

EMPORIA 2020
TRANSPORTATION PLAN

**Developed by the
Transportation Planning Division**

Of the

Virginia Department of Transportation

In Cooperation With

The U.S. Department Of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration

&

The City of Emporia

December 2001

This report does not constitute a standard specification, regulation or provide a funding mechanism for the included transportation recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

The Emporia 2020 Transportation Plan was developed as a joint effort between the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the City of Emporia. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the existing transportation system and future demand in the City of Emporia and to recommend a set of transportation improvements that could best meet existing and future transportation infrastructure needs.

Improved transportation systems are vital to Virginia's and to the local area's economic growth and development. Providing effective, safe, and efficient movement of people and goods is a basic goal of VDOT's transportation program. This guiding principle, together with consideration of environmental issues and local mobility needs, was the basis for the development of this transportation plan.

VDOT will use this plan when evaluating requests from the local governments for specific transportation projects and/or implementing projects that VDOT initiates. This list of recommendations will also be used in the statewide transportation planning process so that the magnitude of transportation needs statewide can be more accurately quantified.

STUDY AREA AND THOROUGHFARE SYSTEM

The City of Emporia is located along the Meherrin River in the center of Greensville County, within the southeastern portion of Virginia, approximately 8 miles north of the Virginia-North Carolina state line. Emporia is home to a significant transportation crossroads: Interstate 95 (I-95) and US Route 58 (US 58). Emporia is approximately 65 miles south of Richmond, Virginia and 75 miles west of Norfolk, Virginia. The City encompasses an area of approximately 6.6 square miles.

The study area for the Emporia 2020 Transportation Plan coincided with the boundary line of the corporate limits. Within this boundary line (commonly called a cordon line), a set of specific roadways was selected and designated as the urban thoroughfares. The analysis and recommendations were limited to these urban thoroughfares and any new facilities recommended in this study.

Thoroughfares are defined as facilities that operate as arterials or collector routes. The distinction between functional classifications (arterial, collector, local street) is based on whether the facility primarily serves "through-traffic" or provides direct access to adjacent land. Thoroughfare roadways in cities and towns with populations over 5,000 have an "urban" designation and those in cities and towns with populations less than 5,000 are designated "rural".

Roadways not classified by this system, but deemed important by local governments, may be in the 2020 Transportation Plan as "non-thoroughfare" roadways. Typically, these are planned roadways or improvements that will be built with funds (public or private) other than VDOT funds.

DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

The 2000 Census recorded 5,665 persons living in the City of Emporia, an increase of 359 persons over the 1990 Census. During the time period from 1950 to 1980, the City of Emporia's population had a negative growth rate. However, over the last 20 years the City has seen positive growth. The major reason for this population growth comes from the 1988 annexation that increased the population by 1,022. The City of Emporia Comprehensive Plan projected that the City population will grow to 6,000 persons by 2010.

The Emporia-Greensville area has historically had an agricultural economy, with Emporia being the trade and manufacturing center. Trade encompasses 35 percent of the employment in Emporia, services account for 29 percent, while manufacturing is 25 percent. The largest employer in the area is the Georgia-Pacific Corporation with three plants in the vicinity. As I-95 is located in part in Emporia, the City is a stop-over point for travelers and much of the local retail economy for Emporia is tied to the travel industry. The unemployment rate in July 2001 was 5.5 percent according to the Virginia Employment Commission. This rate is slightly below the average unemployment rate in the area for the last decade, which is 6.2 percent.

SUMMARY OF APPROACH AND ANALYSIS METHODS

The development of the transportation plan followed a process that included data collection, review, and analysis. The data collected included information such as traffic counts, police accident reports, roadway geometric inventory data, bridge structural inspection reports, at-grade railroad crossing geometric data, tourism surveys, and goods movement surveys. Review and analysis of this data was combined with a review and analysis of previous transportation and land-use plans and other studies. Furthermore, meetings were held with local staff throughout the study process to gather additional input.

TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Transportation recommendations are included in the plan as phased recommendations or other recommendations.

Phased recommendations are generally improvements to the VDOT-maintained roadway system and have been phased to establish a basis for prioritization. Phased recommendations are divided into three phases. Phase One recommendations are base year improvements intended to address the most immediate needs of the City. Phase Two recommendations are interim study year (2010) improvements. Typically these improvements are not needed in the immediate future. However, planning and budgeting for their future implementation may allow them to be in place for the interim study year of 2010. Phase Three recommendations are long-term (2020) improvements that do not have an immediate or short-term need. However, in the long-term, as traffic grows and existing facilities age, their importance will become more apparent. Long-term recommended improvements may also be re-evaluated as this plan is updated to determine if the need for their implementation has been met, or whether they should be deferred into the future again when their need may develop. In some instances, long-term recommended improvements may be removed from the transportation planning effort if their need does not develop or if other circumstances cause a change of priorities in the study area.

Other recommendations focus on parking, bicycle/pedestrian facilities, intercity rail, intercity bus, air travel, transit, paratransit, taxi, and goods movement and may include areas of special concern. These items are not typically funded as part of the urban transportation plan, but may include components addressed by any of the phased recommendations.

PHASED RECOMMENDATIONS

PHASE ONE: BASE YEAR (2001) RECOMMENDATIONS

Roadway Improvements

- Provide roadway striping on Halifax Street between Southampton Street and Knox Street. The total length of this improvement is 0.80 miles and the total cost has been estimated at \$48,000.

Intersection Improvements

- US 301 (N Main Street) at the Hospital Entrance – Provide a new signal at the intersection of US 301 (N Main Street) and the hospital entrance. The cost for this improvement has been estimated at \$180,000.

Bridge Improvements

- Replace the bridge over Metcalf Branch on Halifax Street. The cost for this improvement has been estimated at \$756,000.

PHASE TWO: INTERIM YEAR (2010) RECOMMENDATIONS

Roadway Improvements

- Widen Halifax Street between Knox Street and US 301 (N Main Street) to urban 2-lane standards including sidewalks. The total length of this improvement is 0.44 miles and the total cost has been estimated at \$2,088,200.

Intersection Improvements

- US 58 Business (W Atlantic Street) at US 301 (N Main Street) – Provide a dedicated right-turn lane from eastbound US 58 Business (W Atlantic Street) onto US 301 (N Main Street). The total cost of this improvement has been estimated at \$111,000.
- US 58 at US 58 Business (Market Drive) – Provide a second dedicated right-turn lane from eastbound US 58 onto US 58 Business (Market Drive). The cost for this improvement has been estimated at \$111,000.

Grade Crossing Improvements

- Improve the grade of Southampton Street at the crossing of the CSX railway. The total cost of this improvement has been estimated at \$395,000.

PHASE THREE: STUDY YEAR (2020) RECOMMENDATIONS

Roadway Improvements

- Widen US 58 to a 6-lane rural divided roadway from Purdy Road to US 301 (N Main Street). The total length of this improvement is 1.13 miles and the total cost has been estimated at \$6,441,000.
- Widen and improve Sunnyside Road to an urban 2-lane roadway from the Emporia east corporate limits to Reese Street. The total length of this improvement is 0.40 miles and the total cost has been estimated at \$1,898,400.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Parking

There is no major lack of parking for the local businesses and residents in the City of Emporia. On-street parking is provided on both sides of US 301 (S Main Street) from Spring Street to Church Street and on the northbound side of US 301 (N Main Street) between Valley Street and Baker Street. This parking serves the “downtown” storefronts on US 301 (N Main Street). On-street parking is also provided on Halifax Street between Valley Street and US 58 Business (W Atlantic Street) to serve the businesses that front Halifax Street. On-street parking is not allowed on US 58 Business (E/W Atlantic Street) in Emporia. Most major businesses have adequate off-street parking space available. No additional parking facilities are recommended at this time.

Bicycle/Pedestrian

The City of Emporia Comprehensive Plan includes a suggestion that the City should develop guidelines and possible routes for Emporia’s bikeway planning needs. In addition, the Comprehensive Plan lists specific recommendations for expanding the bikeway/pedestrian facilities in Emporia:

- Extend the existing bike trail along the north bank of the Meherrin River to the west toward the Walnut Heights area.
- Add walking trails along the banks of the Meherrin River to help unify the two halves of the City.
- Extend the existing bike trail from the Meherrin River Park north on Halifax Street to the Community Youth Center.
- Add a bike trail from the Meherrin River Park south to Brunswick Avenue.

These improvements provide recreational opportunities for the City’s residents and possibly provide residents with an alternative means of transportation to work in the downtown areas.

Sidewalks are considered an important part of the transportation system for the City of Emporia. Roadway improvements in this plan include the provision of sidewalks where they do not currently exist for transporting citizens safely.

Intercity Rail

The nearest intercity rail stop is a full service station in Petersburg, Virginia (44 miles north) on the north-south rail route. No formal plans for establishing rail passenger service have been announced in the region. No enhancements to intercity rail service are proposed at this time.

Intercity Bus

In the City of Emporia, Greyhound Lines bus service is available at 720 N Main Street and provides regularly scheduled access to transfers nationwide. No enhancements are recommended at this time.

Air Travel

Commercial Service

Commercial air passenger service is available at Richmond International Airport in Richmond. This airport is located 65 miles north of Emporia, connecting Emporia residents with major hubs across the country. Airfreight and charter services are available at this airport.

General Aviation

The closest general aviation facilities are available at Emporia-Greenville Regional Airport. The airport is located 3 miles east of Emporia along US 58. The airport has one 5000-foot runway and serves corporate turbojets and turboprop aircraft. There is currently no airfreight traffic at the Emporia-Greenville Regional Airport.

No improvements to air travel are recommended at this time.

Transit, Paratransit, and Taxi

The City of Emporia currently does not operate any mass transit. Five privately owned taxicab businesses serve Emporia. Provision of additional services is not recommended at this time.

Goods Movement

Roadway freight shipment to the City of Emporia is available via one of the two main primary arterials that access the City: I-95 and US 58. Emporia is also at the crossroads of two key railways, CSX, running north-to-south, and Norfolk-Southern going east-to-west. Both railway lines have industrial rail spurs within the city limits.

Based upon the interviews with City representatives, there are no goods movement issues that may hinder economic development in the City of Emporia. There were also no transportation deficiencies identified that would impede goods movement within the study area. Therefore, there are no specific recommendations related to goods movement.

Tourism

Emporia takes advantage of a transportation crossroads: I-95 and US 58. The City is an ideal stopover point for thousands of travelers on these two roadways. Therefore, much of the local retail economy is strongly tied to the travel industry. Emporia is home to several annual festivals and events, including the Meherrin River Arts Council, the Virginia Pork Festival, the Great Peanut Tour, and the Virginia Peanut Festival. Some of these events draw up to 15,000 people. The City also has two buildings on the National Register, the H.T. Klugel Building and the Old Merchants and Farmers Bank Building.

Currently, no parking, pedestrian, or capacity-related problems have been identified in Emporia that would limit tourist activity. Therefore, no tourism-related improvements are recommended.

LOCAL PROJECTS¹

The following local grade crossing has been identified for improvement by the City of Emporia. Although outside the jurisdiction of the VDOT thoroughfare roadway system, it is listed to provide continuity and consistency between local plans and VDOT plans.

- Improve the grade crossing on Park Avenue at the CSX railway. The cost is approximately \$1,000,000.

ENVIRONMENTAL OVERVIEW

An environmental overview was conducted for the Emporia thoroughfare roadway recommendations that included widening (providing additional travel lanes) or development of new roadway facilities. To conduct the environmental overview, secondary data from VDOT and other readily available sources was used. Information on the environmental overview methodology can be found in the Emporia 2020 Transportation Plan Technical Report. The following is a brief summary of a potential environmental impact:

- A wetland and stream crossing were identified for the US 58 widening.

These estimates are intended to represent the worst-case scenario of impacts. Further evaluation of environmental impacts resulting from each of these recommendations should occur once they are developed in more detail. The local project included in this plan is for information purposes only and is not necessarily supported by VDOT. Therefore, it was not reviewed as part of the environmental overview. There were no additional environmental features identified in Emporia that would preclude implementation of any of the recommendations.

LOCAL COORDINATION AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

The development of the Emporia 2020 Transportation Plan included several coordination meetings with City staff and a public meeting held with VDOT representatives, City officials, and residents from Emporia.

The coordination meetings consisted of a kick-off meeting, an existing conditions meeting, and a draft recommendations meeting. The kick-off meeting, held in May 1999, enabled the project team to discuss with local staff, the purpose and scope of the study, the schedule for data collection and plan preparation, and the coordination process. The second meeting (existing conditions), held in September 2000, allowed the project team to present the results of baseline and horizon year traffic analysis and also allowed local staff to communicate desired transportation needs. Finally, at the draft recommendations meeting, held in May 2001, the project team presented and discussed with City officials the draft 2020 transportation recommendations. City staff provided input that was then used to draft the final recommendations.

After the series of coordination meetings, a public meeting was held at the Emporia Municipal Building on November 6, 2001. The purpose of this meeting was to present the recommendations to City officials, citizens, and other interested parties, to receive comments on the plan, and to allow the City Council to consider adopting the plan.

PLAN ADOPTION

The Small Urban Area Transportation Plan for the City of Emporia was adopted by the Emporia City Council on December 4, 2001

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

More details on the development of the Emporia 2020 Transportation Plan and the study recommendations are available in the Emporia 2020 Transportation Plan Technical Report and at the Emporia 2020 Transportation Plan website, <http://www.vdoturbanplans.com/Emporia.htm>. Copies of the Technical Report will be available at the Emporia Municipal Building and at the Crater Planning District Commission office. They are also available for review at the VDOT

¹ Local recommendations are included for information purposes only and are not necessarily supported by VDOT.

Emporia 2020 Transportation Plan

Transportation Planning Division central office in Richmond, Virginia, at the VDOT Hampton Roads District office in Suffolk, Virginia, and at the VDOT Residency office in Franklin, Virginia.

Projects included in the Virginia Transportation Development Plan (VTDP) are not part of this recommendations package. The VTDP can be reviewed online at VDOT's website, <http://www.virginia.gov/vdot>.

Information on VTDP projects for the City of Emporia can also be obtained by contacting the VDOT Resident Engineer at the Franklin Residency office in Franklin, Virginia (434-562-3194).

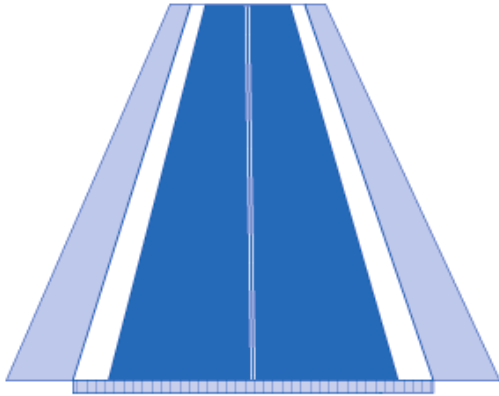
EMPORIA TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS²

Route #	Route Name	From	To	Road Segment Length (Miles)	Recommendation	Cost (Yr 2000\$)	Existing Typical Section (Width)	Recom. Typical Section (Width)	Average Daily Traffic (ADT)		
									Year 2000	Year 2010	Year 2020
	Halifax St	Southampton St	Knox St	0.80	Year 2001 Provide roadway striping	48,000	U2 (48')	U2 (48')	2,980	3,300	3,600
	Halifax St	Knox St	US 301 (N Main St)	0.44	Year 2010 Widen to urban 2-lane standards including sidewalks	2,088,200	R2 (24')	U2 (30')	1,650	1,800	2,000
US 58		Purdy Rd	US 301 (N Main St)	1.13	Year 2020 Widen to rural 6-lane divided standards	6,441,000	R4D (48')	R6D (72')	26,420	38,000	48,600
	Sunnyside Rd	Reese St	ECL Emporia	0.40	Year 2020 Widen to urban 2-lane standards	1,898,400	R2 (20')	U2 (30')	550	600	700
	Intersection Improvement	US 301 (N Main St)	Hospital Entrance		Year 2001 Signalize intersection	180,000	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Bridge Replacement	Metcalf Branch	Halifax St		Year 2001 Replace bridge over Metcalf Branch	756,000	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Intersection Improvement	US 58	US 58 Bus (Market Dr)		Year 2010 Add a second dedicated right-turn lane on eastbound US 58.	111,000	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Intersection Improvement	US 58 Bus (W Atlantic St)	US 301 (N Main St)		Year 2010 Add a dedicated right-turn lane on eastbound US 58 Bus (W Atlantic St)	111,000	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Grade Crossing	Southampton St	CSX railway		Year 2010 Rail/Roadway improvements at railway crossing	395,000	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total						12,028,600					

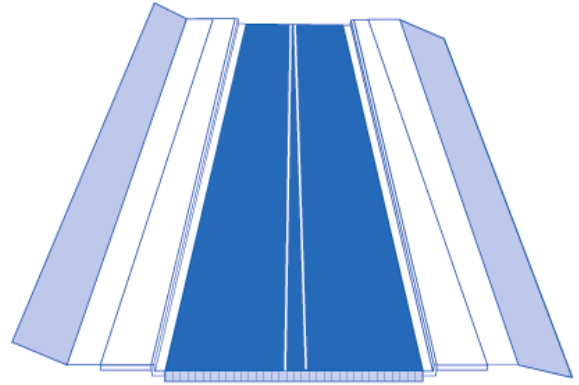
² Only thoroughfare roadways with recommendations are shown. For a complete listing of thoroughfare roadways, please refer to the Emporia 2020 Transportation Plan Technical Report or the Emporia 2020 Transportation Plan website, <http://www.vdoturbanplans.com/Emporia.htm>.

TYPICAL SECTIONS

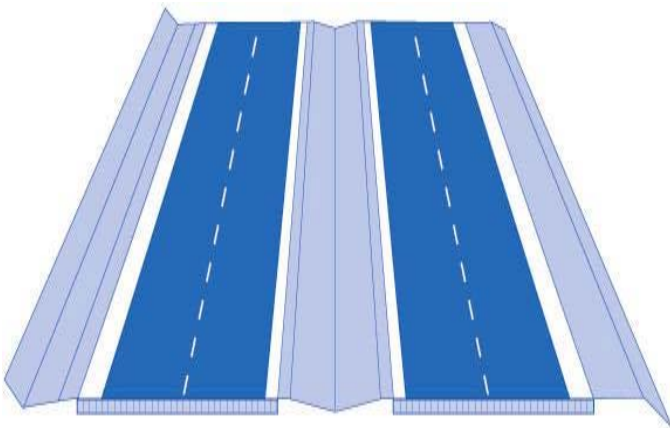
R2
Rural 2-lane roadway with standard shoulders and ditches



U2
Urban 2-lane roadway with curb and gutter



R4D
Rural 4-lane divided roadway with standard shoulders and ditches



R6D
Rural 6-lane divided roadway with standard shoulders and ditches

