

## VDOT Responses to 8/24/2010 HOA Meeting Comments

Proposed Truck Climbing Lane Route 7 Westbound Between West Market Street and Route 9  
UPC# 58599, Project # 6007-053-133, P101

Date of Meeting: August 24, 2010  
Time: 6:00PM to 8:00PM  
Location: Rust Library  
380 Old Waterford Road NW  
Leesburg, Virginia 20176

### Summary of Verbal Comments and [VDOT Responses](#)

#### **Comment #1:**

Provide an interchange at Route 7 and Farm Market Road/White Gate Road. This was studied in the late 1990's.

#### [VDOT Response:](#)

An interchange at this location would be difficult to construct given the topography of the area, and would result in impacts to several surrounding homes. The construction costs would add roughly \$50 million to the project. The estimated cost of the Route 7 Truck Climbing Lane Project is approximately \$25 million. Currently, allocations to this project are approximately \$20 million.

#### **Comment #2:**

This project will add congestion from Route 7 westbound to Route 9 interchange.

#### [VDOT Response:](#)

Regardless of whether the project is built or not, traffic will continue to increase both on Route 7 and Route 9. Based on traffic modeling, the project will not add a significant amount of traffic (see traffic projections on [VDOT Project Website](#)).

The project will improve operations at the Route 9 interchange and at the Route 7 on- and off-ramps through the addition of the following:

- Two additional turn lanes at the terminus of the off ramp from Route 7 westbound to Route 9
- Additional extended dual left turn lanes from Route 9 southbound onto Route 7 eastbound
- Additional receiving lane on Route 7 eastbound on-ramp from Route 9 southbound
- New traffic signal at both the terminus of the Route 7 westbound off-ramp to Route 9 and at the intersection of Route 9 and Route 7 eastbound on-ramp

#### **Comment #3:**

Will this project impact future planned widening of Route 7 from 4-lanes to 6-lanes?

#### [VDOT Response:](#)

The Loudoun County Comprehensive Plan calls for Route 7 to be widened from 4-lanes to 6-lanes, including through the project area. The project will not preclude future widening of Route 7.

**Comment #4:**

Due to the current heavy traffic volumes on Route 9, it is difficult for residents of Beacon Hill to turn from Beacon Hill Drive to Route 9, especially during peak periods. The addition of a new traffic light at the Route 9/Route 7 interchange will further compound the problem.

**VDOT Response:**

VDOT will investigate the feasibility of a traffic signal as well as other improvements, including a roundabout, at the Beacon Hill Drive and Route 9 intersection based on current traffic counts and projected traffic data. The addition of turn lanes and traffic signals on the Route 9 interchange allow for improved traffic operations versus the current condition.

**Comment #5:**

Has emergency access been considered? If not, this will negatively effect emergency response times due to the closure of median breaks.

**VDOT Response:**

The conceptual plan includes right-in/right-out access for emergency vehicles at Leeland Orchard Road and Beechnut Road. VDOT will investigate preserving some or all of the median breaks for emergency access. Any preserved median breaks will be blocked to prevent unauthorized use. This investigation will include coordination with the Loudoun County Department of Fire and Rescue Services to ensure adequate emergency access is maintained.

**Comment #6:**

Build connection from Leeland Orchard cul-de-sac directly to West Market Street or nearby Town of Leesburg roads.

**VDOT Response:**

VDOT will investigate this proposal further if endorsed by the Town of Leesburg. The most technically feasible connections on the north side of the Route 7 corridor is Rosebrooke Court or Phillips Drive in the Normandy Village neighborhood. The most feasible connection on the south side is to connect Roxbury Hall Road to Kintyre Court and then connect Children's Center Road to Cannongate Drive in the Shenstone community.

**Comment #7:**

Would the project eliminate tree barriers? Would landscaping be included with the project?

**VDOT Response:**

Based on conceptual plans, significant impacts to tree barriers are not anticipated, mainly due to the fact that the majority of paving will take place in the existing median. VDOT anticipates spending approximately 2% to 3% of the total construction costs on landscaping, which would be roughly \$350,000 to \$550,000.

**Comment #8:**

Why is right-in/right-out access not maintained at each intersection?

VDOT Response:

In order to minimize construction costs and right of way expenses, much of the climbing lane construction will take place in the Route 7 median, rendering that median less effective and less safe as a refuge for cross traffic. Also, it will be more difficult for egressing vehicles to cross three lanes of free flowing traffic. Traffic signals are not an option because this segment of Route 7 is designated a Limited Access Freeway and signals will result in greater congestion than what is presently experienced.

To address these competing needs, conceptual plans show that the existing median breaks on Route 7 between Route 9 and West Market Street would be closed, and robust measures put in place that would accommodate the resulting increase in U-turn movements at the Route 9 and West Market Street interchanges. These measures mainly consist of i) modifications to the two interchanges and ii) construction of acceleration and deceleration lanes at the remaining at-grade intersections.

The purpose behind the closing of some of the intersections along this segment of Route 7 (Hidden Gap Road, Fort Johnston Road and Leeland Orchard Road in the westbound direction, and Beechnut Road in the eastbound direction) is to reduce the likelihood of crashes, via the elimination of conflict points that are created by the intersections, in a manner that minimizes the overall “footprint” of the project. If the intersections were to remain open, then acceleration lanes as well as lengthened deceleration lanes would need to be provided at each location. If all of the existing intersections were to remain open, then there will be a de facto 4<sup>th</sup> lane along Route 7. This will result in excessive construction costs and right of way impacts due to the mountainous terrain in this area.

Another factor to consider is the fact that this segment of Route 7 was formally designated a Limited Access facility when the current four lane highway was built in the early 1970s. It has the same status as the Route 7 Bypasses around Leesburg, Hamilton, Purcellville and Round Hill.

Two of the main factors that drove the selection of which intersections to close were i) traffic volumes and ii) safe and convenient alternate means of access. Traffic counts from 2010 show that at Hidden Gap Road, there are only 17 vehicles entering Route 7 during the morning peak hour and 20 vehicles turning into Hidden Gap Road during the evening peak hour. Couple this light traffic volume with alternate access points via Farm Market Road as well as Beacon Hill Drive and the thinking was that traffic impacts to the rest of the Beacon Hill streets would be negligible.

At Fort Johnston Road, there is one vehicle entering Route 7 and three vehicles enter Fort Johnston Road during the morning peak hour. At Leeland Orchard Road, there are seven vehicles entering Route 7 during the morning peak hour. Again, the low traffic volumes and proximity of an alternate access point make this approach desirable compared to the construction of acceleration and deceleration lanes if Fort Johnston Road and Leeland Orchard Road remained open.

**Comment #9:**

Provide a signal at the intersection of Farm Market Road and Route 7, even if just for off-peak times. This was the site of a fatal crash within last year.

**VDOT Response:**

VDOT will investigate safety improvements to this intersection. However, a traffic signal is not an option because this segment of Route 7 is designated a Limited Access Freeway and a signal in this location, with proportionally very few turning vehicles from side streets, will result in greater congestion than what is presently experienced.

**Comment #10:**

Restrict vehicles to maintain lane through this section of Route 7, west of the West Market Street interchange.

**VDOT Response:**

There is already signage in place for slower vehicles to keep right. VDOT will continue to investigate alternatives for signage as well as pavement markings to maintain the most efficient traffic flow possible.

**Comment #11:**

Close the ramp from West Market Street to Route 7.

**VDOT Response:**

This is not feasible as it will result in a significant degradation of the regional roadway network. Also, the climbing lane is warranted regardless of whether the ramp is closed or not.

**Comment #12:**

Remove the steep hill beginning at West Market Street. The steep grade results in vehicles (especially large trucks) reducing speed, which in turn slows surrounding traffic.

**VDOT Response:**

This is not feasible as it will incur the massive right of way and construction impacts that VDOT is seeking to avoid by placing the climbing lane in the Route 7 median.

**Comment #13:**

Extend Winning Colors Place to Old Waterford Road.

**VDOT Response:**

VDOT will investigate this proposal if endorsed by Loudoun County and the Town of Leesburg.

**Comment #14:**

Re-align new roadway approaching new intersection of Fort Johnston Road and Count Turf Place to build roadway close to fence line. This will reduce tree impacts and impacts to farm

property. Opposed to VDOT taking land from southeast quadrant of new intersection of Fort Johnston Road and Count Turf Place.

**VDOT Response:**

VDOT will work with the affected property owner on the best possible alignment of the extension of Fort Johnston Road to Alysheba Drive.

**Comment #15:**

This project increases traffic through the Beacon Hill community due to the additional traffic added from residents of Fort Johnston Road and Leeland Orchard Road.

**VDOT Response:**

The Beacon Hill community is comprised of approximately 225 homes. There are approximately 20 homes total off of Fort Johnston Road and Leeland Orchard Road. Based on the number of residences, the amount of traffic generated by connecting these two cul-de-sac neighborhoods would be an increase of less than 10%. The roadway that would experience the majority of this traffic is only a 500 ft. long segment of Alysheba Drive between Farm Market Road and Count Turf Place, and there are no homes along this segment. Again, the low traffic volumes and proximity of an alternate access point make this approach desirable compared to the construction of acceleration and deceleration lanes if Fort Johnston Road and Leeland Orchard Road remained open.

Please see response to Comment #8 for additional information.

**Comment #16:**

Motorists often mistake the Roxbury Hall Road intersection deceleration/right turn lane for the West Market Street on-ramp from Route 7 eastbound. This leads to crashes into the guardrail just east of the intersection of Route 7 and Roxbury Hall Road. Provide acceleration lane from Roxbury Hall Road to Route 7 eastbound. Extend right turn lane/deceleration lane from Route 7 eastbound onto Roxbury Hall Road.

**VDOT Response:**

VDOT will investigate safety improvements to this intersection, including the feasibility of extending the deceleration/right turn lane and adding an acceleration lane. However, the addition of an acceleration lane from Roxbury Hall Road to Route 7 eastbound may create a conflict with weaving traffic exiting Route 7 to West Market Street.

**Comment #17:**

Provide a left-in from Route 7 westbound to Roxbury Hall Road (entrance to Church of the Nazarene of Leesburg). If this left-in access were restricted, as shown in current plan, this would have the greatest impact in terms of commute time versus all other movements within the project vicinity.

**VDOT Response:**

VDOT will investigate the feasibility of this alternative.

**Comment #18:**

Provide soundwalls, especially for residents off of Farm Market Road.

**VDOT Response:**

Since the project is federally funded, an environmental document will be prepared as required by the National Environmental Policy Act. The environmental document will include a detailed noise analysis and the need for soundwalls will be evaluated.