

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

Meeting #12: July 25, 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; Craig Oakley, New Baltimore Fire Department; Natalie Erdossy, Brookside HOA; Marc Geffroy

Members Absent: Steven Combs, state veterans home (Puller Veterans Care Center); Haven Melton, FAA Vint Hill; George Phillips, Prince William County; Cristy Thorpe, C. Hunter Ritchie Elementary School; Ike Broaddus, Vint Hill Business Community

Staff Present: Garrett Moore, VDOT; John Lynch, VDOT; Mark Nesbit, VDOT; Ben Davison, VDOT; Rick Crofford, VDOT; Greg Cooley, VDOT; Lou Hatter, VDOT; Holder Trumbo, BOS Supervisor Scott District; Captain Ray Prudhum, Sheriff's Office; Corporal Steven Shiner, Sheriff's Office; Andy Marshall, Sheriff's Office; Holly Meade, Fauquier County; Marie Pham, Fauquier County; Maureen Williamson, Fauquier County

Due to ongoing renovations at the regular meeting location the August 22 meeting will be held at the Warrenton Fauquier Visitors Center, 33 Calhoun Street, in Warrenton.

1. Introductions/ Panel Comments

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

Garrett thanked the Fauquier County Sheriff's Office and the Virginia State Police for traffic control efforts during the closure. VDOT appreciates the dedication and focus on safety while assisting vehicles and rerouting truck traffic, as necessary.

Corporal Steven Shiner of the Sheriff's Office discussed the protocol in place at Route 600/Route 215 to turn around lost vehicles and tractor-trailer traffic. Crashes have been minimal with eleven total, three having minor injuries and only one of the injury crashes directly related to the closure. A traffic count was performed on Route 600 between Shepherdstown Road and Route 215 and in a 24 hour period 10,300 vehicles were counted. The Sheriff's Office is monitoring the traffic queue on Route 600 and when it gets to a certain point, they intervene until it returns to a manageable level.

Garrett asked that law enforcement remain flexible, as the reopen date is fluid in that it will depend upon factors such as weather or equipment breakdown.

Pete Eltringham asked what steps the contractor will take to reopen the road. John Lynch responded that there are defined steps in the construction contract. There are minimum requirements the contractor needs to meet before the road is reopened. From a safety standpoint, if the contractor is unable to install the guardrail for example, they will have to make provisions for safety such as providing barrels or barricades to protect the traveling public when the road is opened. VDOT's Will

Stowe has walked the job and talked to the contractor about what needs to be done prior to the reopening of the road. Garrett feels very confident that the road will reopen on or before August 2. The road will not remain closed for longer than necessary.

Pete said that the most significant concern for the citizens living in and around the project area is the accessibility of the Route 600/215 intersection. He asked if we could have done better at this intersection and could we do better in the remaining eight days of the closure. He said he felt that the use of a temporary signal or more traffic direction at the intersection by law enforcement could have been put in place to improve traffic flow. Corporal Shiner said that law enforcement performed several time studies and found that traffic sitting without direction was fifteen minutes and traffic sitting with direction from law enforcement was a little over six minutes. A temporary signal at the intersection would have created an enhanced danger, as motorists would not have been used to the new signal. Garrett said that the reason law enforcement is managing the flow of traffic the way they are is to prevent it from backing up even further.

Supervisor Trumbo asked about the number of tickets given out particularly for trucks. Corporal Shiner estimated they have issued approximately 70 tickets with 70 percent being given to trucks. Supervisor Trumbo estimated that to be about two to three tickets each day and Corporal Shiner agreed. Captain Ray Prudhum quoted statistics taken as of Thursday, July 17, which included 50 summons for truck restriction violations.

Pete said that he does not know of anyone who does not like having the four-way stop at Kennedy Road and Aiken Drive. Captain Prudhum noted that inattentive driving is typically the cause of crashes at that location. Natalie Erdossy asked if this all-way stop has helped. Captain Prudhum responded that there is minimal base information so it seems to have helped. Garrett said that VDOT understands that motorists like the four-way stop, but VDOT must justify the permanency of the four-way signal with crash data. Tim feels that not all crash data has been captured for this intersection. Garrett noted that it never is for any intersection. However, there is a standard reporting for crashes which allows an apples-to-apples comparison.

There being no additional questions for law enforcement, they excused themselves from the meeting.

2. **Meeting #11 Summary – Review of Minutes**

No comments were made on the meeting minutes.

3. **Public Feedback and Follow-Up**

Tim thanked the local news media particularly the *Fauquier Times* and *Fauquier Now* for articles published about the closure. The articles have been informative and helpful in keeping communities apprised of project progress. He also recognized Lou Hatter for keeping the Route 29 stakeholders group and other volunteers informed of the very latest updates so that they could disseminate timely information to their email contact groups. Tim noted that he felt confident in VDOT's project newsletters and referred to them frequently when discussing project activity with HOA constituents. Garrett thanked Tim and others who represent HOAs for getting the word out on a consistent and regular basis commenting that their communication efforts have been a huge help. Pete commented that the radio ads were very effective, as well.

Garrett said that VDOT has received a few individual, strongly felt complaints in regard to the closure. Tim commented that he had anticipated a higher number of complaints and complimented the media plan saying it helped to tamp down potential complaints. Garrett said that VDOT is very

comfortable that by midnight on the 2nd of August the road will be opened. He added that there are wildcards that could impact the reopening, but he feels confident the road will be opened on or before August 2nd. The project completion date is actually September 30 and there is still work to be done.

Supervisor Trumbo asked Garrett if any of the complaints received have merit. Garrett said that he has not personally fielded calls or visits from angry residents, as these calls and visits are mainly fielded at the front desk of the Warrenton Residency. Of the less than five complaints, callers tended to offer alternatives to the three-week closure approach to the Cut the Hills project approved by stakeholders. The alternatives offered by the callers were options VDOT and the stakeholders had discussed at monthly public progress meetings. Holder said that perhaps the residents had not heard the closure message and were caught off guard by the closure. Garrett said that overall feedback he received noted that the closure has had less of an impact than residents thought it would.

Supervisor Trumbo asked Craig Oakley of the New Baltimore Fire Department if there were any surprises to EMS during the closure. Craig estimated that the Department has received less than ten calls related to the closure and he felt it did not impact emergency services as much as he thought it would.

Garrett said that we all knew that the closure was going to be an inconvenience, but he feels the communities have worked together to pull through the closure. Pete commented that much of the work that was done on the alternative routes in anticipation of the closure, has paid off. Garrett noted that this is thanks to the efforts of VDOT's Culpeper District managers, John Lynch and Mark Nesbit. Tim commended VDOT for work done on Rogues Road and Broad Run Church Road prior to the closure. These roads are in better shape than they were four months ago.

4. *Cut and Fill the Hills Project*

a. Schedule & Funding Update

John reminded the group that the Route 29 reopen date is August 2 with additional work continuing, including nighttime lane closures, to September 30. The blasting contractor estimated 25 blastings to cut the hills and remove the rocky outcroppings in the median and they did the job in seven blasts over a six-day period. This is due in part to the contractor being able to use existing asphalt as a mat. Tim said that within the Vint Hill area, the blasting was not heard by residents. Natalie agreed.

John gave an update to Phase 1 project expenditures which to date do not include most of the design build billings, as the contractor is only three-four weeks into the project. He confirmed that whatever is not spent on Phase 1 will be transferred to Phase 2 projects so no funding will be lost.

b. Construction Update

See above.

c. Traffic, Detours, & Law Enforcement Operations

John told the group that today they there was a single lane closure to a south bound lane to raise an overhead utility line.

5. *Communication Plan*

Lou discussed the two flyers that were distributed well in advance of the closure. He said the "Regional Detour" flyer was sent to local businesses and the "What to Expect" flyer was distributed to trucking industries, state and federal government, and truck stops and convenience stores south of

Warrenton. Lou noted having received several calls asking for advice on detour routes and he said he always advises motorists to use the regional detour, Route 17 to Interstate 66, as it works really well. VDOT has received comments from resident commuters who have said they will continue to use the regional detour even after Route 29 is reopened. They have commented that the route is further in distance, but it is less heavily traveled with fewer signals. Pete suggested that perhaps truck restrictions on traditional cut through roads like Blantyre Road and Old Tavern Road should remain in place permanently. John noted that there is a process that must be followed to make those permanent.

Lou showed a video of one of the blastings noting it went viral with more than 1 million documented views of the posting on a combination of sites including VDOT's Facebook page and numerous local, national and international news organizations.

6. Phase 2 Projects: Rt. 29/600 & Route 29/215 Intersection Improvements

a. Schedule & Funding Update

John reported that VDOT has not done any progressive work to the Phase 2 improvement projects since the last update. VDOT has taken a design-bid-build approach for each segment of Phase 2 (Route 29/Route 600 & Route 29/Route 215 intersections). VDOT provided a cost estimate to preliminary engineering, right-of-way and utilities, and construction. VDOT is trying to obtain operational funds to upgrade the controllers and signals so they can operate them more effectively and efficiently.

John said that Mark is also developing a plan to use hired equipment rather than state forces with the downside being it is limited to \$600,000 per contract. Most of the elements require right-of-way, which will require utility work and therefore a public hearing process. Pete asked for confirmation that the right-of-way issues were confined to the Broad Run Church Road and Route 29 improvement. John confirmed that each segment of Phase 2 will experience right-of-way issues. Pete and Natalie both thought that the Route 29/Route 215 intersection would be able to function within the existing right-of-way. Garrett confirmed that right-of-way is needed and this will impact time and cost of the project. Natalie asked if this is seen as a problem. John said that it depends on the outcome of the Section 106 review and noted that getting through the environmental phase will likely not be easy.

b. Section 106/NEPA Stakeholders Meeting: September

On the slide titled "Phase 2: Section 106/NEPA Stakeholders Meeting," under the third bullet point titled "Who?" Pete suggested that the acronym PEC be spelled out to be Piedmont Environmental Council. He also suggested adding Citizens for Fauquier County to the overall bullet point.

Pete asked if the Advisory Panel was going to come together to meet prior to the Section 106/NEPA Stakeholders Meeting scheduled for September/October in order to formulate a recommendation for talking points. Garrett sees the meeting happening similarly to the Cut the Hills meeting. VDOT has basic recommendations, which need to be reconfirmed with the Advisory Panel. He noted that the funding is tight but the \$7.4 million went into the Six-Year Improvement Program in June. Some of the funding is state money which will allow for flexibility. John recommended completing the Section 106/NEPA review first as there is no sense on moving forward with other aspects of the project until we get through the Section 106 process.

Rick Crofford noted that as a condition of the Cut the Hills project, Department of Historic Resources asked that VDOT coordinate a meeting with historic preservation stakeholders to broadly discuss how transportation projects are selected especially with regard to the different roles of VDOT and

local governments and to consider how local land use decisions influence transportation decisions and ultimately historic preservation. Several panel members made the comment that the Section 106 review process was remarkably short for the Cut the Hills project.

Pete asked how we communicate the importance of the historical significance of the battlefield to the various contractors who may be working on Phase 2 projects.

Garrett suggested that the August meeting include: 1. A review of the previous improvements discussed for Phase 2 to confirm that these are still what the advisory panel recommends; and 2. Discussing the environmental/Section 106 process. The Section 106 review is important because the area is considered an historic site. North of the intersection, closer to the hill, is considered an area more central to the actual Buckland Battlefield. Pete said that the middle intersection of Route 215/29 is the center of a three phase Civil War battle that was the last successful cavalry engagement of the war in 1863. Garrett recommended contacting the stakeholders in advance of the August meeting to make them aware of the topics that will be discussed. Garrett confirmed that VDOT would like to do all of the work, but given the limited funding the projects may need to be prioritized.

c. Discussion of Phase 2 Implementation Plan

To be discussed at next meeting.

7. Meeting Calendar – month, time, location

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

- August 22, 2019
- September 26, 2019

It was confirmed that the August 22 meeting will meet from 1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m. in the Board of Supervisors Meeting Room, Warren Green Building, 10 Hotel Street, Warrenton.

Note: Due to ongoing renovations at the regular meeting location the August 22 meeting will be held at the Warrenton Fauquier Visitors Center, 33 Calhoun Street, in Warrenton.

8. New Business & Wrap-up

Garrett asked if there were any new business or comments and given that there were none and no additional items to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 2:12 p.m.