



www.VirginiaDOT.org
Route121CFX@vdot.virginia.gov

Location Public Hearing

U.S. Route 121 (Coalfields Expressway), Section IIIB Buchanan County

Tuesday, September 23, 2014, 5-7 p.m.
Inclement Weather Date: September 25, 2014, 5-7 p.m.
Riverview Elementary/Middle School
27382 Riverside Drive
Grundy, VA 24614

A JOINT PROJECT OF:

The Virginia Department of Transportation

The Federal Highway Administration

Welcome

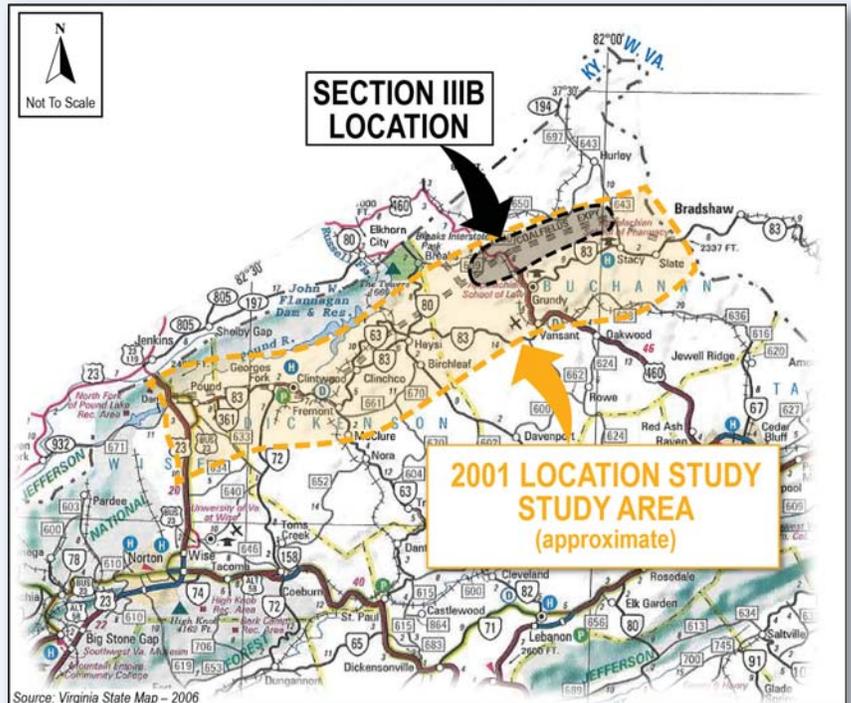
The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), has evaluated changes to Section IIIB of proposed U.S. Route 121, which extends from Route 614 to Route 643 in Buchanan County. The proposed changes result in a modified alignment that is shorter than the previously approved alignment and provides for a connector to existing U.S. Route 460 at the Town of Grundy.

Purpose of the Hearing

The purpose of this hearing 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 proposed project. We invite you to review the findings of the Environmental Studies document and other information about changes to the proposed location of Section IIIB 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 by the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) and FHWA.

Background

The purpose of constructing U.S. Route 121 is to improve mobility and safety, support economic development, and satisfy Congressional initiatives. The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) for U.S. Route 121 were completed in 2001. The ROD identified Alternative F1 as the selected alternative and noted that the project would be designed and constructed in numerous phases. In January 2006, VDOT entered into a Comprehensive Agreement with private contractors for design and construction of the project. The contractors have experience working throughout the region. As such, they were tasked by VDOT to develop modifications to the selected Alternative F1 that would best take advantage of areas where use of their large-scale earthmoving equipment and techniques as well as incidental coal recovery could be used to substantially reduce the estimated cost of the project. The proposed changes to the selected Alternative F1 in Section IIIB are referred to as "Alternative F1 Modified," and environmental studies have been completed to assess the proposed changes.



Environmental Impacts

The corridors for Alternative F1 and proposed Alternative F1 Modified, as well as the typical cross section for the new roadway, are shown on the adjacent page. Alternative F1 Modified shifts the Alternative F1 corridor by at most approximately 1.5 miles and overlaps at several points, while also providing a somewhat straighter alignment. It is still within the broader study area considered in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), crosses similar terrain, and it involves substantially similar environmental and social conditions as the selected Alternative F1. The table below quantifies and compares impacts reported in the 2001 FEIS for Alternative F1 with updated values for Alternative F1 and Alternative F1 Modified.

CATEGORY	Alternative F1 2001 FEIS Values	Alternative F1 Updated Values	Alternative F1 Modified ⁹
Total Area within Alternative (acres within 750-foot corridor)	1,369	1,369	1,220
Homes ¹	41	40	28
Businesses ¹	1	1	0
Schools ¹	0	0	0
Churches ¹	1*	0	0
Cemeteries ¹	0	0	0
Other Community Facilities (rescue squads, fire stations, etc.) ¹	0	0	0
Prime and Unique Farmland (acres) ²	0	0	0
Forest (acres) ³	444.8**	1,264	1,091
Section 4(f) Property Use (acres) ^{1, 4}	0	0	0
Parks and Recreational Resources ¹	0	0	0
Historic Properties Affected ⁴	0	0	0
Length of Streams (miles) ⁵	1.6	1.8	2.6
Wetlands (acres) ⁶	0.36	0	0
Floodplains Filled (acres) ⁷	0***	0***	0***
Noise Impacts (Number of Receptors Impacted)	0	0	0
Hazardous Material Sites Impacted (number of sites) ⁸	4	1	0

NOTE: The Alternative F1 2001 FEIS Values reported in this table were calculated by summing the impacts for Segments 303, 238, 237, and 302, as presented in Chapter 4, Environmental Consequences, of the 2001 FEIS. The numbered footnotes below are applicable to the Alternative F1 Updated Values and Alternative F1 Modified only:

¹ Google Earth, accessed April 2014.

² Natural Resources Conservation Service, United States Department of Agriculture Web Soil Survey, accessed April 2014.

³ National Landcover Dataset, 2006.

⁴ Virginia Cultural Resource Information System, accessed April 2014.

⁵ National Hydrography Dataset, 2013.

⁶ National Wetlands Inventory, 2013.

⁷ National Flood Hazard Layer, Buchanan County (2001), Federal Emergency Management Agency.

⁸ Google Earth, accessed April 2014; Environmental Protection Agency, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, and USDOT Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration online datasets.

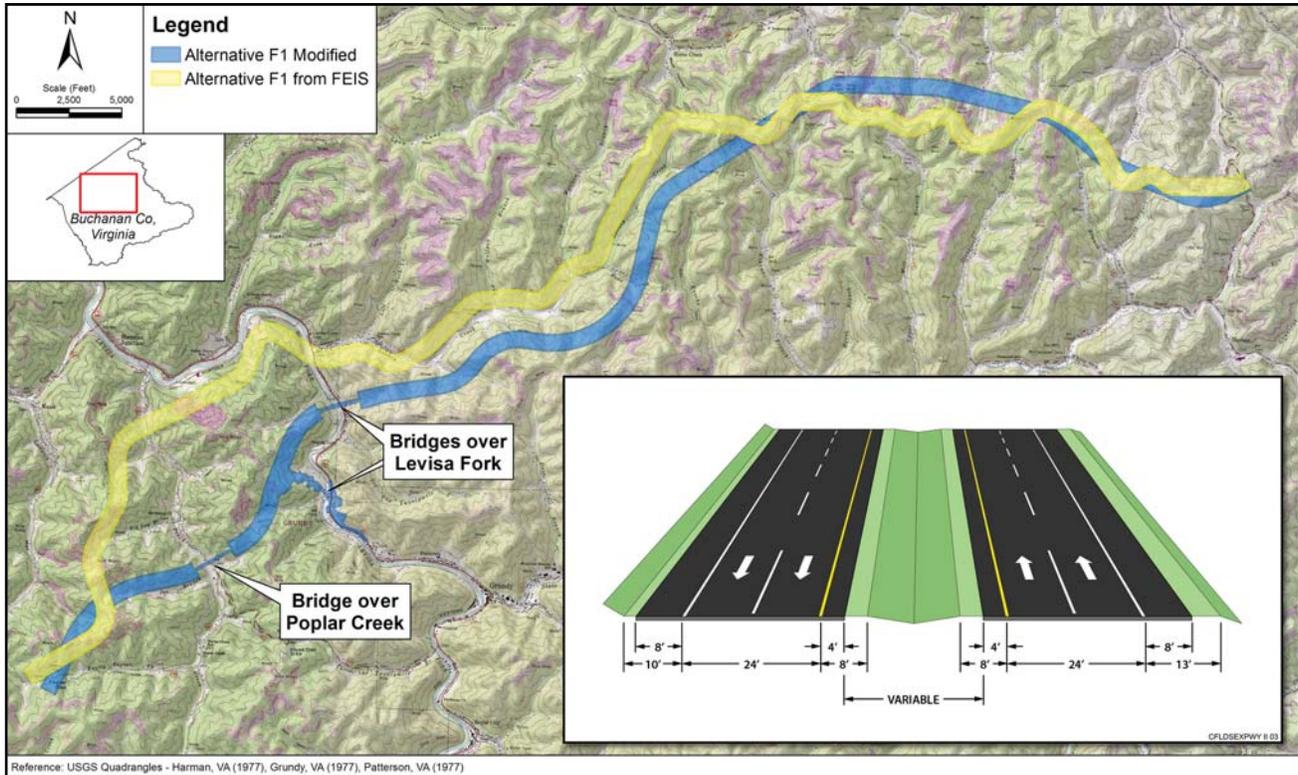
⁹ For the connector between mainline Alternative F1 Modified and existing U.S. Route 460 at the Town of Grundy, some conceptual engineering was conducted in coordination with the Grundy Town Manager in order to address concerns about potential business and residential displacements. Accordingly, the impacts calculations for the U.S. Route 460 connecting road and transition to existing U.S. Route 460 portions of Alternative F1 Modified reflect estimated construction limits rather than a 750-foot-wide corridor as was assumed for the mainline calculations. Additionally, given the sensitivity of stream and floodplain impacts, preliminary bridge concepts have been identified for crossings of Poplar Creek and Levisa Fork and these also are reflected in the calculations.

* FEIS reported that Segment 237 would impact the Poplar Creek Pentecostal Church of God; however, this church could not be found on recent aerial mapping or through online research.

** FEIS reported forest impacts for an estimated impact width of 300 feet.

*** No floodplain impacts were reported in the FEIS because it was assumed that floodplains, such as the one at Levisa Fork, would be bridged. Likewise, floodplain crossings for Alternative F1 Modified would also be on bridges.

Alternative F1 and Alternative F1 Modified



Coal Synergy

Coal synergy is an innovative concept that uses large-scale earthmoving equipment and techniques common to the mining industry and revenue from incidental coal recovery to offset roadway construction costs, thereby reducing the expenditure of public funds. Incidental coal recovery is not the largest savings factor; it is the economies of scale achieved with the equipment and the techniques that reduces excavation cost, which is the largest cost for construction in the project area's mountainous terrain.

The coal synergy approach to constructing U.S. Route 121 does not allow VDOT's private sector partners to engage in surface mining operations. Currently, there are no active or permitted surface mines within the study corridor and there are no current or pending surface mining applications. Any future surface mining permits will be permitted independent of the roadway. Therefore, any coal removed from the corridor and deemed an engineering necessity for the roadway construction project would constitute incidental coal removal, which occurs as a matter of course on most road projects within the coal-producing counties in southwest Virginia (Wise, Dickenson, and Buchanan counties, as well as parts of Russell and Tazewell) and would therefore not be unique or unusual. In addition, at this point in project development, it is unknown if or where coal seams would be encountered by the proposed construction.

The coal synergy approach to building Section IIIB does not reduce environmental requirements on the private partners. Incidental coal recovery is a tightly regulated process and the federal Office of Surface Mining (OSM) and Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy's Division of Mined Land Reclamation (DMLR) oversee, review, and approve applications to conduct incidental coal recovery operations and inspect such operations to ensure that they are limited to engineering necessity for roadway construction and that the quantity of coal extracted does not exceed the approved qualifying threshold.

Appalachian Development Highway System

Corridor Q of the Appalachian Development Highway System (ADHS) traverses portions of Kentucky, Virginia, and West Virginia, generally following the existing U.S. Route 460 corridor, with some sections on new location designated as the U.S. Route 460 Connector. Phase I of the new U.S. Route 460 Connector is currently under construction. A Finding of No Significant Impact was issued in 2010 for Phase II, and a Design-Build contract was executed on July 31, 2013. A portion of Section IIIB of proposed U.S. Route 121 is also part of Corridor Q. Where the two routes overlap, the roadway would be dually designated as U.S. Route 121 and U.S. Route 460. Additional information on the ADHS can be found at the following web address: <http://www.arc.gov/adhs>.

Environmental Review

The 2001 FEIS and the Section IIIB Environmental Studies document are available for review here tonight, or they can be reviewed on VDOT's web site at www.VirginiaDOT.org/IIIB. The documents are also available at VDOT's Bristol District Office located at 870 Bonham Road in Bristol, 276-669-6151, 1-800-352-1730 or TTY/TDD 711. Please call ahead to ensure that the appropriate personnel are available to answer your questions.

Civil Rights

VDOT ensures nondiscrimination in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. For additional information or assistance, contact VDOT's Bristol District Office of Equal Opportunity, 870 Bonham Road in Bristol, 276-669-6151, 1-800-352-1730 or TTY/TDD 711.

Schedule

Date	Event
August 2014	Environmental Studies document approved by FHWA for public availability
September 23, 2014	Public Hearing
October 6, 2014	Final day to submit comments
December 2014	Environmental Studies document revised, as appropriate, based on hearing comments and comments on the document
February 2015	Final decision on location by CTB
February 2015	Final decision on the Environmental Studies document by FHWA

Right-of-Way and Relocation Assistance

Information about right-of-way purchase procedures is provided in VDOT's brochure entitled "Right-of-Way and Utilities: A Guide for Property Owners and Tenants." Copies of this brochure are available here from VDOT's Right-of-Way representatives. After this hearing, information and questions regarding right-of-way should be directed to:

Michael G. Black
Bristol District Right-of-Way and Utilities Manager
870 Bonham Road
Bristol, VA 24201
276-669-9925

What's Next?

VDOT will review and evaluate the comments you provide to us tonight and during the comment period. Comments will be considered, addressed, and changes made to the Environmental Studies document as appropriate. A summary of the comments received during the comment period will be submitted to the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), along with a copy of the public hearing transcript, the recommendation for the project, and a request that a final decision be made by the CTB and FHWA.

Get Involved

Please review the maps and displays and share your thoughts by using the comment sheet provided with this brochure. You may leave your comments in the box provided at tonight's hearing. You may also record your comments orally at the designated recording station.

If you are not ready to provide your comments tonight, you may submit them by **October 6, 2014** in one of the following ways:

Complete comment sheet online at:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/IIIBCommentSheet>

Email: Route121CFX@vdot.virginia.gov

Please reference "U.S. Route 121 – Section IIIB Public Hearing Comment" in the subject line.

Mail to the following address, which is also preprinted on the back of the comment sheet:

Mandy Cox
Program Manager
Virginia Department of Transportation
870 Bonham Road
Bristol, VA 24201