

**MINUTES OF
RT. 29 NEW BALTIMORE ADVISORY PANEL**

Meeting #7: February 28, 2019

1:00 – 3:00 P.M.

1st Floor Conference Room – Warren Green Building

10 Hotel Street

Warrenton, VA 20186

Members Present: Tim Hoffman, Vint Hill HOA; Pete Eltringham, Poms Farm HOA; Garrett Moore, VDOT; Marc Geffroy, Business Community; Craig Oakley, New Baltimore Fire Department; Rebecca Pozo-Olano, Brookside HOA (in place of Natalie Erdossy); Cristy Thorpe, C. Hunter Ritchie Elementary School

Members Absent: Ike Broaddus, Vint Hill Business Community, Steve Combs, VA Hospital; Haven Melton, FAA; Haven Melton, FAA Vint Hill; George Phillips, Prince William County

Staff Present: Lou Hatter, VDOT; John Lynch, VDOT, Mark Nesbit, VDOT; Holly Meade, Fauquier County; Holder Trumbo, Fauquier County Scott District Supervisor; Maureen Williamson, Fauquier County; Marie Pham, Fauquier County

Guests Present: Ray Bell, Poms Farm HOA; Tom Blaser, Rinker Design Associates; Bill Chakalos, New Baltimore Business Owner; Brian Cohn; Greg Corcoran, Battlefield Baptist Church; Joe Costello, Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission; Tom Daily, Vint Hill Manor HOA; Cheryl Fisher, Fauquier County School Transportation; Chris Flurry, Delegate Guzman Representative; Dave Graham, Fauquier County Schools; Jim Gray; James Ivancic, Fauquier Times; Dave Mailler, New Baltimore Resident; Peg Mailler, New Baltimore Resident; Joe Martin, Fauquier County Chamber of Commerce; Chuck Medvitz; Sergeant R. Moline, Fauquier County Sheriff's Office; Peter Popovich, Saints Hill HOA; Corporal S.W. Shiner, Fauquier County Sheriff's Office; Bryan Simpson, New Baltimore; John Simpson, New Baltimore; Brooke Stark, Prince William County (Aide to Supervisor Candland); Erik Wachtmeister, White Hall Farm

1. Introductions/ Panel Comments

Garrett Moore opened the meeting at 1:00 p.m. with introductions and reviewed the agenda. VDOT is getting the word out and concerns are being expressed. Procurement is underway.

3. Public Feedback and Follow-Ups

a. None received

4. Program Overview and Funding

a. *Phase I – Cut and Fill the Hills at Route 215 (Vint Hill Road)*

John Lynch reminded everyone that the purpose and need of the project to improve safety along Rt. 29 northbound approaching Vint Hill Road and to improve the substandard vertical alignment of the roadway. The road is currently designed for a 35 mph speed. The procurement process

will improve it to a minimum of 50 and there are alternatives that will provide for proposals for 55 and 60 mph design speed.

The scope of work includes cutting down both hills just north of the Battlefield Baptist Church and filling in the sag at Vint Hill. VDOT issued a preliminary design to show builders there is a viable option within budget. A temporary construction easement is being pursued for the Springer property to rebuild the entrance since it is at the crest of one of the hills.

\$7.4 million of Highway Safety Improvement Funding (HSIP) is allocated for both the Rt. 29/Rt. 215 and Rt. 29/Rt. 600 improvements. Of that, \$4.7 million of HSIP funds are associated with the safety improvements for cut and fill of the hills (Cut the Hills) which gives the project a cost benefit of 1. VDOT is targeting approximately \$3 million for construction costs for the Cut the Hills project. Additional VDOT development costs and oversight costs during construction will be in addition to the design-build construction cost. The remaining funds from the Cut the Hills project, up to the \$4.7 million budget, can be applied to the subsequent projects. To increase the \$4.7 million total budget of HSIP funding, VDOT is required to go through a process to release the funding and must justify a safety need.

There were no questions or comments on the funding mechanism. John confirmed that no funding was taken away; it was redistributed between the two distinct projects.

5. Program Overview and Funding

a. Environmental Section 106 & NEPA Process, Progress Update

John explained the project was required to go through a Section 106 review and received a determination of no adverse effect for the project. That review period ended February 14, 2019.

VDOT issued a willingness to hold a public hearing for the projects and no requests were received. This fulfills the formal public involvement process.

VDOT received concurrence from FHWA on the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document, which received a Categorical Exclusion. The only requirement remaining is to post the document for a certain period. This ends the NEPA process and clears VDOT for construction.

b. Historic Process and Update

VDOT received a letter from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requesting that they meet with the Buckland Historic District prior to starting the Section 106 Review for the additional projects.

c. Stormwater Management (SWM)

VDOT received confirmation from the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) that the exception was approved since no additional pavement is being added. In future projects SWM may be a consideration.

Mr. Moore commented that during a meeting with the Buckland Historic District there was a request for VDOT to look at long-term planning beyond this project. VDOT has secured funding for long-term planning. After this project is completed some sort of facilitated community involvement will take place to discuss what the road will look like in the future. Pete Eltringham asked if Prince William County would be engaged in that effort. Garrett confirmed that they would be included.

Right of Way & Utilities

John noted that VDOT is pursuing the temporary construction easement for the entrance to the Springer property at the crest of one of the hills. VDOT does not believe there will be any impact to the Battlefield Baptist Church. The entrance can be reconstructed within the right-of-way. There is no conflict with the overhead power lines. There is one crossing of two Comcast lines underground that need to be lowered during construction.

d. Project Schedule Update

John reviewed the procurement schedule for the project:

- Request for Proposals Release February 4 2019
- Submittal & Price Proposals Due March 15, 2019, 4:00 p.m.
- Price Proposal Opening March 19, 2019, 9:00 a.m.
- Notice of Intent to Award Contract March 22, 2019
- CTB Contract Award April 10, 2019
- Rt. 29 Northbound Full Closure July 8, 2019 – August 2, 2019
- Final Project Completion September 30, 2019

Garrett noted that there is still a possibility that VDOT might not meet this schedule. He reiterated that the consensus to close the northbound lanes was vetted through the advisory panel. The decision involved the cost and the “least bad” alternative as far as upsetting traffic. The northbound lanes will be closed for up to three weeks. VDOT has detours in place and are heavily incentivizing an early completion.

John reviewed the alternatives that were discussed before reaching the conclusion that the shutdown of the northbound lanes was the most efficient from a cost and construction standpoint.

Alternative 1A

- Construct temporary pavement in median to provide three lanes on southbound side
- Use moveable barrier to provide two lanes in peak direction
 - Advantages
 - Operationally worked well
 - Maintaining two lanes of traffic peak direction
 - Disadvantages
 - Higher cost and time due to construction of temporary lane
 - More disturbed area and addition of pavement would trigger SWM
 - The intersection of Rt. 29 and Vint Hill Road would have to be modified each time there is a shift in the number of lanes for the peak direction

Alternative 1B

- Construct temporary pavement in median to provide three lanes on southbound side
- Provide one lane each direction with two-way left turn lane
 - Advantages
 - Maintains access to/from Rt. 215
 - Maintains access to/from adjacent properties
 - Disadvantages
 - Higher estimated cost and time due to construction of temporary lane
 - More disturbed area and addition of pavement would trigger SWM

Alternative 2

- Convert southbound lanes to one lane each direction
 - Disadvantages
 - Requires the construction of crossovers – Added cost, longer construction time, more disturbed area
 - Provides only one lane in each direction – Operationally this would cause problems on 29 the majority of the day
 - Left turns would be prohibited

Alternative 3

- Maintain traffic on northbound lanes through the work zone by reducing one lane or working at night.
 - Disadvantages
 - Construction period too long – interferes with July 4th travel and/or school

Another alternative not presented included the construction of two northbound lanes in the median, however the cost of this option proved greater than \$3 million just for the detour itself.

Alternative 4

- Total closure of northbound lanes with lanes closed for 26 days (July 8 to August 2)
- Northbound through traffic detour via US 17 and I-66 to Gainesville and beyond
- Local traffic detour via Rt. 600
 - Advantages
 - Lowest construction cost
 - Shortest construction time
 - Minimizes disturbed area
 - Maintains access to/from Rt. 215 and adjacent properties
 - Disadvantages
 - Significant traffic disruption through the corridor – hopefully less than three weeks

e. Maintenance of Traffic Options

John presented two maps depicting the proposed regional detour and local alternative routes. The regional detour map proposes motorists use Rt. 17 to I-66 with the local alternatives map suggesting traffic may use Rt. 600 to Rt. 55; Rt. 605 to Rt. 652 to Rt. 215; Rt. 605 to Rt. 28.

Tim Hoffman suggested looking at the impact on Blantyre Road and Old Tavern Road which would be shortcuts off of Rt. 17 to get back up to I-66. Garrett said that VDOT's initial recommendation for motorists south of Warrenton is to take the four-lane divided road – that is Rt. 17 to I-66. VDOT will not advertise alternative routes like Rt. 245 and Blantyre Road. He emphasized he does not want trucks to attempt to make the turn from Rt. 600 onto Rt. 215. WAZE will take motorists to these alternatives and there is no way to prohibit motorists from traveling this route. However, if motorists use Rt. 245 and Blantyre Road as shortcuts these alternatives will soon be congested.

Tim commented that the motorists will perceive the proposed detour as a long way around and will look for shorter alternatives. Garrett agreed that it will be painful particularly for the first two or three days until motorists get into a routine.

Tim expressed concern for the difficulty motorists have in making make a left turn off of I-66 WB onto Business Rt. 17 NB going into Marshall. He encouraged VDOT to consider a temporary signal at this stop. Garrett confirmed that models of this intersection have been run and VDOT is in the process of reviewing them.

Pete commented that beyond the through trucks there will be a lot of heavy trucks making general deliveries within this area. He asked if the Warrenton Residency will have the ability to repair any additional damage to the roads due to the increased truck traffic before school starts. Mark Nesbit said that there is a stretch of Rt. 600 and near Riley Road that is in this year's program that VDOT is trying to complete before the Cut the Hills closure. Maintenance crews will be available as needed during the closure period.

An audience member asked if there is anything that could be done at the intersection of Rt. 600 and Rt. 215. Additional traffic coming from Rogues Road onto Rt. 215 to access Rt. 29 NB will put additional traffic on Rt. 215 and make it more difficult for Rt. 600 to make the left hand turn. He asked if VDOT would consider a temporary three-way stop. Garrett said that VDOT would take a look at it and noted there is not much right-of-way there for an improvement.

Tim agreed and added that it is a dangerous intersection with limited sight distance. An increase in traffic trying to turn left from Rt. 600 onto Rt. 215 could result in a more dangerous intersection. Pete asked if special signage and/or speed bumps would help coming out of the curve before you get to Rt. 215. Tim suggested VDOT consider closing Broad Run Church Road to truck traffic. Garrett said that VDOT is discussing a temporary through truck closure. John noted that VDOT discussed this with the sheriff's office and state police to initiate this discussion. VDOT will continue discussion of this topic at the next meeting in March.

Action Item: Bring additional information on temporary truck restrictions to the advisory panel.

Supervisor Holder Trumbo asked about responses from New Baltimore emergency response services to areas such as Poms Farm. He asked if the County should consider shifting resources during the closure. Craig Oakley agreed that it would probably be smart and added that most responses come down Broad Run Church Road. There are numerous responses at the intersection of Rt. 215. The call volume past Rt. 215 is small. Supervisor Trumbo noted that when responding to a call from Pilgrims Rest Road responders would have to go to Rt. 215 to go southbound on Rt. 29. Garrett asked if Fauquier County emergency services has a mutual support agreement with Prince William County. Craig confirmed that they do and added that usually Prince William County will travel from Rt. 29 south. Garrett clarified that in aiding them during the project period, the response time will be greater. Craig said that Fauquier does not go to many responses in Prince William County and estimated responding to that county approximately once a month. Garrett suggested that Prince William County may want to shift during the project period and noted that VDOT will incentivize an early completion.

Pete noted that in addition to Poms Farms there are approximately 75 homes as well as a religious retreat and businesses off Route 625. The possibility of a need for emergency response during the three-week project period is relatively high.

Cristy Thorpe expressed concern for water run off at the intersection of Broad Run Church Road and Vint Hill Road and asked if VDOT could consider ditching or develop a water runoff plan

for this intersection. Garrett said VDOT will look at how to sign the roads. VDOT's first concern is advertising the Rt. 17 to I-66 detour to try and prevent regional traffic using local roads.

An audience member asked if Rt. 28 would be an alternative for some traffic. Garrett agreed that it may but that it is already heavily traveled. He mentioned suggesting that drivers alternate their time of travel if possible. Garrett asked if members in the audience have additional concerns about the proposed plan or other alternatives.

An audience member told the group that as he travels to and from Manassas daily using Vint Hill Road to Rogues Road and has noticed water gathering on Rogues Road, which is marked off by safety cones. There are spots along the road where the road is constantly deteriorating. Garrett said that VDOT is aware of the water issues and deterioration on the road. He agreed that the issues are due to the constant wet weather and the subgrade material not having a chance to dry out. This issue is occurring statewide.

A member of the Warrenton Chamber of Commerce offered to assist VDOT in spreading the information about this project and closure.

A member of the audience and resident on Rt. 600 asked if there was a way to contact WAZE and other navigation and live traffic systems. Garrett shared that VDOT has a partnership with WAZE and that they are aware of VDOT work zones. John added that WAZE pulls information from VDOT's 511 site.

An audience member who owns a farm off of Fosters Fork Road (Rt. 673) expressed concern that traffic is repeatedly rerouted into this area when there are accidents on Rt. 29. The roads in this area are not designed for large trucks. Garrett said the VDOT operations center may be able to assist by getting information to WAZE.

Tim asked if VDOT has looked at the timing of lights in Haymarket. There is a series of lights there that will cause additional congestion with the higher volume of traffic coming up Rt. 55 from either south or west. There is also a high volume of traffic coming up Rt. 15 north. Trying to get through this intersection and onto I-66 will be difficult if the current timing of the lights is maintained. Garrett said that this needs to be done and is a next step. He said that VDOT operations center may, at the beginning of the project, change algorithms, which can take two or three days to sort out.

Brooke Stark mentioned receiving several calls from the Gainesville District due to the timing of the lights. Garrett made a note of it and will report back on the timing of the lights. John added that VDOT met with law enforcement to discuss where enhanced enforcement may be needed during the closure and temporary through truck restrictions. If there are additional suggestions the panel members and public are encouraged to share those with VDOT.

f. Draft Communication Plan

Lou Hatter said that VDOT has already begun community engagement through the advisory panel meetings and members sharing information with their community. He credited the news media as also being helpful in sharing information. Last week VDOT sent a news release about the closure to the nine-county Culpeper District, Northern Virginia, and the Lynchburg District distributed it to everyone along the corridor from Danville in Pennsylvania County all the way up through Fairfax County. It went to all local governments, emergency response agencies, schools,

and businesses. He said the Metropolitan Planning Organization met in Charlottesville on February 27, 2019 and the VDOT representatives briefed their board of directors and policy board and they have requested to be on the distribution lists. VDOT is trying to get the word out as quickly and as early as possible. The objective is for people to be sick and tired of the closure message.

Tim asked about the use of temporary warning signs or message boards as a means of advertising the closure. Garrett responded that these types of messaging devices will be in place in the coming weeks.

Lou informed the group that VDOT has a robust social media presence which includes a statewide Facebook account and each district has their own Twitter account. The advantage of Twitter is that it is followed by members of the news media, emergency response agencies, governments, and chambers of commerce. Tim asked VDOT to share Facebook and Twitter account addresses for distribution to HOA residents. Lou provided the panel with the Twitter address @VADOTCULP. Tim said that the Fauquier Times has carried several helpful articles. Garrett said that one of the reasons VDOT is advertising early is to allow people can make plans around the closure. In this case, message redundancy is key.

Lou told the group that VDOT will run a paid radio advertising campaign in advance of the closure and during the first part of the shutdown. WTOP and WINC Winchester will run ads on each station during peak morning and afternoon drive time. Tim mentioned NPR as another possible station to consider. He noted that NPR reports weather and traffic on the 8's format. Pete added that VDOT has a useful app, which is an excellent resource for construction maps. Lou said that the VDOT 511 app is free and allows motorists know what is on the road before they go.

An audience member asked about the possibility of VDOT providing printed posters advertising the closure and illustrating the detour route. Garrett agreed with this approach and recommended offering posters to businesses along the Rt. 29 corridor in Fauquier County as well as Prince William County.

Garrett asked if the Sherriff's Office and first responders have any concerns for VDOT to consider. If questions or concerns come up in the near future, please email or call VDOT or a panel member. At the March meeting VDOT should be able to inform the panel about the bids received. Garrett asked if there were recommendations on how to advertise the local detours to local traffic. Lou said that for a similar project in Charlottesville, motorists found their own best way around the closure. VDOT tries not to publicize the local routes as there was a real danger of pushing unnecessary vehicle and truck traffic through to residential areas. VDOT is very cognizant of this fact and does not want it to happen.

Supervisor Trumbo suggested that VDOT visit the Mill Run Business Park businesses as they are north of Warrenton and operate heavy trucks. He offered to assist VDOT in their efforts to reach out to these businesses and facilitate a meeting.

Garrett asked the panel members if they have other issues not addressed here, to please bring them forward. Moving forward over the next few months VDOT will be turning over the project to construction and communications. Given that VDOT has a plan for the project to cut the hills, the next focus will be on the Rt. 215/29 and Rt. 600/Rt. 29 intersections.

A concern that was raised at an earlier meeting that VDOT would not follow through on all phases of the project. Garrett said VDOT plans to take this as far as it will go.

Tim raised concern for not seeing the Snow Hill Community in New Baltimore represented. Supervisor Trumbo confirmed that the Snow Hill Community is aware of the closure. The communities of Suffield Meadows and Jamison Farm communities are being informed of the closure as well.

An audience member congratulated VDOT for keeping everyone informed and for moving the process along.

VDOT will post the presentation slides and detour maps on its website. Marie Pham asked members of the audience to please sign in so that there is a record of attendance for the meeting minutes.

6. *New Business and Wrap-Up*

Garrett noted that the next meeting is scheduled for March 28, 2019, at 1:00.

7. *Adjourn*

Given that there were no additional items to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 2:12 p.m.