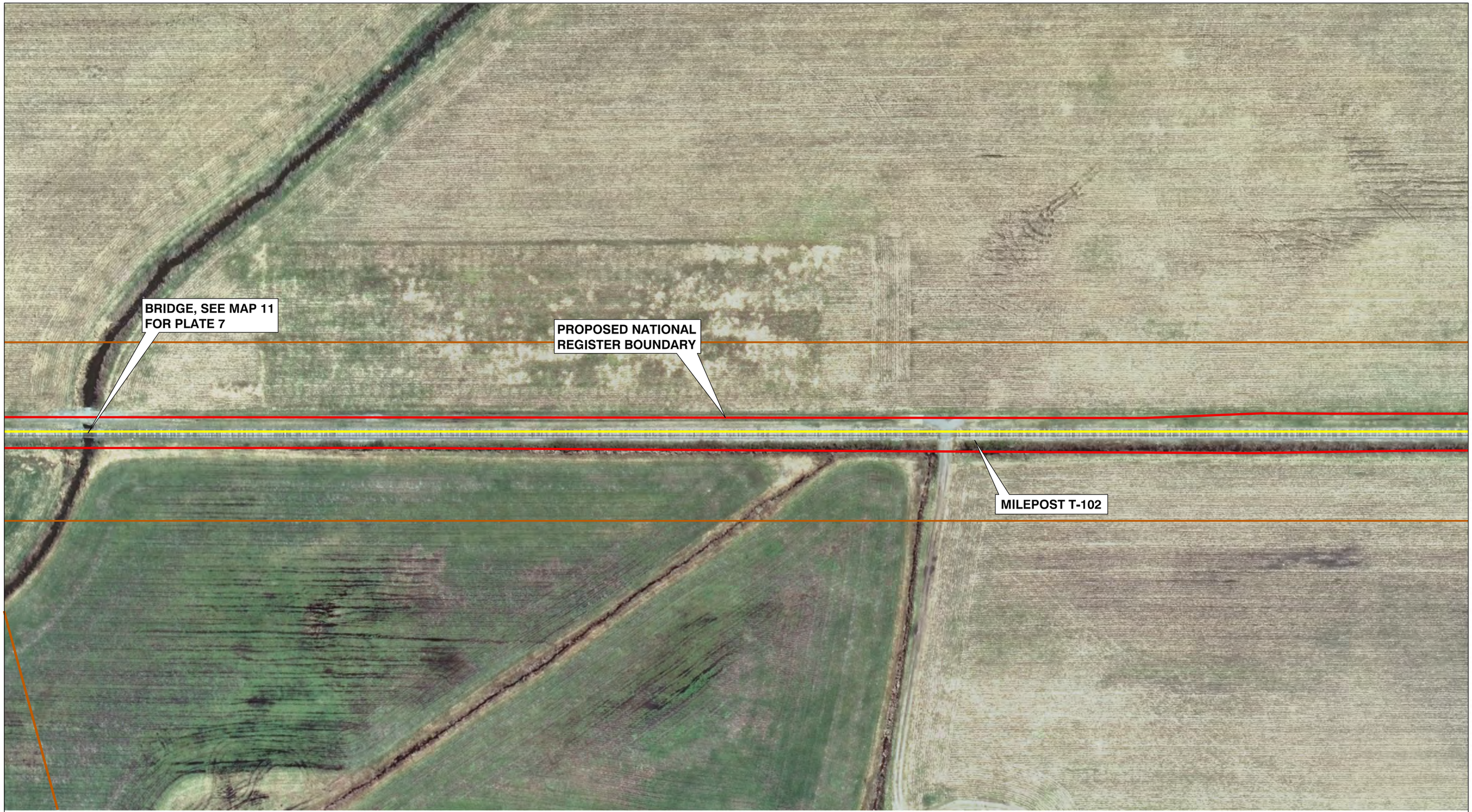

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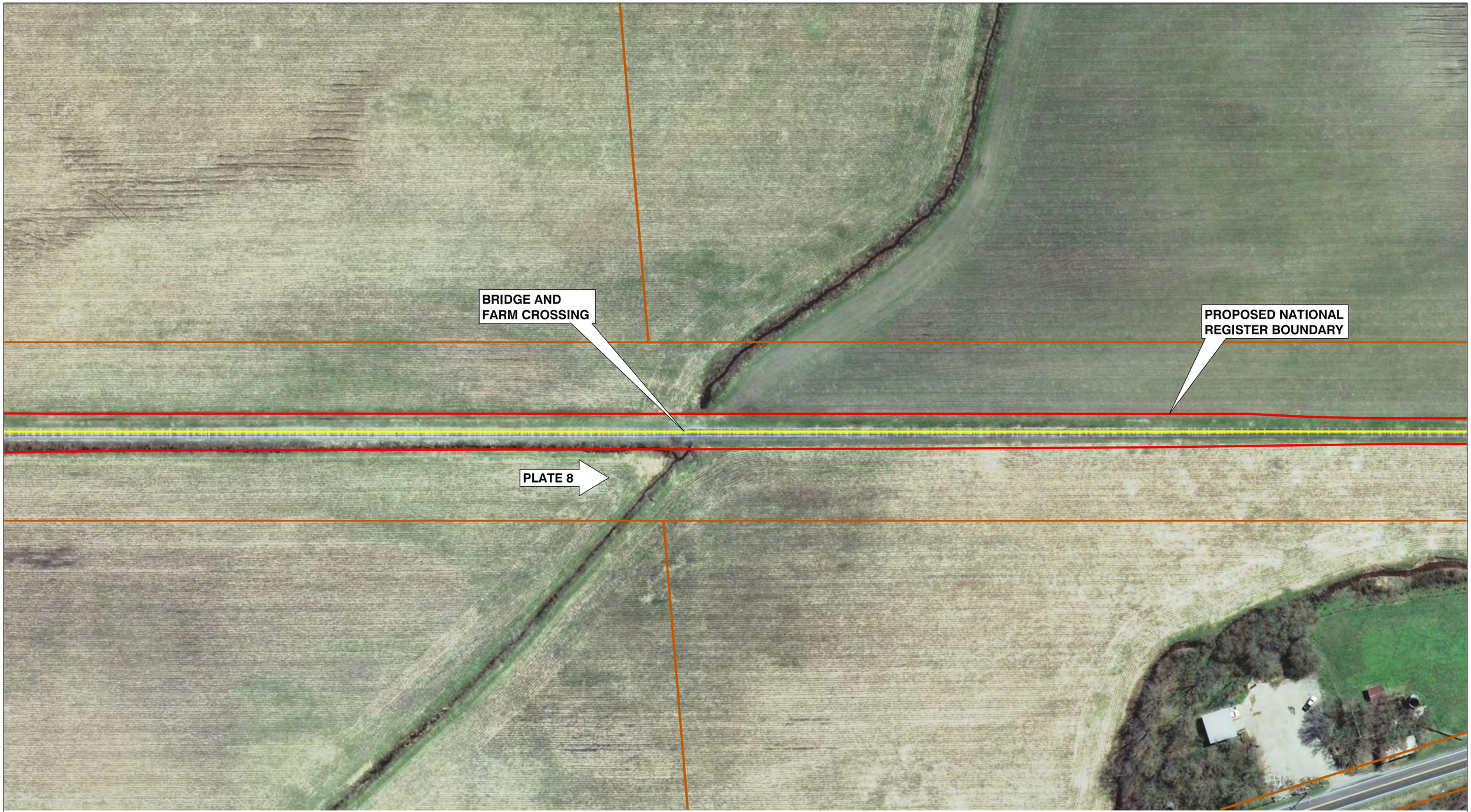

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BRIDGE

PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY

AIRPORT RD

COALVILLE RD

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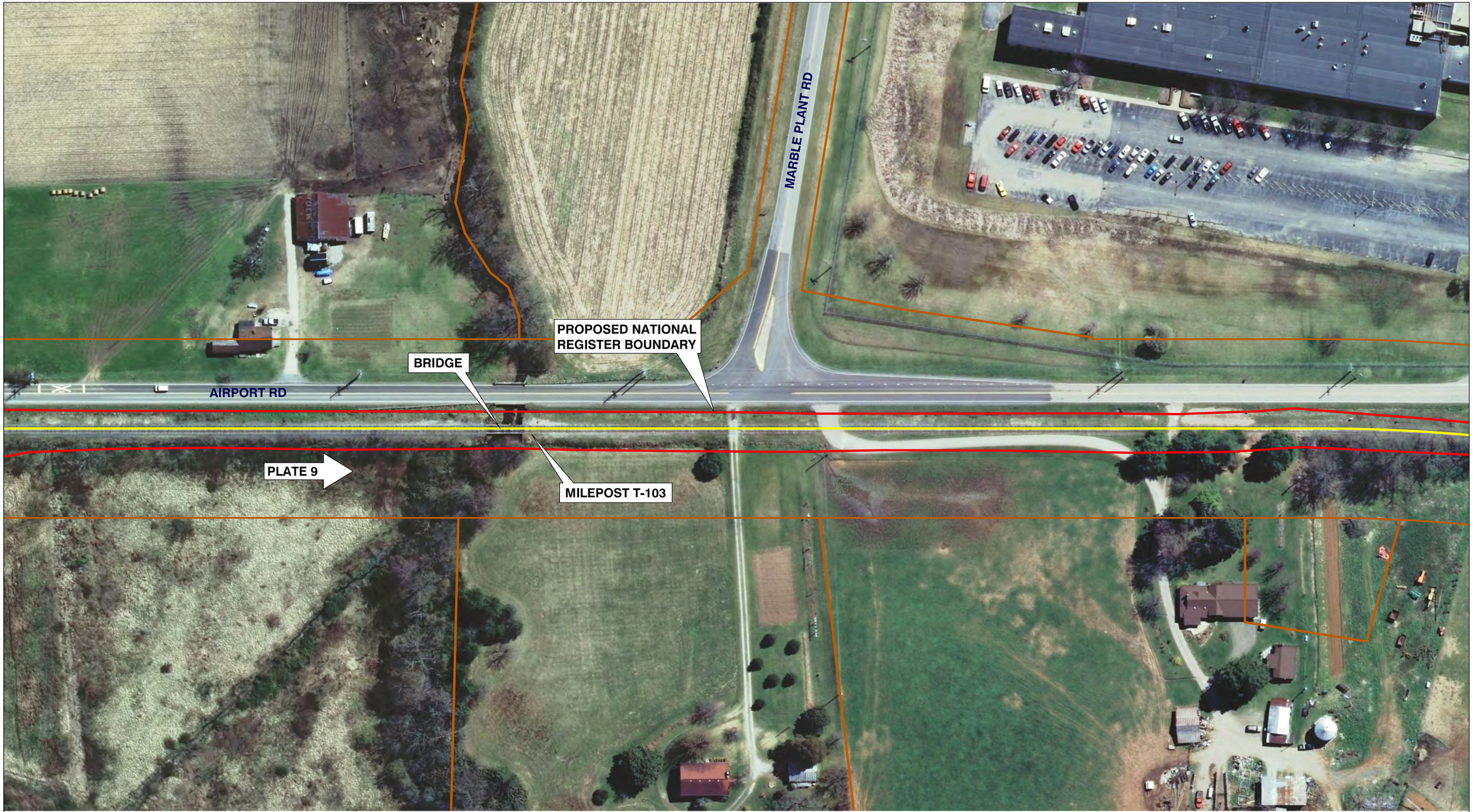

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AIRPORT RD

BRIDGE

PLATES 12&13

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BONA VISTA LN

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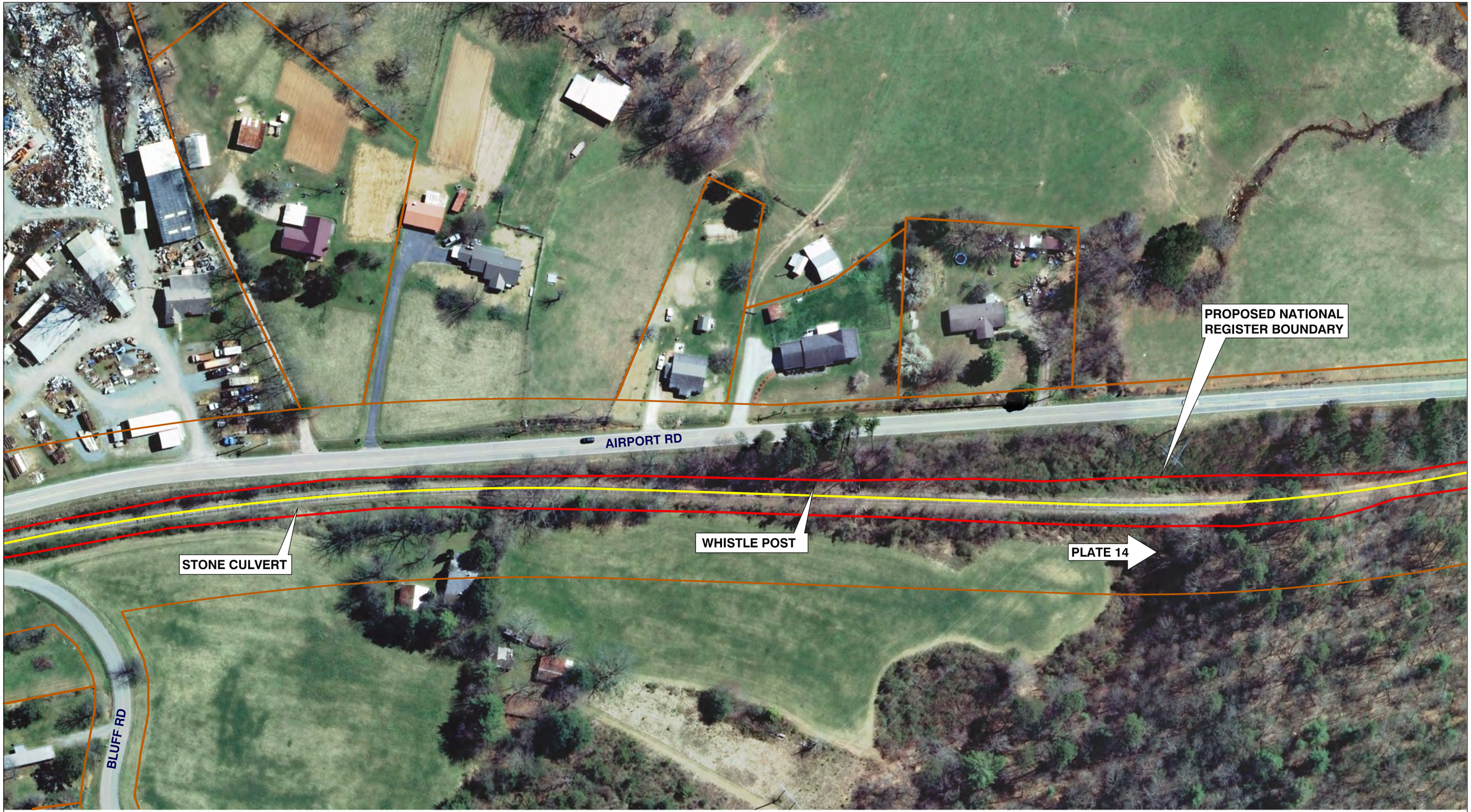

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VALLEY RIVER

AIRPORT RD

PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY

MILEPOST T-104

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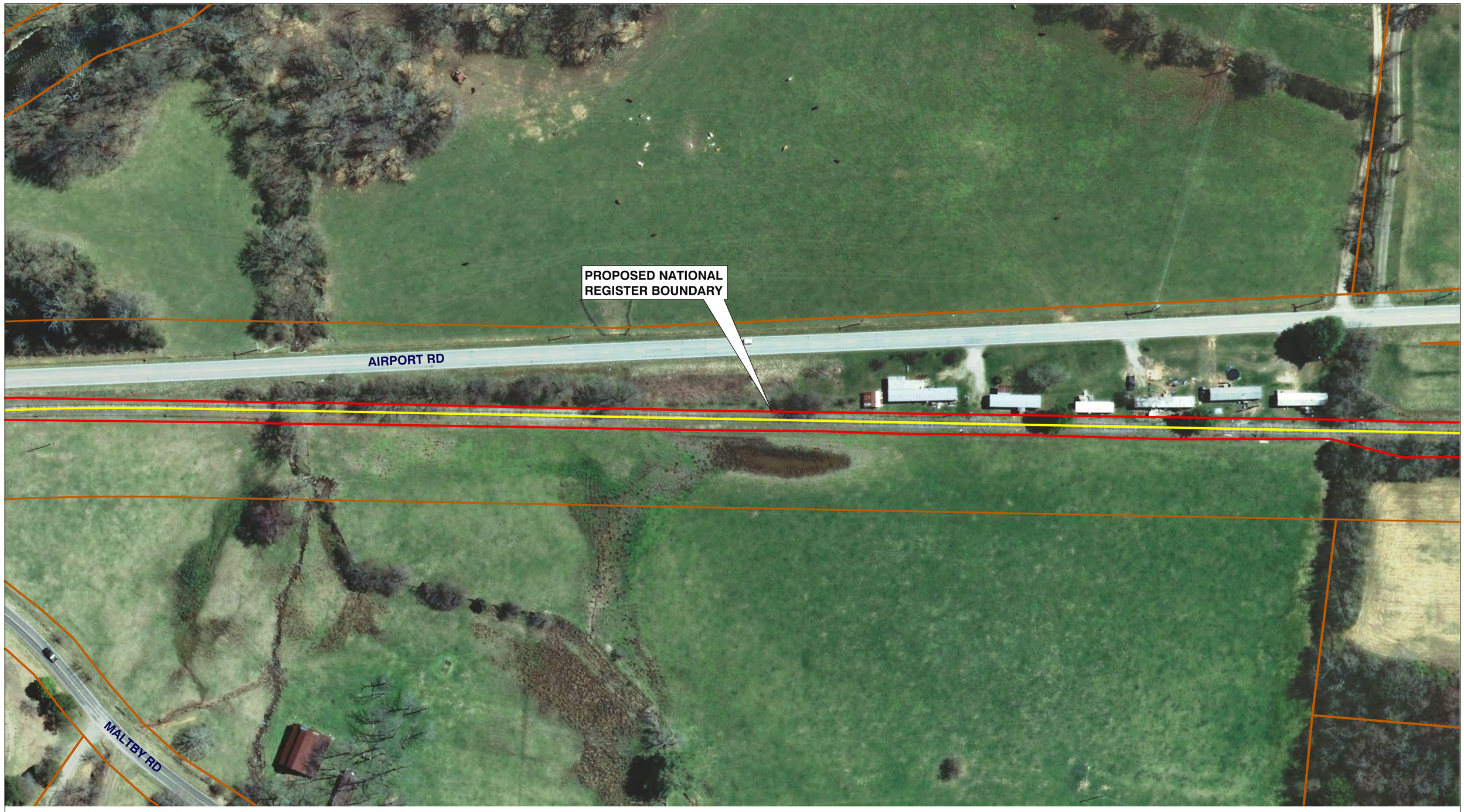

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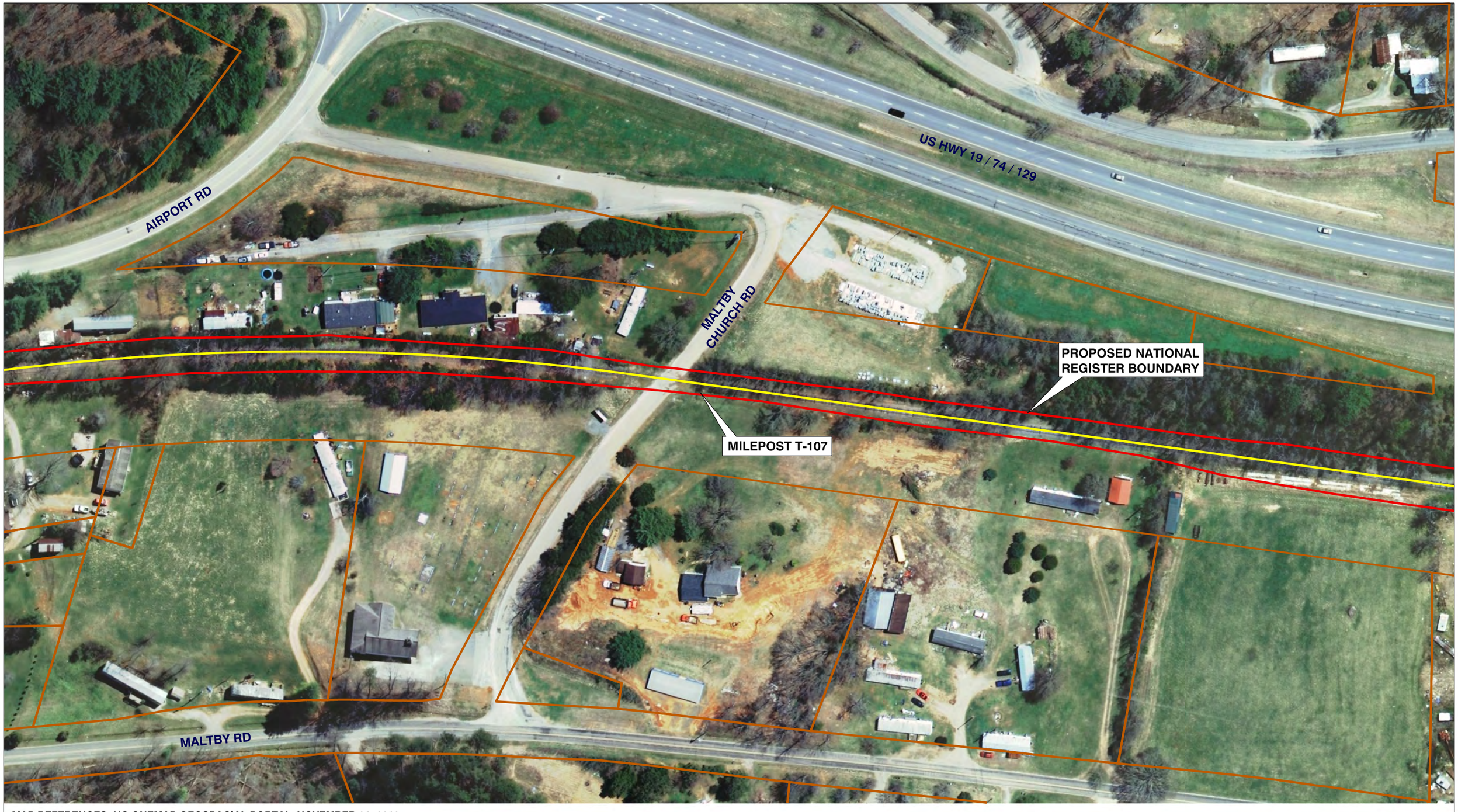

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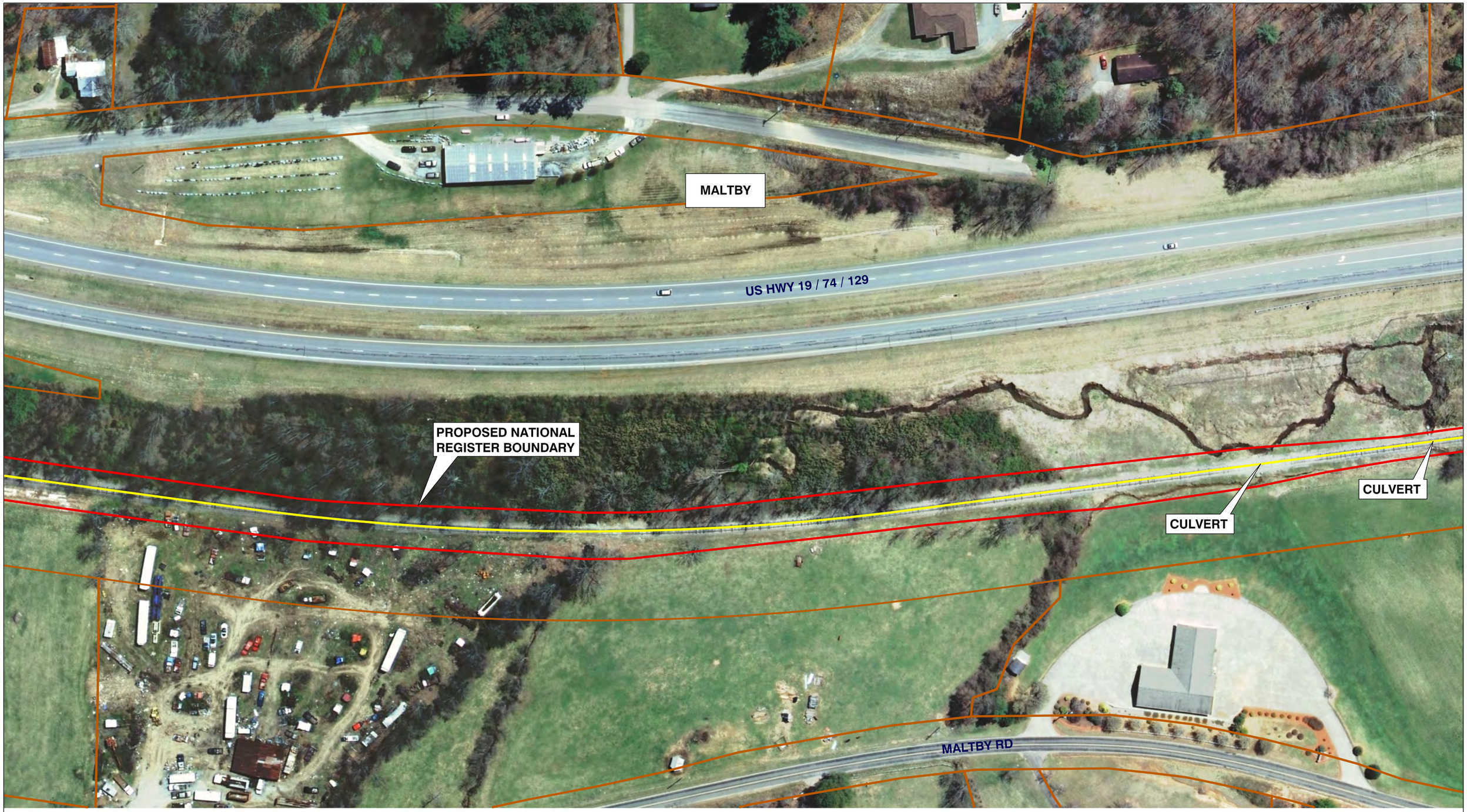

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STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA • DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION •

0 50' 100'

- APPROX. GIS PARCEL BOUNDARY
- EXISTING MAINLINE TRACK
- SIDING TRACK
- PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY

ANDREWS TO MURPHY

HISTORICAL RESOURCES ASSESSMENT
JANUARY 29, 2014

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CHEROKEE COUNTY GIS DATA DEPOT, JANUARY 10, 2014

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA · DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

0 50' 100'

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ANDREWS TO MURPHY

HISTORICAL RESOURCES ASSESSMENT
JANUARY 29, 2014

US HWY 19 / 74 / 129

PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY

TOMOTLA RD

MILEPOST T-108

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CHEROKEE COUNTY GIS DATA DEPOT, JANUARY 10, 2014

0 50' 100'

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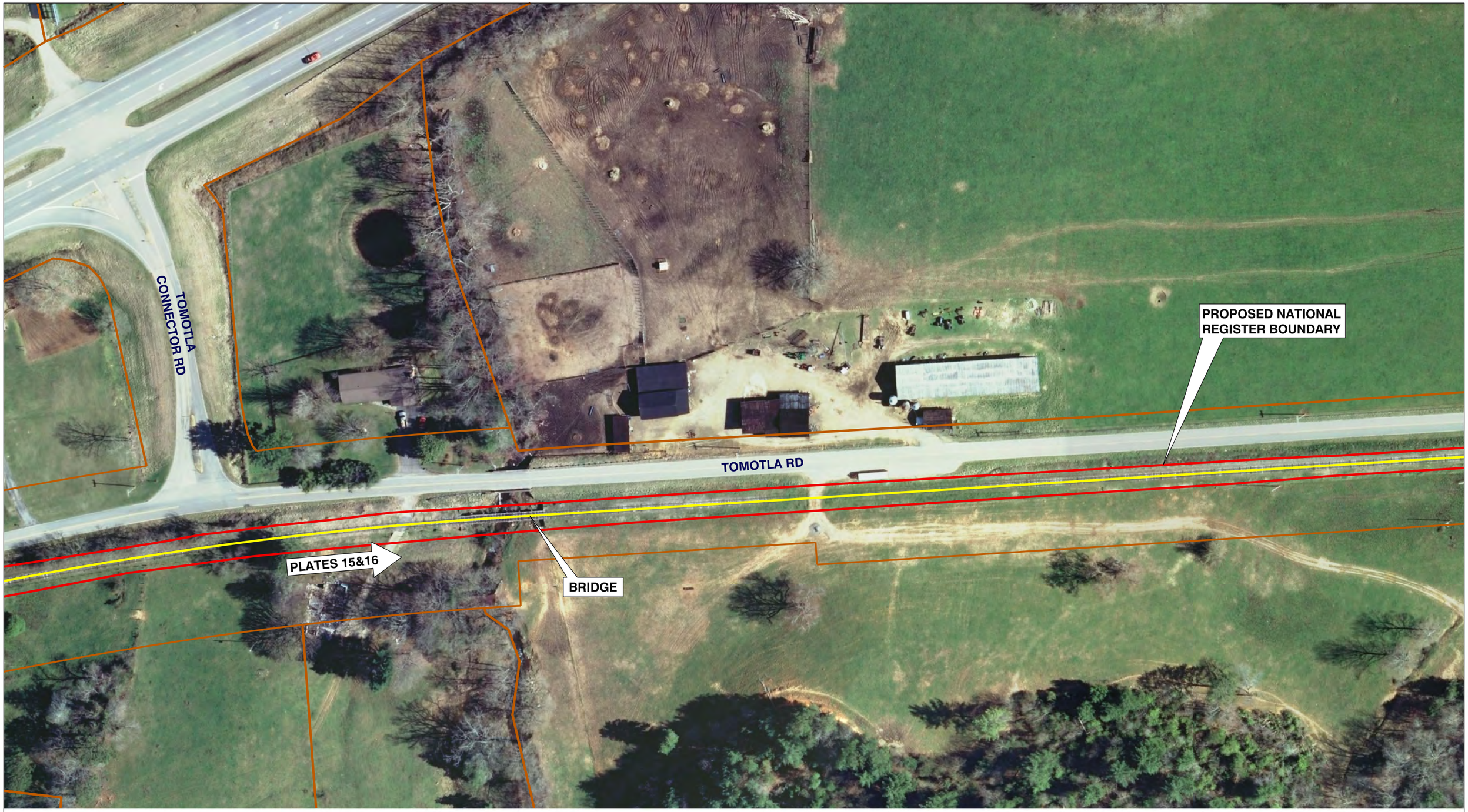
ANDREWS TO MURPHY

HISTORICAL RESOURCES ASSESSMENT
JANUARY 29, 2014



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CHEROKEE COUNTY GIS DATA DEPOT, JANUARY 10, 2014

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA • DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION •

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ANDREWS TO MURPHY

HISTORICAL RESOURCES ASSESSMENT
JANUARY 29, 2014

PROPOSED NATIONAL
REGISTER BOUNDARY

TOMOTLA RD

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CHEROKEE COUNTY GIS DATA DEPOT, JANUARY 10, 2014

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ANDREWS TO MURPHY

HISTORICAL RESOURCES ASSESSMENT
JANUARY 29, 2014

VALLEY RIVER

TOMOTLA RD

MILEPOST T-109

BRIDGE

PROPOSED NATIONAL
REGISTER BOUNDARY

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CHEROKEE COUNTY GIS DATA DEPOT, JANUARY 10, 2014

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA • DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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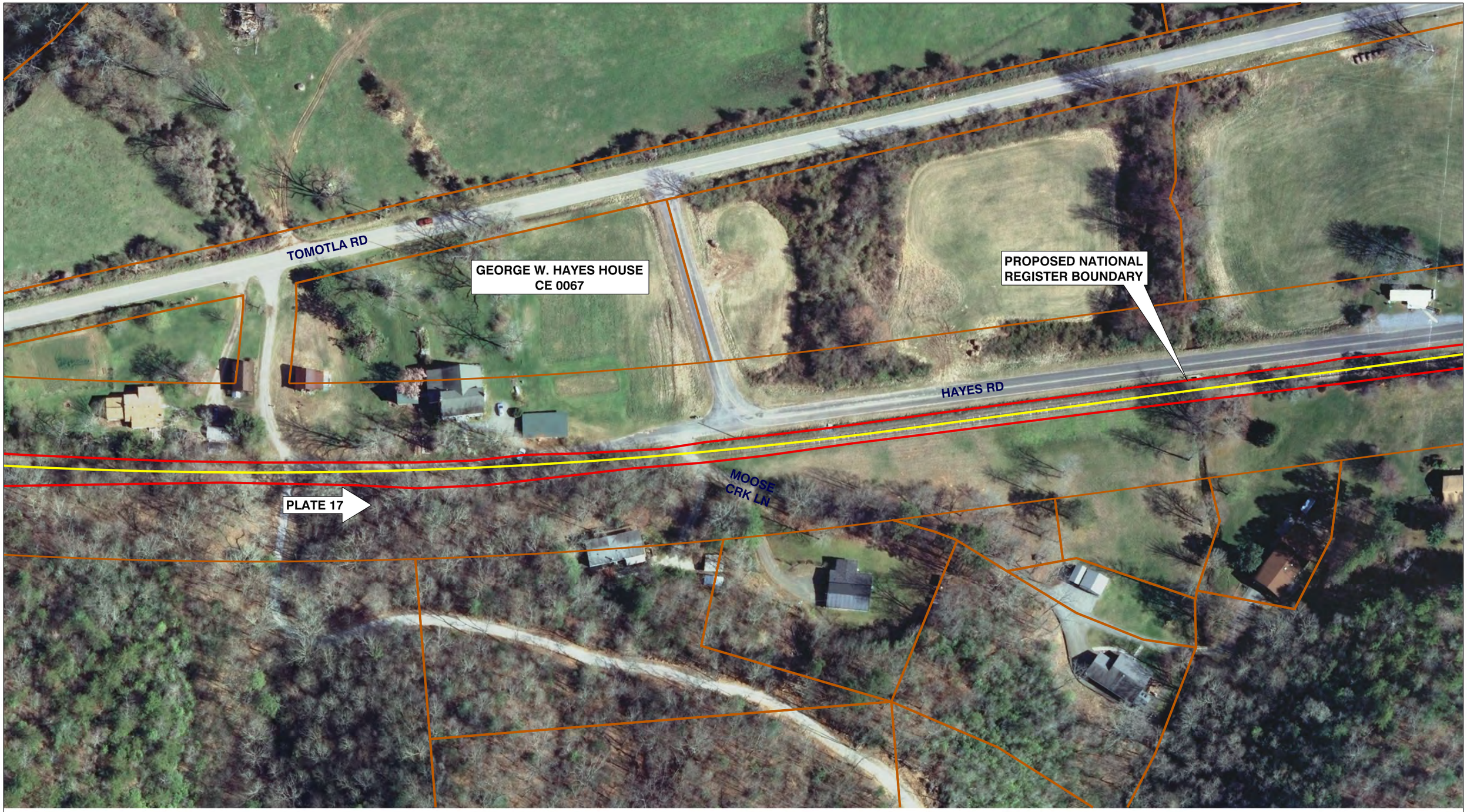
ANDREWS TO MURPHY

HISTORICAL RESOURCES ASSESSMENT
JANUARY 29, 2014



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ANDREWS TO MURPHY

HISTORICAL RESOURCES ASSESSMENT
JANUARY 29, 2014

TOMOTLA

TOMOTLA CMTY CTR RD

HAYES RD

HAYES RD

PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY

WHISTLE POST

OLD TOMOTLA RD

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STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA · DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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JANUARY 29, 2014

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ANDREWS TO MURPHY

HISTORICAL RESOURCES ASSESSMENT
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REGAL

REGAL RD

HARPER RD

PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY

MILEPOST T-111

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ANDREWS TO MURPHY

HISTORICAL RESOURCES ASSESSMENT
JANUARY 29, 2014

PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY

PLATE 20

REGAL RD

MAP REFERENCES: NC ONEMAP GEOSPACIAL PORTAL, NOVEMBER 21, 2013
CHEROKEE COUNTY GIS DATA DEPOT, JANUARY 10, 2014

0 50' 100'

APPROX. GIS PARCEL BOUNDARY
EXISTING MAINLINE TRACK
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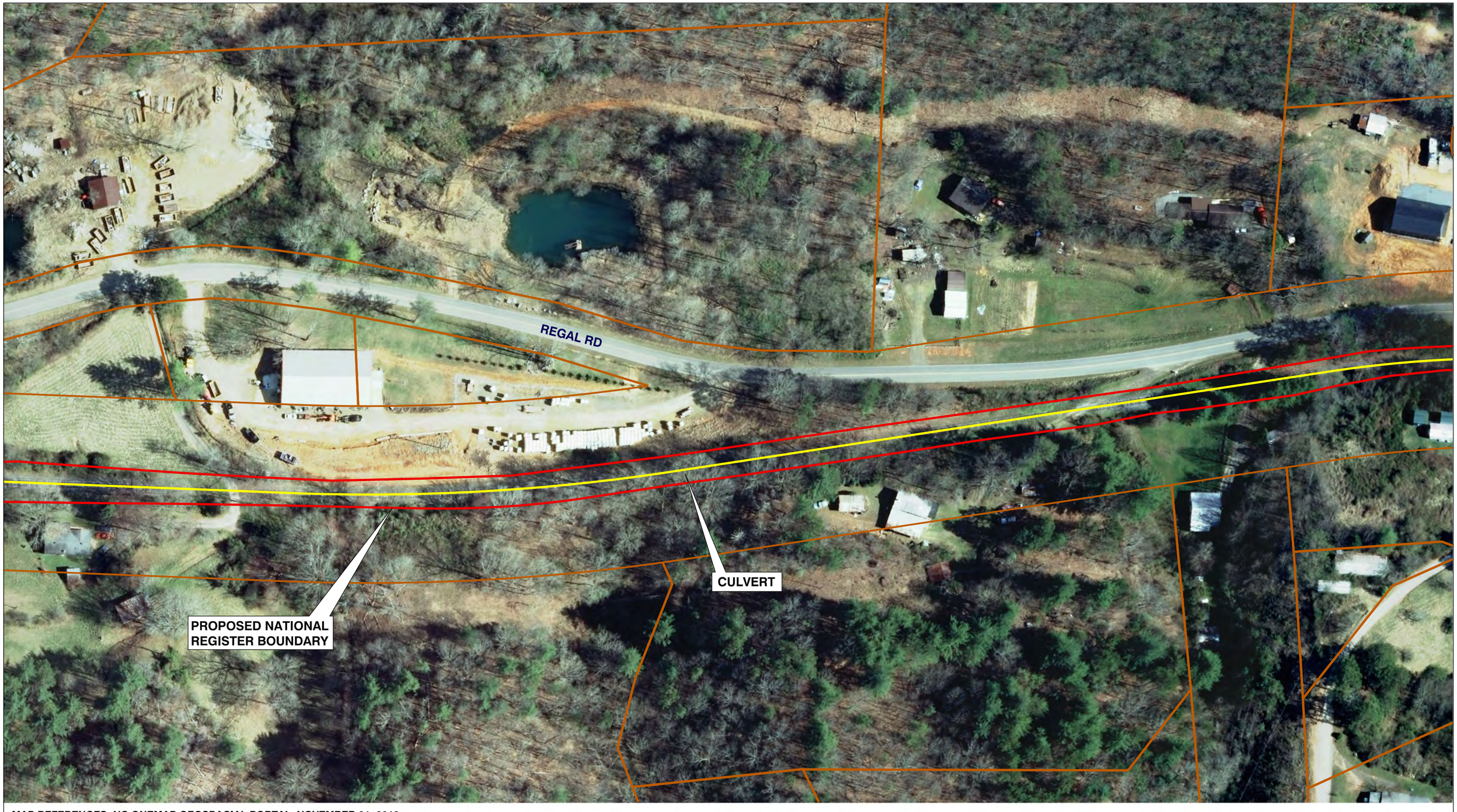
ANDREWS TO MURPHY

HISTORICAL RESOURCES ASSESSMENT
JANUARY 29, 2014



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STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA • DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION •

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ANDREWS TO MURPHY

HISTORICAL RESOURCES ASSESSMENT
JANUARY 29, 2014

PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY

PLEASANT VALLEY RD

PLEASANT VALLEY HTS

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CHEROKEE COUNTY GIS DATA DEPOT, JANUARY 10, 2014

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APPROX. GIS PARCEL BOUNDARY
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ANDREWS TO MURPHY

HISTORICAL RESOURCES ASSESSMENT
JANUARY 29, 2014

PLEASANT VALLEY RD

CARRIAGE LN

PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY

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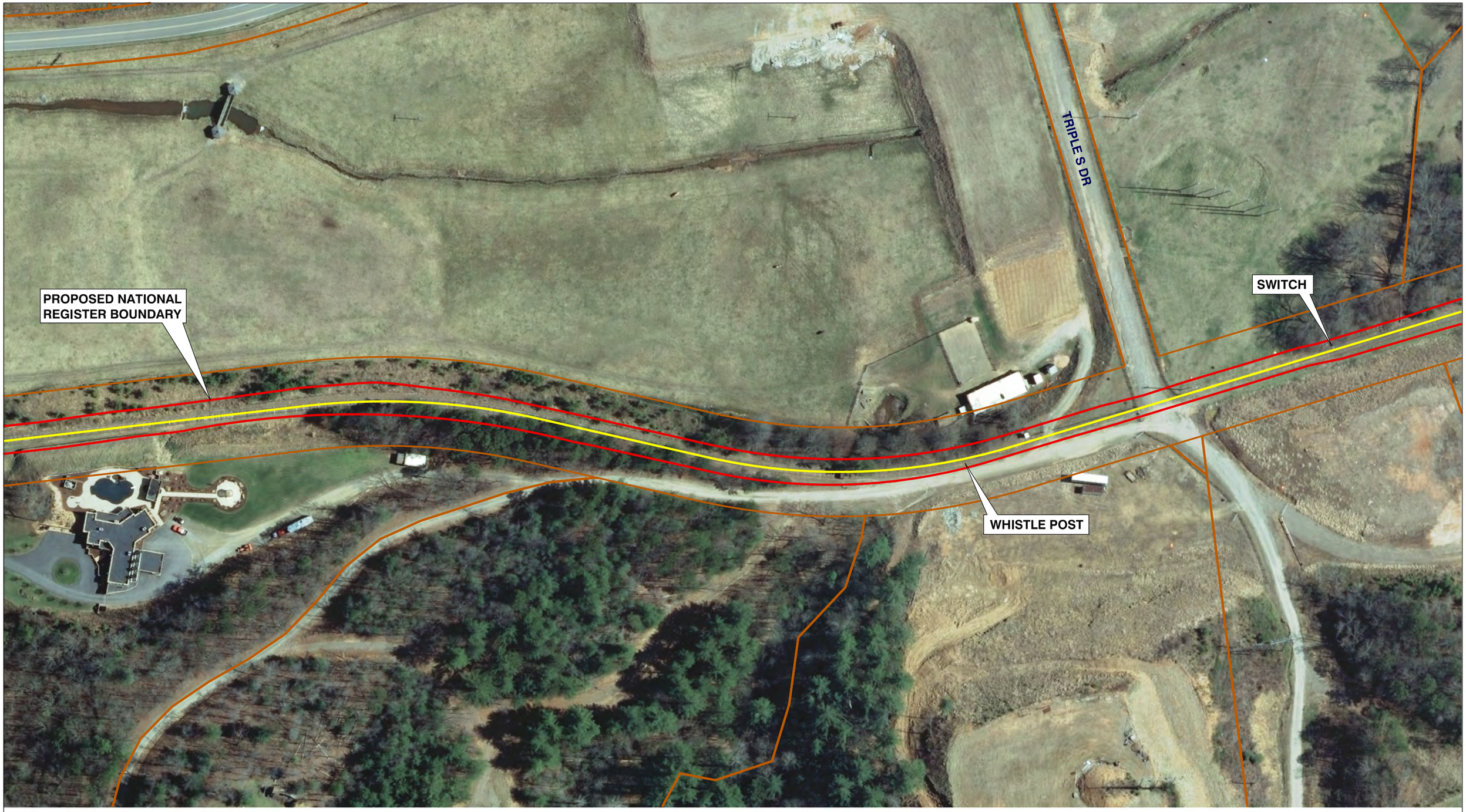
HISTORICAL RESOURCES ASSESSMENT
JANUARY 29, 2014



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HISTORICAL RESOURCES ASSESSMENT
JANUARY 29, 2014

REGAL ST

WYE ST

MORROW ST

PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY

RAMSEY ST

JOE BROWN HWY

RESERVOIR RD

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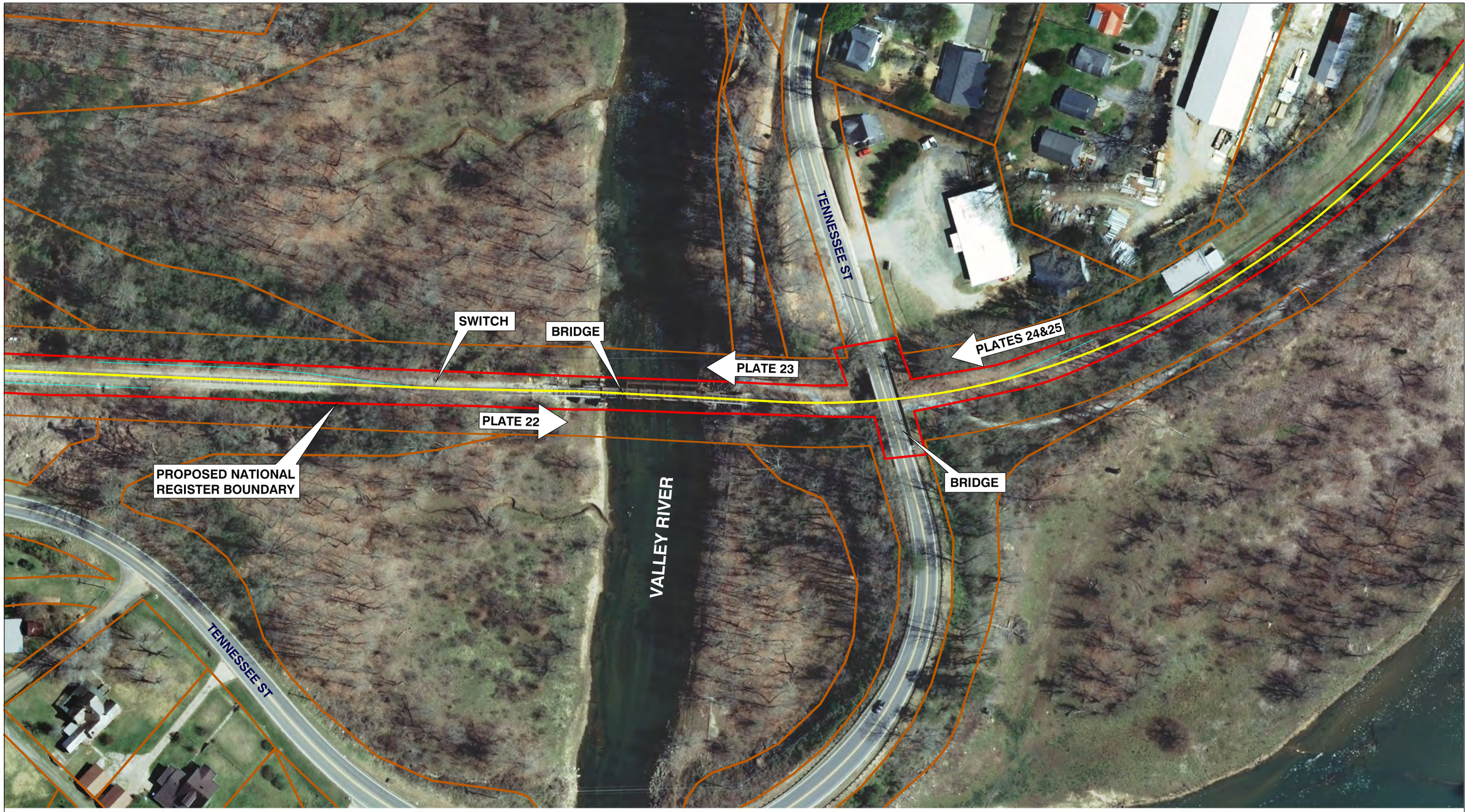

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