

**MARION 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 Town of Marion**

**August 2001**

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

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Marion 2020 Transportation Plan was developed as a joint effort between the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the Town of Marion. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the existing transportation system and future demand in the Town of Marion 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 Town of Marion is located in Smyth County in the mountainous section of central southwest Virginia. The Town is located adjacent to I-81 and is approximately 45 miles northeast of Bristol, Virginia. The Town of Marion is the county seat and largest town in Smyth County. The Town encompasses an area of approximately 4.2 square miles.

The study area for the 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 33,081 persons living in Smyth County, an increase of 711 persons over the 1990 Census. During the same time period (from 1990 to 2000), the Town of Marion population dropped from 6,630 to 6,349, a decrease of 281 persons. Although the population of Marion has declined over the past 40 years since their population peak in 1960 (8,385), the 1996 Town of Marion Comprehensive Plan projected that the Town population will grow to 8,300 persons by 2010.

Marion has an industrial base and is considered a sub-regional shopping center destination. The Comprehensive Plan recommends "cautioned" growth in retail goods businesses and industrial growth only through expansion of existing industrial sites. The Plan does recommend an expansion in the tourism sector, including acceleration of development in the Hungry Mother State Park. The unemployment rate in August 2001 was 6.4 percent for Smyth County and Marion according to the Virginia Employment Commission. This rate is significantly below the unemployment rate for the County and the Town since the last decade, which was 9.4 percent in 1991.

## **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 Town. 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**

#### ***Intersection Improvements***

- Prohibit left turns from westbound US 11/VA 16 (E Main Street) onto Pendleton Street. This change is in response to the safety concerns on US 11/VA 16 (E Main Street) for left turning vehicles at Pendleton Street and VA 16 (S Commerce Street). The total cost for this improvement has been estimated at \$10,000.
- Traffic signal and/or advance warning signing improvements at the intersection of US 11/VA 16 (N Main Street) and VA 16 (Park Boulevard) to increase visibility of the signal and/or increase yellow signal time on US 11/VA 16 (N Main Street). These recommended improvements are in response to the historic number of correctable rear-end and right-angle accidents at this intersection. The total cost for this improvement has been estimated at \$90,000.

### **PHASE TWO: INTERIM YEAR (2010) RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### ***Roadway Improvements***

- Widen US 11 (S Main Street) between Greenway Avenue and College Street from two lanes to four lanes. The total length of this improvement is 0.39 miles and the total cost has been estimated at \$3,430,440.
- Widen and improve S Poston Street from US 11 (S Main Street) to W Cherry Street and E/W Cherry Street from S Poston Street to VA 16 (S Commerce Street) to an upgraded 2-lane urban collector typical section. As part of this improvement, increase the radius of the S Poston Street/E/W Cherry Street roadway bend. The total length of this improvement is 0.67 miles and the total cost has been estimated at \$3,179,820.

## **PHASE THREE: STUDY YEAR (2020) RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***Roadway Improvements***

- Widen and improve Chatham Hill Road to an upgraded 2-lane urban collector typical section from the NCL to Fowler Street. The total length of this improvement is 0.91 miles and the total cost has been estimated at \$2,040,780.
- Widen and improve E/W Chilhowie Street to an upgraded 2-lane urban collector typical section from the WCL to Chatham Hill Road. The total length of this improvement is 0.43 miles and the total cost has been estimated at \$4,318,860.

### **OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### ***Parking***

The Town has delineated the center of Marion as the central business district (CBD). As part of the redevelopment of the CBD, the Town has set a goal to provide safe and convenient parking within the CBD. The Town also included in the Comprehensive Plan a recommendation to build new parking facilities on the north side of US 11 (E Main Street) between Church Street and Chestnut Street.

#### ***Bicycle/Pedestrian***

The Town of Marion has received approval for the Tea-21 Application for Federal Funds for the construction of a pedestrian and bicycle path from the Hungry Mother State Park into Marion along VA 16 (Park Boulevard). Both the Town of Marion and Smyth County support this project that would provide recreational opportunities for the Town's residents and provide enhanced tourism opportunities to the Town.

The Town included language in the Comprehensive Plan to encourage development of sidewalk facilities throughout the Town to accommodate pedestrian activity.

#### ***Intercity Rail***

The nearest intercity rail stop (un-staffed) is in Hinton, West Virginia (94 miles north) on the east-west rail route. A full service station on the same line is located in Prince, West Virginia (110 miles north). Nearest direct access to the north-south line is at High Point, North Carolina (131 miles southeast). No formal plans for initiation of rail passenger service have been announced in the region. However, feasibility studies conducted by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation in 1994 and 1997 have investigated initiation of rail passenger service between Bristol, Richmond, and Washington D.C., and included a proposed station in Marion. It is recommended that the Town of Marion support any plans that may be formalized to establish rail passenger service in the region.

#### ***Intercity Bus***

Greyhound Lines bus service is located in Marion at 141 Dabney Drive and provides regularly scheduled access to transfers nationwide. No enhancements are recommended at this time.

#### ***Air Travel***

##### **Commercial Service**

For commercial air passenger service, the nearest airport to the Town of Marion is the Tri-Cities Regional Airport near Blountville, Tennessee (54 miles southwest). It is served by four commercial carriers offering service to six major hubs. Additional commercial airports are located over 100 miles further away.

##### **General Aviation**

The closest general aviation facilities are available at Mountain Empire Airport, which is jointly owned by Smyth and Wythe counties, located nine miles northeast of Marion by 1-81. Mountain Empire Airport has a 5,250-foot lighted

runway (75 feet wide), three hangers capable of holding 30 planes, and charter and air freight services available. The airport can be accessed from US 11 with signs on both US 11 and I-81.

No additional enhancements to air services are proposed at this time.

### ***Transit, Paratransit, and Taxi***

Minibus and van services for the elderly and handicapped residents of Marion are provided by the Area Agency on Aging, District Three Governmental Cooperative. In addition, the District Three Governmental Cooperative operates a shuttle bus service to the two area community colleges and a municipal bus system for the Town. Two privately owned taxicab businesses serve Marion. Three other taxi businesses operate in Smyth County. In combination, these businesses provide multiple passenger and package services to the area. Provision of additional services is not recommended at this time.

### ***Goods Movement***

Roadway freight shipment to the Town of Marion is available via one of the two main primary arterials that access the Town: US 11 and VA 16. Both of these routes provide access to I-81, the major truck route in southwestern Virginia. Brunswick Lane is home to Marion's major industrial sites and experiences significant truck activity.

The Norfolk Southern Railway maintains tracks through Marion and freight services are provided to local industries by rail.

No roadway sections are said to be adversely impacted by high levels of truck traffic and no roadway segments were identified that would impede the movement of truck traffic. Therefore, no truck restrictions or truck bypasses are recommended at this time.

### ***Tourism***

Marion is located only four miles from the Hungry Mother State Park and receives a significant tourism benefit from this. US 11 (Main Street) and VA 16 (S Commerce Street/Park Boulevard) through Marion serve as the access routes to the park from I-81. Hungry Mother State Park is a 2,200-acre park noted for its woodlands and 108-acre lake. The park has camping, cabin rentals, horse trails and the Virginia State Park System's first conference center: Hemlock Haven. There are currently no parking, pedestrian, or roadway capacity problems associated with tourism in Marion. Therefore, no improvements are recommended at this time.

### **LOCAL PROJECTS<sup>1</sup>**

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

- Extend Fowler Street from its existing terminus at Prater Lane to the intersection of VA 16 (Park Boulevard) and Culbert Drive. This would require the installation of a new traffic signal at VA 16 (Park Boulevard). The cost is approximately \$2,135,700.

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

## **ENVIRONMENTAL OVERVIEW**

An environmental overview was conducted for the Marion 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 Marion 2020 Transportation Plan Technical Report. The following is a brief summary of potential environmental impacts:

- US 11 (S Main Street) widening from Greenway Avenue to College Street: 2 homes relocated

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. Local projects included in this plan are for information purposes only and are not necessarily supported by VDOT. Therefore, they were not reviewed as part of the environmental overview. There were no additional environmental features identified in Marion that would preclude implementation of any of the recommendations.

## **LOCAL COORDINATION AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION**

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

The coordination meetings consisted of a kick-off meeting, an existing conditions meeting, and a draft recommendations meeting. The kick-off meeting, held in April 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 May 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 March 2001, the project team presented and discussed with Town officials the draft 2020 Transportation Plan recommendations. Town 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 Marion Municipal Building on July 16, 2001. The purpose of this meeting was to present the recommendations to Town officials, citizens, and other interested parties, to receive comments on the plan, and to allow the Town Council to consider adopting the plan.

## **PLAN ADOPTION**

The Small Urban Area Transportation Plan for the Town of Marion was adopted by the Marion Town Council on August 20, 2001.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

More details on the development of the Marion 2020 Transportation Plan and the study recommendations are available in the Marion 2020 Transportation Plan Technical Report and at the Marion 2020 Transportation Plan website, <http://www.vdoturbanplans.com/Marion.htm>. Copies of the Technical Report are located at the Marion Town Library and the Mount Rodgers Planning District Commissions office. They are also available for review at the VDOT Transportation Planning Division at the central office in Richmond, Virginia, at the VDOT Bristol District office in Bristol, Virginia, and at the VDOT Residency office in Abingdon, 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.virginiadot.org>.

Information on VTDP projects for the Town of Marion can also be obtained by contacting the VDOT Resident Engineer at the Abingdon Residency office in Abingdon, Virginia (276-676-5503).

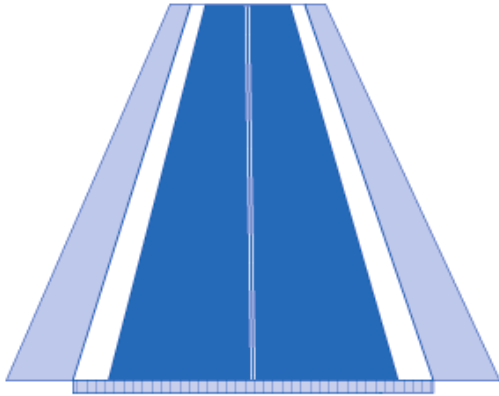
**MARION TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS<sup>2</sup>**

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
US 11	S Main St	Greenway Ave	College St	0.39	Year 2010 Widen to urban 4-lane standards	3,430,440	U2 (40')	U4 (48')	11,390	13,900	16,200
	S Poston St/ E/W Cherry St	US 11 (S Main St)	VA 16 (S Commerce St)	0.67	Year 2010 Improve to urban collector 2-lane standards	3,179,820	U2 (24')	U2 (30')	4,620	5,100	5,600
	Chatham Hill Rd	NCL Marion	Fowler St	0.43	Year 2020 Improve to urban collector 2-lane standards	2,040,780	R2 (20')	U2 (30')	600	700	700
	E/W Chilhowie St	WCL Marion	Chatham Hill Rd	0.91	Year 2020 Improve to urban collector 2-lane standards	4,318,860	R2 (20')	U2 (30')	2,450	3,000	3,500
	Intersection Improvement	US 11/VA 16 (Main St)	Pendleton St	N/A	Year 2001 Prohibit left turns from westbound US 11/VA 16 (Main St) onto Pendleton St	10,000	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Intersection Improvement	US 11/VA 16 (N Main St)	VA 16 (Park Blvd)	N/A	Year 2001 Traffic signal and/or advance warning signing and/or increase yellow signal time	90,000	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total						13,069,900					

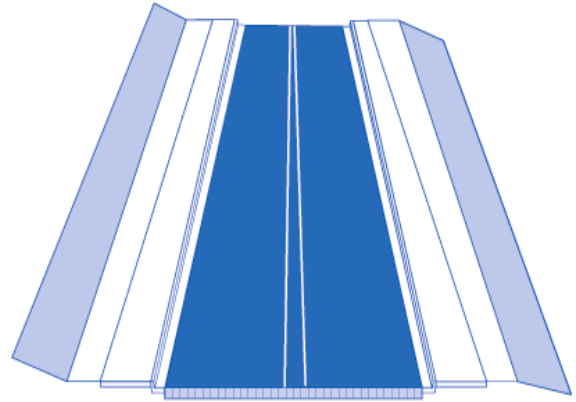
<sup>2</sup> Only thoroughfare roadways with recommendations are shown. For a complete listing of thoroughfare roadways, please refer to the Marion 2020 Transportation Plan Technical Report or the Marion 2020 Transportation Plan website, <http://www.vdoturbanplans.com/Marion.htm>.

## TYPICAL SECTIONS

R2  
Rural 2-lane roadway with standard shoulders and ditches



U2  
Urban 2-lane roadway with curb and gutter



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U4  
Urban 4-lane roadway with curb and gutter

