

**MINUTES OF
ROUTE 29 NEW BALTIMORE ADVISORY PANEL**

Meeting #6: January 24, 2019

1:00 – 3:00 P.M.

1st Floor Conference Room – Warren Green Building

10 Hotel Street

Warrenton, VA 20186

Members Present: Natalie Erdossy, Brookside HOA; John Lynch, VDOT; Tim Hoffman, Vint Hill HOA; George Phillips, Prince William County; Pete Eltringham, Poms Farm; Garrett Moore, VDOT; Marc Geffroy, Business Community; Ike Broadus, Vint Hill Business Community; Cristy Thorpe, C. Hunter Ritchie Elementary School

Members Absent: Steve Combs, VA Hospital; Craig Oakley, New Baltimore Fire Department; Haven Melton, FAA

Staff Present: Mark Nesbit, VDOT; Lou Hatter, VDOT; Ben Davison, VDOT; Chuck Proctor, VDOT; Rick Crofford, VDOT; Holder Trumbo, Fauquier County Scott District Supervisor; Wendy Wheatcraft, Fauquier County; Marie Pham, Fauquier County

Guests Present: James Ivancic, Fauquier Times; Julie Bolthouse, Piedmont Environment Council; Don Del Rosso, Fauquier Now; Brian Cohn; Tom Daily, Vint Hill Manor HOA; Juanita Grimsley; Todd Jaros; George Eastment, Suffield Meadows HOA; Brian Simpson; Greg Corcoran, Battlefield Baptist Church

1. Introductions/ Panel Comments

Garrett Moore opened the meeting at 1:00 p.m. and informed the advisory panel that the meetings will continue until they feel they are ready to stop. He asked if the members had any comments.

Ike Broadus noted that two or three meetings ago the speed on Route 29 was discussed and asked if it could be reduced to 45 mph in the business area. Garrett said that this would have to be done following the Code of Virginia and the focus of the meeting is on the Route 29/Route 215 intersection. He added that VDOT will conduct a speed study further south in the business area in the future.

2. Meeting #5 Summary – Review of Minutes

Garrett asked if there were any comments on the minutes. Ike noted that it was nice to have detailed minutes available and moved to accept the minutes. The panel members present unanimously supported the motion and the minutes were approved.

3. Public Feedback and Follow-Ups

Garrett asked if the members have received any feedback from the public since the November 24, 2018 meeting. He noted two comments received by VDOT:

a. Concern at Cerro Gordo in Prince William

Residents on Cerro Gordo have expressed concern that while they agree an improvement is needed on Route 29 in this area, they have concerns that by improving throughput on Route 29 that this would make it more difficult for residents to leave Cerro Gordo and turn left to travel

northbound on Route 29. The Residents were under the impression the traffic light at Vint Hill was being removed to construct the Michigan Left. When the Residents of Cerro Gordo were updated on this issue, their concerns were alleviated. Garrett commented that he did not feel the proposed improvements would result in the left turn being any more challenging but that VDOT will monitor this to see if it's an issue.

b. Comments from Cheesecake Heaven

Cheesecake Heaven at the intersection of Route 29 and Route 600 has concerns about the geometric changes proposed. She would like to see the signal timing adjusted. Garrett noted that adjusting the signal timing will not work but offered to meet with the business owner. Ike asked if she was looking at the most recent set of plans. Holder Trumbo said that she is and her concern is with the additional right-of-way required and the proximity of the road to her business. Natalie Erdosy asked if Fauquier Bank has expressed similar concerns. Garrett said he is not aware of this. Holder said that he has reached out to the bank to discuss the proposed solution with them. Ike commented that there seems to be a lot of space between the lot and the road. Tim Hoffman felt that with traffic clearing faster this would be an improvement for her. Garrett and Holder agreed that VDOT and the county need to meet with her to see if she is seeing anything they the group has not yet considered.

Action Item: Meet with Cheesecake Heaven and The Fauquier Bank to discuss any concerns they may have regarding the proposed improvements at the Route 29/Route 600 intersection.

4. Update 29/215 Sight Distance Project (Cut the Hills)

Garrett noted that VDOT has moved some funding forward and John Lynch has created a detailed plan to target construction this summer. However, VDOT is unsure if they will be able to meet this goal. This plan will likely change given how early it still is in the process, especially with the Section 106 review under way. VDOT will bring any changes back to the panel for their consideration. Pete asked if the target date is still the second half of July. Garrett confirmed that is the target. Tim asked if the funding available is in question. Garrett said that \$7.4 million is allocated for both the Route 29/Route 215 and Route 29/Route 600 improvements. Some of the money is programmed later in the Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP). The goal is to move forward and start improvements to the northbound lanes of Route 29 approaching Route 215 this summer. To advertise and complete the environmental process is an aggressive schedule. Something could arise in the environmental review and affect starting this summer.

Ike asked if we won't know if there is sufficient funding until the project (Cut the Hills) is advertised. John Lynch said there is enough funding available. Garrett added that VDOT has contacted four contractors who they feel could do the project efficiently. VDOT expects there will be pressure from surrounding communities regarding the closure of the northbound lanes on Route 29.

An audience member asked if VDOT is proposing to only cut the hills or cut and fill the hills. Garrett confirmed that the project will both cut and fill the hills.

John noted that the highest frequency of crashes occurs in this area, those these are not necessarily the most severe crashes. The southbound lanes of Route 29 were constructed later and meet the design speed of the road. \$7.4 million is allocated to the project. The proposed solutions must have a benefit to cost ratio of 1.0 or greater so only \$4.7 million of the \$7.4 million is available to remove the humps and the intersections improvement work. VDOT's target for the Cut the Hills project is \$3.0 million in a design-build contract plus VDOT's development and oversight costs. This would

entail closing the northbound lanes of Route 29 for approximately three weeks. The detour would be to take Route 17 to Interstate 66. It is expected that local traffic will find other routes.

Tim expressed concern that local traffic will use Dumfries Road (Rt. 605) to Rogues Road (Rt. 602) as a back entrance to Vint Hill. He noted the poor condition Route 602 is in now and that this would exacerbate the road condition. John responded that VDOT will look into this. Mark Nesbit added that Route 602 is in the paving schedule for 2020. Pete noted that the county has proposed improvements for Route 602 that should not be done concurrent to the Route 29 closure. Tim added that the shoulder is collapsing on sections of the road.

Action Item: VDOT will review the current condition of Rogues Road (Rt. 602).

Ike asked for clarification regarding the funding - \$7.4 million is allocated, \$4.7 million is available, but VDOT is trying to reduce the cost to \$3.0 million. John explained that the \$7.4 million allocated is for both projects – the improvements at the Route 29/Route 215 intersection and the improvements at the Route 29/Route 600 intersection. The benefit to cost ratio of the Highway Safety Improvement Projects (HSIP) was ± 2.5 for constructing the Michigan left. Cutting the hills should provide a 30% to 40% reduction in crashes in the northbound lanes of Route 29. In order to use the HSIP funding VDOT must construct an improvement that provides a benefit to cost ratio greater to or equal to 1.0. In order to achieve this minimum benefit only \$4.7 million is available to cut the hills and any improvements to the intersections. The goal is to conserve as much funding as possible for the turn lane improvements at Route 29/Route 215 and at Route 29/Route 600. VDOT's hope is that an innovative approach will reduce the design-build cost to \$3.0 million (This does not include project development costs, CEI, contingency and incentives so the total project cost is more than \$3.0 million).

Ike asked if the \$4.7 million is just for the improvements at Route 29/Route 215. Garrett said that VDOT still has not reviewed this to see if it could be higher. Ike clarified that the entire \$7.4 million is not available for the Route 29/Route 215 improvements because the benefit to cost ratio would need to be higher. Garrett confirmed that Ike is correct. He added that if VDOT can partner with the bank to keep costs down at the Route 29/Route 600 intersection this would help the projects. VDOT's goal is to complete all the proposed improvements at Route 29/Route 215 and then focus on improvements at the Route 29/Route 600 intersection.

Marc Geffroy asked if the proposed improvements at the Route 29/Route 600 intersection have a benefit to cost ratio of at least 1.0. (This is an operational benefit so does not provide a measurable safety benefit so it does not have a safety cost benefit). Marc asked if the worst accidents are at Route 29/Route 215. Garrett clarified that the worst accidents probably happen at the Route 29/Route 600 intersection.

John introduced Rick Crofford from VDOT's environmental section to review this. Rick explained that they have concurrence from the Federal Highway Administration for a categorical exclusion. The rock excavation is driving the cost of the removal of the hills. VDOT is working with the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) on a stormwater management exception. DEQ has been positive and receptive as this concept reduces the pervious area. VDOT has a concept prepared in the event that the stormwater management exception is not approved.

The goal with this project is to match the southbound grade as much as possible. VDOT has not found anything from a utility perspective that would cause an issue. It is their understanding that there is fiber optic on the southbound side of Route 29.

VDOT has explored multiple alternatives for this solution.

Alternative 1 construction cost is approximately \$3.0-\$3.2 million and has the shortest construction time. This only cuts one hump but as traffic increases and backs up further south this will not meet the objective.

Alternative 2 construction cost is approximately \$5.7-\$5.9 million. This holds the hinge point of the road, fills slopes and lays back the cut. It can be done vertically but it is not filling enough.

Alternative 3 would shift in the fill areas to keep the hinge point the same. The construction cost is slightly lower than Alternate 2 at \$ 4.8-\$5.0 million.

Alternative 4 is being refined for design for the Request for Proposals (RFP). The concept can change but needs to be done within a construction cost of approximately \$3.0 million and balance the cut and fill.

Pete asked if Alternative 4 modifies the northbound alignment to be the same as the southbound alignment and has the same sight lines as the southbound alignment. John responded that it would probably not be the same. Pete asked how different it would be. John believes that Alternative 3 would achieve this but does not balance the cut and fill. VDOT would grade the median, removing the rock outcrop to improve sight distance. Garrett confirmed that to match the southbound alignment the cost of the project would be so high it would not generate an acceptable benefit to cost ratio. The focus is on cutting down the humps and raising the dips to improve the sight distance. John noted that it would cost approximately \$6.0 million to make the northbound alignment match the southbound alignment.

Pete asked if drivers would be able to see the signal at Vint Hill Road (Rt. 215) from Battlefield Baptist Church. John confirmed that they would. Garrett said that they looked at cutting down three humps but the cost was too expensive.

Rick said that VDOT is progressing with the Section 106 process. VDOT has identified the federal action as the leveling of the hills only. The leveling of the hills requires Section 106 coordination and includes consulting parties. An Effect letter has been sent to the Department of Historic Resources (DHR) to determine the effect the project will have on historic resources. In VDOT's effect determination letter to DHR, VDOT indicates that there is an effect to the battlefield but believes that the effect is not adverse. There are wetlands and streams in the project area, however they are adjacent to the existing VDOT right of way and will not be impacted if the project remains within existing right of way. The leveling of the hills project has independent utility as it will provide improvements to the roadway even if no other projects move forward. This same environmental process would be undertaken for all three phases of the proposed improvements: leveling the hills on Route 29 northbound, intersection improvements at Route 29/Vint Hill Road (Rt. 215), and intersection improvements at Route 29 and Broad Run Church Road/Beverleys Mill Road (Rt. 600).

VDOT is working on a categorical exclusion (NEPA) and looking at possible water quality impacts. There is no Virginia Outdoor Foundation (VOF) easement or hazardous materials so the environmental review will be done when Section 106 is complete.

Pete asked is this is part of the Lake Manassas watershed. Rick said that this project does not generate any change to that. Garrett added that the project has a net pervious surface improvement. Pete asked

if VDOT expects to meet their timeline. In three weeks VDOT should have confirmation from DHR on the effect on historic resources.

John reviewed the potential project timeline.

2019 Construction:

- Request for Proposals release Feb. 4, 2019
- CTB contract award April 10, 2019
- Route 29 Northbound full closure July 8 to Aug. 2, 2019
- Final project completion Sept. 30, 2019

2020 Construction:

- Request for Proposals release Aug. 13, 2019
- CTB contract award Feb. 19, 2020
- Route 29 Northbound full closure July 7 to July 31, 2020
- Final project completion Sept. 30, 2020

Ike asked if the intersection improvements at Route 29 and Vint Hill Road (Rt. 215) are part of this project. John explained that this first project is only to level the humps and fill the dips. Section 106 will have to be completed for the proposed intersection improvements separately.

Garrett asked for confirmation that the dates work and said that VDOT needs to go to the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) to update them of the plan as soon as possible.

5. Update on Intersection Concepts: Traffic Analysis, LOS

John reviewed the existing conditions at Route 29 and Vint Hill Road (Rt. 215). The northbound through has 210 seconds of delay today and with the improvements this would reduce to 125 seconds of delay. This is still a Level of Service (LOS) F but an improvement over the existing condition. The other movements would improve similarly.

Chuck Proctor explained that this is an average for traffic.

John noted that VDOT is starting to use an advanced signal performance system. This would help by sending alerts to their engineers who would then have full communication with the traffic operation center in Staunton. This can be looked at for the Route 29 corridor. With the existing InSync system VDOT has to call the company to have them fix any issues rather than resolving the issue themselves. Garrett noted that signal coordination works for a maximum of four or five signals. John added that this is best when the signals are within a mile of each other and noted that this can be morphed to autonomous vehicles.

Natalie noted Brookside residents' concern with access from Riley Road (Rt. 676). Garrett responded that drivers accessing Route 29 from Riley Road (Rt. 676) would still have breaks in traffic.

6. Meeting Calendar – monthly, time, location

Garrett asked about meeting on February 28th and March 28th and noted in the next few months VDOT would be moving quickly. Pete felt it was important to continue to meet. Tim asked when the second phase of improvements at the intersection of Route 29 and Vint Hill Road (Rt. 215) would commence. John responded that it depends on what funds are available of the \$4.7 million once the Cut the Hills project is awarded. They need to get the first project under contract to know how much money is available for the intersection improvements in the second phase. If not enough funding is

available for the second phase of improvements the advisory panel may need to prioritize the next improvements. Ike asked for clarification that the bid would only involve removing the humps. Garrett confirmed it does. Tim asked if cost overruns are typical and how this could impact the project. Garrett said that VDOT has estimates and will get bids. During construction if there is a large overrun VDOT would have to pay this. Typically VDOT projects have been on time or early 80% of the time and on budget 90% of the time. Costs are increasing but VDOT is obligated to complete the project once they start.

Garrett noted that this project would be a design-build which is not typical for small projects but it will help this move quickly.

An audience member asked if a Maintenance of Traffic (MOT) plan is available. Garrett said that it is not available yet but that VDOT would be routing through traffic to Route 17 north to Interstate 66.

Pastor Greg Corcoran noted that Battlefield Baptist Church has a large number of members who come for services and asked how the closure of Route 29 would impact them. Garrett said that VDOT would add this as an item for the February meeting. John said that VDOT would keep access to the church. Garrett added that their entrance would remain open. An audience member asked how residents of Westervelt would go north of Battlefield Baptist Church to make the u-turn to access their homes.

Action Item: Discuss the location of the proposed closure and its impacts on surrounding property owners. Have maps with routes prepared for this discussion at the next meeting.

Tim expressed concern for unintended consequences and felt that the advisory panel meetings should continue to be aware of these. Garrett agreed. Pete noted that once construction starts there would be a new level of interest from the community. Garrett offered to hold one of the meetings on site as a field trip.

George Phillips inquired about access for the residents of Cerro Gordo. Garrett responded that they felt they would be alright and offered to meet with them to discuss their concerns.

An audience member asked about Suffield Meadows and the alternate route during the closure of Route 29 northbound. Garrett noted VDOT's commitment to discuss this at the next meeting. Natalie asked that the sheriff's office attend the February meeting to engage in this discussion.

Action Item: Ask the sheriff's office to attend the February meeting to provide input to concerns about possible alternate routes during the temporary Route 29 northbound closure.

Cristy Thorpe noted the positive feedback received to removing the hills and that residents are willing to deal with the inconvenience for improved safety.

7. *New Business and Wrap-Up*

Garrett noted that the next meeting is scheduled for February 28, 2019.

8. *Adjourn*

Given that there were no additional items to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 2:22 p.m.