

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

Meeting #8: March 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; Garrett Moore, VDOT; Craig Oakley, New Baltimore Fire Department; Cristy Thorpe, C. Hunter Ritchie Elementary School; Ike Broaddus, Vint Hill Business Community

Members Absent: Steven Combs, state veterans home (Puller Veterans Care Center); Haven Melton, FAA Vint Hill; Natalie Erdossy, Brookside HOA; George Phillips, Prince William County

Staff Present: Lou Hatter, VDOT; John Lynch, VDOT, Mark Nesbit, VDOT; Holly Meade, Fauquier County; Kara Kranz, Fauquier County; Holder Trumbo, Fauquier County Scott District Supervisor

1. Introductions/ Panel Comments

Garrett Moore opened the meeting at 1:00 p.m. with introductions and reviewed the agenda.

Tim Hoffman complimented Don Del Rosso of *Fauquier Now* for writing a concise article, which helped to get the word out to keep the community informed.

2. Meeting #7 Summary – Review of Minutes

Garrett informed the group that five construction companies looked at the bid and four found it to have too much risk. Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) received a responsive bid from one construction team to cut and fill the hills at Route 215. The bid came in from Chemung Construction with offices headquartered in Culpeper. Chemung Construction is uniquely qualified as they do quarry operations including drilling, blasting and have heavy quarry equipment available to them. They are committed to working toward the incentive to finish early and are considering bringing in an airport paver, which allows the paving of two lanes at one time. The next step is to bring the bid to the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB), as it is at their discretion that the bid be awarded.

Tim asked if Chemung Construction stays within the \$3.54 million bid, would that allow for the construction of the turn lanes and other improvements at the intersection. Garrett said that if Chemung Construction meets the bid, they would achieve the \$150,000 incentive. He added that the construction incentive, VDOT's oversight costs, exploration work already performed by VDOT, Virginia State Police and detour costs all need to be factored into the overall \$4.7 million project budget.

Garrett said next steps include the CTB's award of the project bid on April 10, implementation of the communications plan and then a review with VDOT's cost benefit group to review the funding for the next phases. Pete Eltringham expressed interest in hearing about 1) The access plan during

construction particularly for residents on Route 625; 2) how blasting is addressed in the construction contract; 3) speed limit goal after construction; 4) the Buckland Study and the scope of the study. Garrett noted that the access plan along with the local detours should be brought back to the next meeting. In regard to blasting, there is standard language in the contract including “more holes, less powder.” He said he would like to invite representatives from Chemung Construction to the next Advisory Panel meeting to meet stakeholders and answer questions. The speed limit between Route 600 and Vint Hill Road (Rt. 215) will be reviewed after the project is completed, as the design speed can be adjusted up and down based on how it behaves after construction. With regard to the Buckland Study, he explained there was a request from the Buckland Historic District to look at long-term planning beyond this project. He confirmed that VDOT has set aside \$200,000 in 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 asked that all stakeholders are engaged in meetings, similar to these meetings, once long-term planning is initiated.

Ike Broaddus asked if the Section 106 Review could still impact work planned for the project. John Lynch and Garrett said that for this phase of the project, cutting the hills, the Section 106 Review is complete. However, the next phases, which will involve review of turn lanes and signals at Route 215/29 intersection and Route 600, a separate Section 106 Review for each phase will be required.

Ike asked if the New Baltimore Transportation Fund is to be used for the Route 215 intersections. Holly Meade confirmed that it is not.

Garrett said the good news for the Cut the Hills phase is that there is momentum. Shutting down the northbound lane is the high risk, high impact part of the project. It is the only way the project could be done economically and practically. VDOT recognizes the shutdown will be an inconvenience to motorists and emphasized the need for a strong communication plan. VDOT initiated the communication plan with message boards in February. Once the CTB approves the construction bid, a communications “blitz” will be initiated and will run for the next few months. VDOT will concentrate on the key detour to mitigate the use of the road during construction. The communication includes a message suggesting motorists perhaps vacation or telework during the closure period.

Garrett said that the major detour route barring unforeseen traffic issues, is estimated to be ten minutes greater at the low end and at the high end is estimated at fifteen minutes greater. The hope is that by June, local residents will be “tired” of hearing the closure message. Messaging and getting the word out outside of the County is the next biggest risk. Unfortunately, the closure will impact businesses along the southbound route and VDOT looks forward to paying the contractor the incentive because it means the project is completed that much sooner with less impact to businesses. Members present at the meeting were encouraged to discuss the closure in their local communities. One of VDOT’s next approaches is to utilize local radio stations such as WTOP and WMAL to get the word out to communities such as Charlottesville and Rappahannock. Mark Nesbit is tasked with working through Boards of Supervisors and VDOT Residencies in neighboring counties to spread the word. He emphasized that VDOT is doing everything possible by using multiple means to get the word out.

Ike asked if Garrett knew how much funding would be left after the cut and fill the hills phase. Garrett said he is uncertain as to what funding will remain after this phase, as it depends on what is encountered during construction and how much of the incentive is paid. Ike asked if the entire \$7.5 million covers all three phases of the overall project. Garrett confirmed that it does, and added that currently the cost benefit only allows \$4.7 million to be available. However, there may be actions taken that the project is not getting credit for. Ike asked if the \$4.7 million is solely for the cut and fill the hills phase. Garrett confirmed that the \$4.7 million is for all three phases of the overall project

and added that VDOT needs to go back and make sure they are getting credit for all improvements including mitigating other types of crashes. This will be done in the coming weeks. Ike asked Garrett if it was conceivable that no funding would be remaining to complete improvements for the rest of the intersection. Garrett confirmed that it is conceivable. However, he noted that VDOT will go back and review the cost benefit to ensure they are receiving credit for everything and can hopefully justify all of or as close to the \$7.5 million as possible. As these are federal dollars, John Lynch is looking at a finding of public interest to do some of the work with a combination of state forces and smaller contracts. This is a way to break up the work and do it in a way that mitigates more risk and provides more flexibility to try and achieve better value for the dollar. State force work is less expensive than hiring a contractor for small projects.

3. Public Feedback and Follow-Ups

James Ibach, a resident on Beverleys Mill Road (Route 600) noted that he sent VDOT a proposal for the placement of a stoplight at the Battlefield Baptist Church at the hill before the one that has all of the accidents to stop northbound traffic there rather than at the Vint Hill light. He feels that this would alleviate accidents, sightline issues, and no blasting would be required to remove the hills. Another issue Jim discussed is the potential for Route 600 to be used as an alternate route due to GPS units listing it as an alternate route. He said that currently motorists use Route 600 as a shortcut to Interstate 66. He said that since Route 600 is a single lane road, very twisty, and motorists have tendency to speed on it, he feels that the additional rerouted traffic would cause many accidents. Garrett noted that the panel is very far along in the process, however they will not discount any ideas. Ike said that he believed that at one time a flashing light was added in the area of the Battlefield Baptist Church. Pete said that there was a signal at the entrance to the stone house and it caused more accidents. One of the lessons learned from this is that as long as there is a dip and motorists waiting at Route 215, the traffic will dictate that lights before that intersection will cause more problems than they solve. Garrett confirmed that VDOT will review the proposal and provide a determination.

Bill Chakalos asked about a campaign to reopen Route 29 after the completion of the cut and fill the hills project. Garrett confirmed that the campaign to reopen Route 29 will be as heavy, but will not be as long. It will likely be no sooner than two to three days prior to the reopening.

An audience member asked where the northbound lane will be closed. Garrett said that motorists will still be able to get to the Battlefield Baptist Church. He added that the Route 215 and Route 29 intersection will be open in both directions during the project.

4. Cut and Fill the Hills at Route 215: Overview and Funding

John Lynch presented a list of project milestones and highlighted those upcoming, which included the award of the construction contract by the CTB at the April 10 meeting, the Route 29 closure dates of July 8-August 2, and the project completion date of September 30.

John reviewed a line item list of project financials illustrating the anticipated expenditures and distribution of funds to get to the project's total funding of \$4,619,789.

5. Maintenance of Traffic Options: Regional & Local Detours, Truck Restrictions

Mark Nesbit said that VDOT has met with law enforcement regarding the scope of issues that may occur with traffic being detoured up Route 17 to Interstate 66. The goal is to get the majority of motorists to use the detour and VDOT is focusing on critical intersections and having a law enforcement presence at these key locations at critical times especially during peak hours. This will require the use of on and off duty police officers to provide the necessary oversight. VDOT has also

looked at several locations for the use of portable cameras to monitor traffic flow and incidents. VDOT will continue to utilize portable, changeable message boards that will be deployed to various critical locations. Once selected, the construction contractor, per the contract, is required provide a maintenance of traffic plan that will be reviewed by VDOT with the contractor. The maintenance of traffic is a work in process and will be fine-tuned as the project progresses. Once the construction contract has been awarded, VDOT will be able to work closely with the contractor to ensure both VDOT and the contractor's maintenance of traffic plans are in sync.

Mark noted that VDOT's Safety Service Patrol currently provides service on Interstate 66 in urban areas and VDOT is considering adding this service to motorists traveling Route 17 during the closure period. They are also evaluating the use of "Instant Tow" services, which currently provides tow service to motorists. This would dispatch tow services at the same time law enforcement is dispatched to a crash site to save response time. VDOT will be meeting with the Fauquier County Tow Board, which is comprised of the local towing operator community to ask if "Instant Tow" is a feasible option.

Holder Trumbo expressed concern for deep ditches on Route 600. Garrett said that ditches on Route 600 and the on ramps from Route 17 to Interstate 66 will be addressed in the next couple of months. VDOT will evaluate the ditches and fill with stone prior to the closure.

Tim asked if VDOT is still considering restricting truck traffic during the construction period. Mark noted that temporary truck restrictions would be initiated for the construction period on Route 600 (Broad Run Church/Beverleys Mill) east and west of Route 29, Route 628 (Blantyre Road), and Route 245 (Old Tavern Road). Tim asked Garrett to consider adding Route 602 (Rogues Road) to the list of temporary truck restrictions due to its rapidly deteriorating nature. Garrett agreed to add the road to the list. Pete asked that VDOT consider adding Route 605 (Dumfries Road) to the list due to it being on the southern edge of the New Baltimore Service District, a high school location, its lack of shoulders, and a ditch issue. Mark noted that VDOT has identified several areas to address prior to the closure. Garrett suggested that VDOT skin patch and add stone to the pot holes on Route 605 now.

6. Draft Communication Plan

Lou Hatter said that a goal of the communications plan is to keep regional traffic using the detour via Route 17 to I-66. To accomplish this, VDOT will start a targeted communications blitz prior to the closure reaching out as far south as Danville and as far north as Prince William and Fairfax Counties. Messaging will also be broadcast down towards Fredericksburg and on I-95. VDOT is also working with the Virginia Trucking Association and they will be working with the Federal Motor Carrier Administration to reach the large trucking contractors.

In response to Pete's concern about a targeted detour message to local motorists, Lou said that VDOT is not creating a separate detour map for every neighborhood, but will provide maps for clusters of businesses well in advance of the closure from Warrenton north. These maps will be provided to businesses in bulk so that they can be handed out to customers. The maps would provide directions, with language similar to: "If you are here, what is the best route to take to get to there." VDOT does not intend to do a lot of messaging about the local detour routes as they do not want to encourage non local traffic to use these routes. The goal is to keep regional traffic, including truck traffic, on the four-lane road. VDOT is trying to ensure local traffic is aware of their options to get around the project while trying to keep the thru traffic on the four-lane road.

Garrett asked if the targeted maps should be distributed through the local schools. Cristy Thorpe said that the schools could distribute the maps electronically, however she suspects that most families already know the local routes unless they are new to the area. Garrett asked that a message board be placed on Route 29 just north of the Battlefield Baptist Church now to read, "At this spot, the road will be closed July 8-August 2." This will reinforce the message as motorists will be exposed to it for three months prior to the closure.

An audience member asked that VDOT do their best to not direct traffic in areas where the high school is located on Route 602 and the grade school on Route 600. Garrett said that VDOT will only direct motorists to the major detour and added that the closure timeframe was chosen to coincide with summer break.

Joe Martin of the Fauquier Chamber of Commerce reemphasized that VDOT could take advantage of their mailing lists. They have the ability to direct the mailing list to specific zip codes. He offered to share this with the Chambers of Commerce in Culpeper, Charlottesville, and Virginia Chambers of Commerce mailing lists for distribution of detour maps and other communications. Garrett said that redundancy of messaging, in this case, is not a bad thing. Lou said that local maps will be ready for distribution in a couple of weeks. He confirmed that maps and other communications will be distributed electronically and in paper format, particularly to the businesses so that they can hand them out to customers. Panel members requested digital and hard copies of the maps to distribute.

A member of the audience 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. Pete added that WAZE pulls information from VDOT's 511 site.

Lou noted that a news release will be issued when the CTB awards the construction contract.

7. Meeting Calendar – monthly, time, location

Garrett reviewed the upcoming meeting calendar to include the following dates:

- April 25, 2019
- May 23, 2019

It was confirmed that the April and May meetings will meet from 1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m. in the Board of Supervisors meeting Room, Warren Green Building located at 10 Hotel Street in Warrenton.

8. New Business & Wrap-up

No new business was discussed.

9. Adjournment

Given that there were no additional items to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 2:04 p.m.