

N.C.P.I.—Civil 835.13A
EMINENT DOMAIN—JUST COMPENSATION—PARTIAL TAKING BY
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION OR BY MUNICIPALITY FOR HIGHWAY
PURPOSES (“MAP ACT”)—ISSUE OF GENERAL OR SPECIAL BENEFIT.
GENERAL CIVIL VOLUME
MAY 2017
N.C. Gen. Stat. § 136-44.50 to 44.54

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NOTE WELL: This instruction should be given if the condemnor introduces evidence of general or special benefit for the purposes of offset.¹

Typically, Map Act cases are filed as inverse condemnation actions. For this reason, it is presumed that the plaintiff is the property owner.

The (*state number*) issue reads:

"What is the amount of offset, if any, to which the defendant is entitled because the plaintiff's property subject to the defendant's restrictions on its use benefited from (*state project*)?"

On this issue the burden of proof is on the defendant.² This means that the defendant must prove, by the greater weight of the evidence, the amount, if any, by which the plaintiff's property subject to the defendant's restrictions on its use benefited from (*state project*).³

Benefits can be either general or special.⁴ General benefits are those which arise from the fulfillment of the highway purposes which justified the taking. They are those benefits arising to the vicinity which result from the enjoyment of the highway project and from the increased general prosperity resulting from such enjoyment.⁵ Special benefits are increases in the value of the remaining land which are peculiar to the owner's property and not shared in common with other landowners in the vicinity. They arise from the relationship of the land in question to the highway project, and may result from physical changes in the land, from proximity to the new project, or in various other ways.⁶

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You should consider the evidence presented as to general or special benefit to the plaintiff’s property subject to the defendant’s restrictions on its use. However, you should not consider remote, uncertain or speculative benefits.⁷

I instruct you that your verdict on this issue must be based upon the evidence and the rules of law I have given you. You are not required to accept the amount suggested by the parties or their attorneys.

Finally, as to this issue on which the defendant has the burden of proof, if you find, by the greater weight of the evidence, the amount of offset, if any, to which the defendant is entitled because the plaintiff’s property subject to the defendant’s restrictions on its use benefited from (*state project*), then you will answer this issue by writing that amount in the blank space provided. However, if you fail to so find, then it would be your duty to answer this issue by writing "zero" in the blank space provided.

1 Failure to instruct on general or specific benefits can be reversible error. *Board of Transp. v. Rand*, 299 N.C. 476, 483, 263 S.E.2d 565, 570 (1980); see also *Charlotte v. Recreation Comm'n*, 278 N.C. 26, 31, 178 S.E.2d 601, 607 (1970); *Kirkman v. State Highway Comm'n*, 257 N.C. 428, 433, 126 S.E.2d 107, 111 (1962); *DeBruhl v. State Highway Comm'n*, 247 N.C. 671, 686, 102 S.E.2d 229, 240 (1958); *State Highway Comm'n v. Mode*, 2 N.C. App. 464, 472, 163 S.E.2d 429, 434 (1968).

2 On this issue, the burden of proof will always be on the condemnor. N.C. Gen. Stat. § 136-112(1); see also *Board of Transp. v. Rand*, 299 N.C. 476, 480, 263 S.E.2d 565, 568 (1980) (holding that the burden of proving the existence and the amount of offset from general or special benefits is on the condemnor).

3 N.C. Gen. Stat. § 136-112(1) requires a jury in a highway condemnation case to consider both special and general benefits to the remainder where only a part of a tract is taken. The statute has been held constitutional. *Dept. of Transp. v. Rowe*, 353 N.C. 671, 677, 549 S.E.2d 203, 208 (2001), reversing 138 N.C. App. 329, 531 S.E.2d 836 (2000). Note that the measure of damages is different under Chapter 40A.

4 Under prior law, offset consideration was available for special benefits only; however, the distinction is immaterial under G.S. 136-112(1), which permits consideration for both special and general benefits. See *Board of Transp. v. Rand*, 299 N.C. at 479, 263 S.E.2d at

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569.

Both general and special benefits may arise from a proposed use. Thus, if a new highway is constructed, the benefit to a particular lot by being protected from surface water, or by being left in a desirable size or shape, or by fronting upon a desirable street, is a special benefit. The increase in values for business use of property in the neighborhood on account of traffic on the highway and the increased facility of communication is a general benefit, not peculiar to a particular lot.

5 See *Dept. of Trans. v. Rowe*, 353 N.C. 671, 549 S.E.2d 203 (2001); *Kirkman v. State Highway Comm’n*, 257 N.C. 428, 433, 126 S.E.2d 107, 111 (1962); *Templeton v. State Highway Comm’n*, 254 N.C. 337, 118 S.E.2d 918 (1961).

6 *Id.*

7 *Kirkman*, 257 N.C. at 434, 126 S.E.2d at 112 (“Whether benefits are special or general, the courts are agreed on the proposition that remote, uncertain, contingent, imaginary, speculative, conjectural, chimerical, mythical or hypothetical benefits cannot, under any circumstances, be taken into consideration.”) (citations omitted).

