The Environmental Assessment was prepared and approved for public availability by FHWA for the Route 29 Bypass on August 23, 2012. Copies of the document are available for review here tonight, or it can be reviewed on VDOT’s web site at www.virginiadot.org/projects/culpeper/r_29_bypass.asp. It is also available at the Charlottesville Residency office, 701 VDOT Way, Charlottesville, VA 22902; or at the Culpeper District headquarters, 1601 Orange Road, Culpeper, VA 22701.

Welcome
The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), has completed a re-evaluation and update of environmental studies, reported in an Environmental Assessment, for the Route 29 Bypass in Albemarle County. The proposed project would extend approximately 6.2 miles and provide a new four-lane divided, limited-access roadway to the west of existing Route 29 from the Route 250 Bypass and the North Grounds of the University of Virginia on the south end to existing Route 29 north of the South Fork Rivanna River on the north end.

Purpose of the Meeting
The purpose of this meeting is to provide a public opportunity for any person, acting on his/her own behalf or representing a group or governing body, to offer comments or submit written material concerning the Environmental Assessment. We invite you to review the findings of the Environmental Assessment and discuss the project with VDOT representatives who are here to answer your questions. All comments received will be considered prior to a final decision on the Environmental Assessment.

Background
The record of environmental documentation on this project is extensive, beginning with a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) in 1993. Over the next 10 years came an Environmental Assessment revised, as appropriate, based on comments received; Final decision on the EA by FHWA.
As stated in the 1993 FEIS, “The purpose of the Route 29 Corridor Study is to find a solution to existing and future congestion on a three-mile section of U.S. Route 29 between U.S. Route 250 Bypass and the South Fork Rivanna River in the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County north of Charlottesville.”

The section of Route 29 between the Route 250 Bypass and the South Fork Rivanna River no longer adequately serves the mobility function intended for the State Arterial System and the National Highway System, of which Route 29 is a part, due to the disruption of flow by traffic signals, vehicles entering and leaving the roadway at numerous intersecting streets and access points serving adjacent properties, and low operating speeds arising from those conditions. A secondary purpose “is to complete a gap in ongoing improvements to U.S. Route 29 through central Virginia.” Route 29 is the only major north-south route serving the Charlottesville area and connecting it with other population and employment centers.

A detailed alternatives analysis is not being conducted anew as a part of the Environmental Assessment. This is because the project has a valid Record of Decision (ROD) from September 2003. Also, the Environmental Assessment has been prepared to address new information or circumstances relevant to environmental concerns since completion of previous environmental documents. Notwithstanding, a full range of reasonable alternatives was evaluated and discussed in detail in the FEIS and reviewed in the SEIS, as summarized in the Environmental Assessment. Analyses performed as part of the Environmental Assessment indicate that year 2040 traffic forecasts are consistent with the traffic data that formed the basis for the purpose and need of the Route 29 Bypass in the previous environmental documentation. Projected traffic volumes based on regional estimates of growth in population and employment and the patterns of this growth, as reflected in the regional travel demand model, indicate that 2040 traffic forecasts on Route 29 north of the Route 250 Bypass are expected to be approximately 40 percent higher than current volumes. The new parallel road provided by the proposed Route 29 Bypass is forecasted to carry just under 28,000 vehicles per day in design year 2040. Much of this volume would shift from existing Route 29, resulting in reductions of daily traffic volumes on existing Route 29 of up to 28 percent. Traffic using the proposed Route 29 Bypass would be able to travel at high speed (posted speed limit will be 55 mph) with no delays because there would be no intermediate intersections or interchanges with cross streets to interrupt the free flow of traffic.

**Description of the Proposed Route 29 Bypass**

- The Route 29 Bypass would extend approximately 6.2 miles and would be built as a four-lane divided, limited-access roadway between Route 250 Bypass on the south and existing Route 29 north of the South Fork Rivanna River.
- No other interchanges or intersections would be provided between the project termini.
- Grade separations would be provided at the crossings of Route 654 (Barracks Road), Route 657 (Lamb's Road), Roslyn Ridge Road, Route 743 (Earlysville Road), and Route 659 (Woodburn Road).
- The bypass project also includes a number of mitigation measures that were described in the 2003 ROD.
- Note: The short-term improvements to widen Route 29 and to build the North Grounds Connector (now Leonard Sandridge Road) that had been part of the project have since been constructed. Sixty-eight percent of the right-of-way parcels for the bypass have also been previously purchased.

**Environmental Issues**

The scope of issues addressed in the Environmental Assessment was identified primarily from the following sources:

- Comments received through early coordination with federal, state, regional, and local agencies likely to have an interest in the project.
- Issues raised by citizens commenting at the public meeting hosted by the Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in July 2011 before that body took action to amend the Contained Long Range Plan (CLRP) to include the project.
- Unsolicited letters on the project from the public, environmental groups, and other organizations.
- Reconnaissance of the project area and review of associated mapping and other data sources.

Based on all of the above, the following issues were expanded upon in the Environmental Assessment:

- **Transportation**
  - Traffic update
  - Berkmar Drive extension
  - Other projects in CLRP, such as Rio Road interchange, US 250 Bypass interchange
  - Local and regional planning (CLRP, Places29: A Master Plan for the Northern Development Areas, US 29 North Corridor Transportation Study)
  - Context-sensitive design
- **Land Use**
  - Local and regional planning (Places29, Albemarle County's comprehensive plan)
  - Updated county policies regarding land use, zoning, transportation, rural areas, natural resources, cultural assets
  - New development along Route 29 north of project
  - New development in Reservoir watershed
  - Updated community facilities information
- **Air Quality**
  - Air conformity
  - Air toxics
  - Greenhouse gasses
  - Health effects of vehicular emissions
  - Construction impacts
- **Water Quality and Wetlands**
  - Waters of the US, including wetlands (identification update)
  - Pollutant loading and potential hazardous materials issues for South Fork Rivanna River
  - South Fork Rivanna Reservoir
  - New regional water supply plan
  - Stormwater impacts
  - Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act
  - Impaired waters
  - Chesapeake Bay Model for water impacts assessment
  - Mitigation, erosion and sediment control, stormwater management
- **Historic Properties**
  - Archaeological sites at northern terminus
  - Architectural survey update
- **Threatened and Endangered Species**
  - James spinymussel (federal and state endangered)
  - Green floater (state threatened) historically documented in South Fork Rivanna River
  - Ivy Creek-Montvue Stream Conservation Unit
- **Hazardous Materials**
  - Keeping hazardous materials out of South Fork Rivanna Reservoir
  - Pesticide use during construction
  - Transport of hazardous materials, including nuclear materials
- **Noise**
  - Noise analysis update
- **Indirect and Cumulative Effects, including Induced Development**
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  - Noise analysis update
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Purpose and Need

As stated in the 1993 FEIS, “The purpose of the Route 29 Corridor Study is to find a solution to existing and future congestion on a three-mile section of U.S. Route 29 between U.S. Route 250 Bypass and the South Fork Rivanna River in the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County north of Charlottesville.”

The section of Route 29 between the Route 250 Bypass and the South Fork Rivanna River no longer adequately serves the mobility function intended for the State Arterial System and the National Highway System, of which Route 29 is a part, due to the disruption of flow by traffic signals, vehicles entering and leaving the roadway at numerous intersecting streets and access points serving adjacent properties, and low operating speeds arising from those conditions.

A secondary purpose “is to complete a gap in ongoing improvements to U.S. Route 29 through central Virginia.” Route 29 is the only major north-south route serving the Charlottesville area and connecting it with other population and employment centers.

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**Description of the Proposed Route 29 Bypass**

- The Route 29 Bypass would extend approximately 6.2 miles and would be built as a four-lane divided, limited-access roadway between Route 250 Bypass on the south and existing Route 29 north of the South Fork Rivanna River.
- No other interchanges or intersections would be provided between the project termini.
- Grade separations would be provided at the crossings of Route 654 (Barracks Road), Route 657 (Lamb's Road), Roslyn Ridge Road, Route 743 ( EARLYSVILLE Road), and Route 659 (Woodburn Road).
- The bypass project also includes a number of mitigation measures that were described in the 2003 ROD.
- Note: The short-term improvements to widen Route 29 and to build the North Grounds Connector (now Leonard Sandridge Road) that had been part of the project have since been constructed. Sixty-eight percent of the right-of-way parcels for the bypass have also been previously purchased.

**Alternatives**

The scope of issues addressed in the Environmental Assessment was identified primarily from the following sources:

- Comments received through early coordination with federal, state, regional, and local agencies likely to have an interest in the project.
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- Unsolicited letters on the project from the public, environmental groups, and other organizations.
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Based on all of the above, the following issues were expanded upon in the Environmental Assessment:

- **Transportation**
  - Traffic update
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Background

The record of environmental documentation on this project is extensive, beginning with a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) in 1993. Over the next 10 years came an Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) in 1995 for changes to the project termini; a Re-evaluation, Section 4(f) Evaluation, and Revised ROD in 2000; and a Supplemental EIS before further approvals may be granted if major steps to advance the action, such as final design or acquisition of a significant portion of the right-of-way, have not occurred within three years after the approval of the last major Administration approval or grant. Due to recent actions to provide funding to complete design and right-of-way acquisition and advance the project for construction, an Environmental Assessment has been prepared to address new information or circumstances relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed project and its impacts (e.g., changes to the affected environment and changes to applicable laws and regulations) since completion of previous documents submitted pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Previous documents, as well as the current Environmental Assessment and supporting technical reports, can be reviewed at: www.virginiadot.org/projects/culpeper/rt._29_bypass.asp.