THIS DOCUMENT IS SUBMITTED:
ATTENTION: MR. ANDREW STROINY
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION
P.O. BOX 66560
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20035-2222

## COMPLAINT FORM (Answers Regarding)

## DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION COORDINATION AND REVIEW SECTION

la. NAME:

C/O OMEGA R. WILSON AND CHARLES P. GRAVES

WEST END REVITALIZATION ASSOCIATION - CDC \*

ADDRESS:

PO BOX 655 – 206 MOORE ST

MEBANE, NC 27302-0655

PHONE:

OMEGAR. WILSON

(919) 563-6099

CHARLES P. GRAVES

(919) 563-8857

#### 1b. PLEASE CARBON COPY WRITTEN COMUNICATIONS TO:

Attorney Daria Neal, Senior Counsel
Environmental Justice Project
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
1401 New York Ave. NW Suite 400
Washington, D.C. 20005

Phone: (202) 662-8600

FAX: 202-637-3562

Email: dneal@lawyerscommittee.org

2. PERSONS DISCRIMINATED AGAINST: The people suffering discrimination are African-American and low-income residents of the West End Community of Alamance County and Mebane, North Carolina. The population includes hundreds of people who are disproportionately impacted by civil rights and environmental justice violations.

\*BACKGROUND ON THE WEST END REVITALIZATION ASSOCIATION – CDC: The West End Revitalization Association (WERA) was organized after local residents saw a map in the <u>Times-News Newspaper</u>, Burlington, N.C., October 2, 1994. The map was entitled "Alamance County Urban Area Thoroughfare Plan - Adopted April 4, 1990 Amended July 18, 1994 (See Exhibit #1: Map Page 1 & 2). West End residents noticed that a Proposed NC 119-Bypass west of Mebane ran through the West End Community and over 100-year old St. Luke Christian Church. Mebane officials said they had nothing to do with the plan even though the map shows the City of Mebane's approval in 1990

and 1992, without informing or meeting with West End Community residents. Community meetings were started to inform residents of 119-Bypass and it's devastating impact. In these meetings, residents identified others areas where African-American residents continued to receive discriminatory treatment...housing, streets, water and sewer, lighting, and surface water drainage. Crime and drugs activity frightened the young and old. Abandoned building and lots covered with debris detracts from and devalues homes that are well maintained. Disappointed by the like of Mebane City Council support with some many on going issues, West End residents decided to name the community group and elect officers. WERA members ran into many roadblocks in efforts to maintain vigils at city council meeting while pushing councilmen to officially approve plans and funds to alleviate historic problems (See Exhibit #2: Newspaper Article: "West End Revitalization Association addressing concerns of community," Mebane Enterprise, 3-1-1995).

The West End Community fell farther behind as the Mebane City Council subsidized and celebrated its record-breaking growth of new high-income subdivisions and businesses. WERA regularly brought its concerns to Mebane's City Council meetings, the NCDOT, elected officials. In order to keep up the plan to seek resolutions, WERA incorporated and received 501(c)-3 tax exemption status in order to apply for grant funds needs to maintain a full-time office. On January 1, 1997, WERA received a seed grant from the North Carolina Rural and Economic Development Center and became the first Community Development Corporation in Alamance County, North Carolina. (See Exhibit #2: Newspaper Article: "Local group becomes Alamance's first CDC," Burlington Times-News, 4-2-1997; and North Carolina Association of CDC's Documents).

- 3. AGENCY AND DEPARTMENT OR PROGRAM THAT ARE DISCRIMINATING: (For Reference) Exhibit #11: "Department of Transportation Order to Address Environmental Justice In Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations" (OST Docket No. 50125); and Exhibit #12: Community Impact Assessment: A Quick Reference for Transportation (Federal Highway Administration Office of Environment and Planning (No. FHWA-PD-96-036 HEP-30/8-96(10M)P)
  - a) North Carolina Department of Transportation PO Box 25201 Raleigh, NC 27611-5201 (919) 733-7844
  - Alamance County Urban Area Transportation Improvement Program and Alamance County Urban Area Transportation Advisory Committee PO Box 1358
     Burlington, NC 27216
     (336) 222-5110
  - c) City of Mebane 106 Washington Street

Mebane, NC 27302 (919) 563-5901

4A. NON-EMPLOYMENT: DISCRIMINATION IN THE DELIVERY OF SERVICES OR OTHER ACTIONS BASED UPON:

a) Race/Color:

African-American

b) Low-income:

African-American

c) Religion:

Religious and Public Institutions: African-American

- 5. THE MOST CONVENIENT TIME AND PLACE TO CONTACT SOMEONE REGARDING THE COMPLAINT: (919) 563-6099 From 10:00AM to 5:00PM
- 6. ALTERNATE CONTACT: (919) 563-8857 From 10:00AM to 5:00PM
- 7. ATTORNEY REPRESENTING FILERS OF THE COMPLAINT:
  Attorney Daria Neal, Senior Counsel Email: dneal@lawyerscommittee.org
  Environmental Justice Project
  Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
  1401 New York Ave. NW Suite 400
  Washington, D.C. 20005
  Phone: (202) 662-8600 FAX: 202-637-3562
- 8. & 10. EARLIEST DATE OF DISCRIMINATION...MOST RECENT DATE:
  - a) Regarding the 119-Bypass and Overpass (TIP #U3109)(See Exhibit #3: NCDOT's Environmental Input Requested, 11-2-1998). Timetable (May 1990 to Present) On May 7, 1990, the City of Mebane approved plans to construct a four-lane highway through the West End Community, without a public meeting with residents. The North Carolina Board of Transportation adopted this plan on July 6, 1990, without a public meeting with residents. The construction would remove over 30 houses, two churches and a masonic lodge owned by African-Americans. As of January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1999, the City of Mebane, the Alamance County Urban Area Transportation Improvement Program, nor the North Carolina Department of Transportation have not conducted public meetings, provided an environmental impact study, discussed fair financial compensation, or relocation assistance for elders and frail residents.

NOTE: Exhibit #3, dated November 2, 1998, requested input for "SOCIOECONOMIC (Environmental Justice Analysis)." The new project planning engineer, James F. Bridges, Jr., called Omega R. Wilson on October 30, 1998, and briefly discussed obtaining more information from West End residents. This was the first time Environmental Justice had been mentioned by the NCDOT, Alamance County or Mebane. What is more shocking, William Brock of the NCDOT helps write the Community Impact Assessment (September 1996) reference guide. This national guide is quoted on page 6 as

saying, "Ensure that those historically under served by the transportation system, including minority and low-income, are included in our outreach." This guide was written to support transportation officials' compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice (1994). It is clear that NCDOT and Alamance County transportation officials as well as the City of Mebane did not attempt outreach with West End or White Level residents, but practiced deception and civil rights violations in attempts to force the 119-Bypass through their communities without justice compensation.

b) Regarding The Lack of Basic Amenities (Water, Sewer, Paved Streets): Timetable (Historical Pattern to Present) The West End Community is over 135 years old and 90% African-American. The legacy of segregation and discrimination remain. The City of Mebane would not annex West End, only five blocks from downtown, and avoided providing basic amenities. In 1978-79, about one-third of West End received a federal block grant through Alamance County. Funds were used to pave streets for the first time, install sewer lines for the first time, and repair several houses. In 1988, the City of Mebane annexed the area (from Madison Street to North Street) that had been improved with federal funds, but provided little maintenance. The planned 119-Bypass would eliminate one-third of the West End Community (106 year old St Luke Christian Church and thirty plus houses on James Walker, St Luke and Allen Baynes Roads) just outside Mebane's City limits. West End residents in the remaining one-third of the community, just, outside the city limits from Moore Street to Curry Street, still use septic tanks. All three sections have unpaved streets.

West End residents who are one-quarter mile from Mebane's federally funded (USDA's Farmers Home Administration funded at \$2,316,000) sewer treatment plant can not use the service because they do not have sewer lines. West End residents are not aware of any efforts by Mebane to comply with civil rights laws or Environmental Justice guidelines related to these federal funds (See Exhibit #4: Mebane's 1994 Financial Statements, Page 19). Mebane has subsidized the installation of new water and sewer lines to new subdivisions and businesses several miles from the sewer treatment plant then annexed them into the city limits. African-American communities (West End, White Level, and Buckhorn Road) adjacent to new developments have been informed that city water and sewer are not available to them (See Exhibit #5: Map of Mebane's Satellite Annexation; and "Mebane Ups Annex Numbers," Burlington Times-News, 12-27-1998). Mebane annexed the 600 acres Mill Creek subdivision west of 119-Highway North. African-American homeowners in the White Level Community, literally across the street from the high income Mill Creeks subdivision, were twice informed by the Mebane City Council that the city would not annex White Level or provide sewer services unless they obtain a block grant.

- c) Regarding Redlining African-American Communities From The Right To Vote: Timetable (Historic Pattern to Present) The City of Mebane's African-American voting percentage continues to decrease over the last ten years, while the city's population has grown. Mebane's annexation pattern includes primarily new white subdivisions, while excluding traditional African-American Communities (See Exhibit #6: NCDOT Engineering Study, by William Brock, July 15, 1996, Page 2). Even though these African-American residents are in Mebane's extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ), they are not in the city limits and can not vote on matters involving the growth and maintenance of their water, sewer, streets, or plans for highways through their property. This planned pattern of redlining African-American Communities out of the city limits and out of their rights has increased their level of victimization as Mebane enjoys explosive expansion. (See Exhibit #5: Map With Planned 119-Bypass through two African-American Communities. West End, west of Mebane, and White Level, north of Mebane). African-Americans property owners face disenfranchisement as Mebane expands at their expense.
- d) Regarding Housing and Economic Discrimination: Timetable (Historic Pattern to Present) It is very difficult for African-American to sell their property for a fair price without paved streets, city sewer and up-to-standard water services. The value of property has increased in record numbers in Mebane for the last decade, but the lack of infrastructure holds down the value in African-American communities. There are many lots in West End that can not be developed, because new Mebane ordinances determine use of septic systems in the ETJ where there are no sewer lines. Other lots, in and out of the city limits, are land-locked by dead-end streets. Many dead-end streets had right-of-ways approved decades ago, but were not opened. Mebane maps erroneously show that these streets are open.

These lots become virtually worthless for residential or business growth without infrastructure and in-city services, such as refuge and garbage pickup. Some property owners, who have come back to the family neighbor to retire, have been gravely disappointed with the economic stranglehold in which they find their property...in a booming market. Mebane's average new house cost is nearly \$150,000, while some subdivisions start at \$250,000. Very few new houses are built for first time homebuyers that are affordable for regular working families. Mebane has no housing program and offers no incentives to builders of affordable homes in areas that need assistance like West End.

e) Regarding Physical Barriers of Discrimination: Timetable (Historic Pattern to Present) Some of these physical barriers date back to post-slavery and reconstruction. The 119-Bypass would construct other physical barriers to a community that had been separated for 135 years.

- (1) To the east of the West End Community, separating the traditional white community from the African-Americans, is a twenty-foot drainage ditch and an eight acre man-make landfill littered with rotten wood, rusty metal and stagnant water. This EPA concern has been an eyesore and health hazard for decades; however, Mebane openly claims no responsibility for its cleanup. Your introduction to the West End Community is this large filthy hole in the ground and unpaved Madison Street, on one side of Holt Street, and an abandoned old garage and house, on the other side of Holt Street. Another part-time garage is perched at the edge of the landfill. These two fifty year old garages and has certainly allowed gas, burnt oils, transmission fluids, and asbestos brake dust to escape from automobiles and pollute the soil, landfill and to two drainage ditches.
- (2) To the south are dead end streets, without culdesacs, and the City of Mebane's chain-link fence. The fence has one opening, secured by a locked gate at the end of Tate Street. Local residents are not allowed to pass through gates for a one-quarter mile trip to the new federally funded multi-million dollars Mebane Arts & Community Center and Ball Fields. The closest route is over two miles (See Exhibit #7 "Tate Road Residents Ask for Road to Be Cut Through, Paved," Mebane Enterprise, 7-19-1995; and "Mebane Resident Pushes Recognition of West End," Burlington Times-News, 7-2-1995).

Some people said the fence and locked gate on Tate Street made them think of South Africa and apartheid. South African Bishop Desmond Tutu's quote speaks to the struggle by people of color in West End..."You cannot have wholeness, you cannot have spiritual well-being or physical well-being in a situation of injustice," Many Strong and Beautiful Voices by Quinn Eli, (Running Press, 1997).

Just beyond the fence and gate on Tate Street are Mebane's sewer treatment plant and new city garage. In order to reach the new Mebane Arts and Community Center, you cross a stream over an old wooden bridge. The city has repeated refused to replace the ninety-year old bridge with a modern structure. The Mebane's city manager and council claim that replacing the bridge and access road would cost too much. However, Mebane has spent over \$8-million on the arts center, four athletic fields, paved parking lots, sewer treatment plant and a new garage. City workers risk their safety when crossing the outdated bridge in heavy trucks in order to reach the new city garage. Large 18-wheel tanker trucks risk accidents crossing the plankpatched bridge empty and return across it filled with sludge removed from the sewer treatment facility. The real explanation is that removal of the old plank covered bridge would remove another landmark of segregation. This bridge is a road-block to year 2000 and a road-block to Tate Street becoming a direct access to Mebane's Arts and Community Center from the West End Community (See Exhibit #7: "Why can't the bridge be fixed," Mebane

Enterprise, 8-6-1997; and "West End Shut In," Burlington Times-News, 8/1997).

- (3) To the north are railroad tracks.
- (4) And to the west are the proponed 119-Bypass and overpass. The overpass is estimated to be 45-feet high, nearly one mile long from up-grade to downgrade, and nearly 2000-feet wide from on-ramp to off- ramp. The four-lane highway would literally destroy one-third of West End, split off some residents and box in the remainder of the historically African-American community. Noise pollution, highway debris, traffic congestion, and devalued residential property will sky-rocket in West End.

# 12. PERSONS WHO MAY PROVIDE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO SUPPORT OR CLARIFY COMPLAINT:



### 13. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

a) Presentation of information involving the 119-Bypass (U-3109) was designed to discourage public comments and input. The NCDOT and the City of Mebane scheduled the first map showing during the Christmas vacation on the evening of December 23, 1994. State and local officials expressed great surprise at the number of people who came out. It took over one year to get the City of Mebane and NCDOT engineers to schedule a meeting to discuss the direct impact of the 119-Bypass and overpass to the West End Community. NCDOT made it clear that the Mebane City Council was ask to be present in to hear, for the first time,

input from West End residents. The meeting was finally held on March 21; 1996, in the Mebane City Council Chambers with an overflow crowd of 175 people. NCDOT officials and local residents were shocked and outraged when all of Mebane's City Council members boycotted the meeting (See Exhibit #8: "March 21, 1996, TIP Project U-3109," NCDOT; "Residents Voice Opposition to Bypass," Burlington Times-News, 3-23-1996 and "Citizens Hold Meeting with DOT to Discuss 119-Bypass," Mebane Enterprise (3-27-1996)). NCDOT officials later verbally informed West End residents that their verbal and written comments, on NCDOT forms, were no good and the meeting was not official.

The Alamance County Urban Area Transportation Improvement Program held the last map showing on November 17, 1998. There are seven routes that would cause great damage to the West End Community and resulting in the relocation of up-to 70 houses and three churches. One plan (7-ADH) showed the 119-Bypass running over Moore Street at the location of West End Revitalization Association's office in the Omega Wilson Insurance building (See Exhibit #3, chart on last two pages).

b) On November 10, 1998, NCDOT Community Planner Ray Manieri told local residents that he would not include in his written report that West End residents do not want the 119-Bypass in their community. He said that the only choice was one of two routes already decided upon by the NCDOT (See Exhibit #9: NCDOT's Community Impact Assessment Report, by Ray Manieri, 11-17-1998). Manieri, in the section entitled "Southern Project Segment" on page 4, identified a 600-700 acre "dairy farm" that is no long a dairy farm, under option for major commercial development. This open land is just west of the West End Community. No NCDOT, Alamance County or Mebane representative has explained why the 600-700 acres of open land is not the site for the proposed 119-Bypass. Manieri's assessment did not mention that a long-time Mebane City planning board member owns the land.

### c) On page 9, Manieri states:

"The use of Alternative C places a significant share of the project's community impacts on areas with high concentrations of minorities and low-income people. These impacts fall heavily on the minority West End community. Using Alternative C, the project might require 31 residential relocations, of which 87% are located in areas of high minority or low-income concentrations. Of this number, 84% might be within the West End minority community. This alternative would also have an impact on neighborhood stability and cohesion in the West End community and a lesser extent on the White Level Rd. area."

"The use of Alternative B would lessen the project's impacts on areas of high minority and low-income concentration. This alternative might require 10 residential relocations. Of this number, none may be located in West End, but 40% might be located in the White Level Rd, area. Although this alternative spares the West End community from the worst of residential relocations, it may cause relocation or loss of substantial property at St. Luke's Church."

"...This assessment finds no evidence or indication of discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability. Furthermore, the assessment finds no evidence or indication that this project will result in disproportionately high and adverse impacts on minority or low-income populations. This project is, therefore, being implemented in accordance with Executive Order 12898.

Manieri's conclusions are very questionable. 1) He grossly undercounts the number of African-American residents in the White Level Community, thus underestimating adverse impacts. Another 30+ African-American homeowners are in the path of or in very close proximity to the proposed 119-Bypass path...on the present 119-Highway, Landi Lane, and Mrs. White Road. Two African-American churches, White Level Baptist and Kimes Chapel, are in close proximity to paths studies for the north end of the proponed 119-Bypass. 2) Former Project Engineer Eddie McFalls repeatedly stated that the on/off ramps for both Alternative B and C's would cause great property loss or relocation for St. Luke Church and several houses on James Walker Road, St. Luke Church Road and Allen Baynes Road.

Manieri stated that West End residents should be please to get as much as \$73,000 per relocated home, even though, a smaller lot and new house would cost twice as much at today's prices. Retired and disabled senior residents, who are in their 60's, 70's and 80's, would not be eligible for loans they can afford to pay off. Years of stress and anxiety about the 119-Bypass issue are taking their toll on elderly homeowners who currently have no mortgages to pay.

However, the DOT's property acquisition estimates did not include the cost for relocation of St. Luke Christian Church. This 106-year old community institution has been the home church for West End residents for five and more generations. Again, Manieri underestimates the adverse and disproportionate impact on West End residents and historic institutions. He made no mention of the Yadkin Lodge #799 for Free and Accepted Masons on Allen Baynes Road or the Holy Church of Christ on 70-Highway. 3) It was clear from the beginning that our meeting with Manieri was a deception, a ruse. He talked for 30 minutes before mentioning Environmental Justice, and he did not provide any written information on the rights of West End residents. Manieri had been hired two weeks before our meeting and had no training on Environmental Justice. Manieri simply wanted West End residents to endorse the 119-Bypass and overpass that will destroy the West End Community. His conclusion that the project in being implemented in accordance with Executive Order 12898 contradicts the truth and his findings.

d) October 12, 1995, Omega R. Wilson attended the Alamance County Urban Area Transportation Advisory Committee meeting. The 119-Bypass Throughway was discussed and identified as being fully funded, even though, no public meeting had been held, no environmental assessment had been completed, and there no public acknowledgement that civil rights and Environmental Justice existed as they relate to highway planning. At this meeting, Mebane's City Council requested \$763,000 in order to construct bike paths through the same areas of the

West End Community that Mebane councilmen has refused to provide funds for sewer lines and paved street. When the story was reported to local newspapers during the re-election campaign, city councilmen denied any knowledge of the pork-barrel request and the bike paths we not constructed through West End.

e) Since 1979, Mebane has been eligible for block grants from the U.S. Department of Commerce. The funds would match city funds needed to install and upgrade infrastructure in West End and other neglected areas. Mebane would not apply for block grants even though the city's share would only be a 15%-match. In 1992, the City of Mebane refused to sign a block grant application for over \$650,000 that would have installed sewer lines in West End and other needy African-American communities in Mebane. Only in 1997 did West End residents persuade Mebane's City Councilmen to sign a block grant application for \$750,000 with the city matching with \$127,500 for the West End and East End communities (both primarily African-American). Now the City of Mebane is one full year behind in completing work required by the grant. Mebane passed up several million dollars in block grants, over twenty-years, which would have financed a large percent of the cost to install basic amenities. (See Exhibit #10: "Mebane benefits from block grant, sidewalks, sewer improvements," Mebane Enterprise, 1-28-1998; "Special thanks to Omega Wilson for his help with the \$750,000 grant," Mebane Enterprise, 2-4-1998; and other newspaper articles).

### 14. REMEDIES SOUGHT (Include but not limited to the following):

- a) Investigation, by the U. S. Department of Justice, of patterns of discriminations and violations of civil rights and the Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898 regarding concerns discussed in this complaint
- b) Public involvement by residents in the communities impacted by projects planning, development, land use, zoning, relocation, etc., such as West End, White Level, East End and Buckhorn Road.
- c) Public involvement by residents in the communities impacted by highway and/or roadway planning and construction with full participation and input of African-American residents in compliance with the Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898.
- d) Mitigation and enhancements regarding patterns of discrimination against the African-American communities. Actions should involve the NCDOT, Alamance County Urban Area Transportation Improvement Program and Transportation Advisory Committee, and City of Mebane.
- e) Installation of basic amenities, including water, sewer services, sidewalks, and clean ditches water drainage areas.

- f) Elimination of redlining and selective annexation that diminish African-American voting percentage and participation in Alamance County and Mebane's short and long term land use plans.
- g) Compliance with the Fair Housing Act and implementation of short and long range construction plans for affordable individual houses for first time homebuyers, as well as low-income and moderate-income families.
- h) Develop plans for African-American owned and operated businesses and employment training centers in the Africa-American communities.
- i) Eliminate physical barriers in the West End Community, including dead end and unpaved streets, as well as Mebane's chain link fence and gate on Tate Street. Remove old wooden bridge and construct a modern and safe bridge, roadway and walkway from the end of Tate Street to the Mebane Arts and Community Center.
- j) Clean-up debris and fill-in eight-acre landfill, "brownfield," under the guidance of the EPA and develop safe land use plans for property.
- k) Establish an oversight process to insure that patterns of discrimination are eliminated and mitigation and enhancement remedies are fully complied with and carried out by the NCDOT, Alamance County and the City of Mebane.
- I) Identify and obtain funding sources for short and long term research, planning and development of infrastructure, housing, business, and job training in West End and other African-American communities overlooked by the record economic growth and expansion in Mebane and the Mebane ETJ.
- m) Organize and monitor professional training sessions on human and race relations for Mebane City councilmen, Alamance County's Urban Area Transportation Improvement Program and Urban Area Transportation Advisory Committee, and the North Carolina Department of Transportation.

The remedies and enhancements include programs of enforcement, voluntary compliance, and education and outreach. The West End Revitalization Association – CDC and African-American residents are committed to efforts to strengthen the communities, promote individual responsibility and reduce dependency on Federal assistance such as welfare and housing subsidies. Growth and prosperity in African-American, Native American, and Hispanic communities in Mebane and Alamance should translate to growth and prosperity for the entire area. Due to institutional and unrelenting discrimination, short and long term remedies and enhancements are necessary just to reach some level of parity, equality and fairness in Mebane and Alamance County.

OF	FICES OF THE DEPARTME  S, NoXX	E OR ANY OTHER COMPLAINTS WITH OTHER ENT OF JUSTICE?
COM		OU INTEND TO FILE A CHARGE OR E MATTERS RAISED IN THE COMPLAINT G? (Answer is NO.)
18. We are aware the Mebane Police Department has filed an application for grant funds at the U. S. Department of Justice (See newspaper article on the next page: "Grants hope to unite police, community," <u>Mebane Enterprise</u> , 2-3-1999).		
19.	DATE	SIGNATURE Omega R. Wilson
	DATE 10 Feb, 1999	SIGNATURE CLARACTER CONTRACTOR CO