

# ROUTE 15



## **Route 15 Safety and Operational Study: Stakeholder Meeting #6**

Loudoun County Government Center

Dulles Conference Room

July 16, 2018, 6:30 – 8:30 PM

**Agenda:** available on the project website: <https://www.loudoun.gov/Route15>

**Attendees:** Stakeholder and general public sign-in sheets were recorded by DTCI staff

### **Summary of Comments and Questions**

All questions and comments were answered at the stakeholder meeting unless otherwise specified.

1. *Comment:* Supervisor Higgins informed the stakeholders about recent meetings with the Little Springs community and Morven Park to discuss the Phase 1 northbound auxiliary lane improvements. He also met with Rockland Farms to hear their concerns regarding the Congestion Report improvements and right of way impacts. Additionally, Supervisor Higgins and DTCI staff met with Ian Lockwood at the request of the Catoclin Coalition to discuss the ongoing study and needs of the corridor.
2. *Comment:* VDOT gave an update on the Phase 1 improvements for the northbound auxiliary lane extension. After working with Little Springs and Morven Park the County's design consultant has submitted their 3<sup>rd</sup> pavement marking and signage plan revision to VDOT for approval; plan approval is expected within the next week. After design approval, VDOT will work with state forces to complete the work.

**Question:** How long will this improvement take to implement, and can “zipper” merge signs be looked into to create a smoother transition at the current merge of King Street and Route 15?

**Response:** The goal is to implement the interim improvements this year and VDOT has begun working with the sign manufacturer in advance of plan approval. The zipper merge was discussed, but it was noted that it is not applicable on Route 15 because traffic on the primary roadway cannot be stopped. This type of merge is typically used on ramps before the merge onto the primary roadway.

3. *Question:* Can we view the Phase 1 interim improvement plans?

**Response:** The final Phase 1 Improvement pavement marking and signage plan will be publicly available after VDOT grants design approval; following plan approval, DTCI will distribute a copy of the plan to the stakeholders.

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4. *Comment:* Joe Kroboth informed the stakeholders of the current funding status for the Route 15 Congestion Report and Safety and Operations Study. The Congestion Report improvements are now fully funded at \$79.8 million, including the recent award of \$54 million from NVTA funding. For the Safety and Operations Study the County is submitting a BUILD Grant application for \$2 million (of which \$1 million would be obtained federally through the Grant) to complete the Preliminary Engineering (P.E.) and the NEPA study for the corridor; the grant application will be submitted on July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018. The County is also applying for SMART SCALE funds for the improvements from the concepts within the Safety and Operations study; these funding applications will be submitted August 1<sup>st</sup>.

5. *Question:* When we first applied for NVTA funds it was for the full build widening scenario, what happens if there is unused money left over from the project?

**Response:** NVTA funding that is not used would be rolled back into the program and could possibly go to the next highest ranking project in the region, or it could be used in the next call for projects. NVTA funds are the last to be used in project funding, all other sources must be used first.

6. *Question:* What are the next steps for the Route 15 Congestion Report project after the presentation to the Board of Supervisors in September 2018?

**Response:** Assuming the Board approves the staff recommendations, a Request for Proposal (RFP) will be prepared for design. The RFP must go to VDOT to be reviewed for compliance with the federal funding and administration requirements. After VDOT reviews and approves the RFP, the County will advertise the RFP and firms will submit proposal packages providing their qualifications for the project. The Proposal Analysis Group (PAG) is formed within the County to review the proposals and rank the engineering firms based on meeting the RFP requirements and prepare a short list of qualified consultants. After interviews, the top ranked firm will be selected and fee negotiations will begin. If a fee is agreed upon, the recommendation goes to the Board for approval. If the fee is not agreed upon, the County will engage in fee negotiations with the next highest ranked firm. Once the contract terms are agreed upon, then items are presented to the Board of Supervisors Finance, Government Operations and Economic Development Committee for approval and then forwarded to the full Board. After the contract is awarded, the consultants will begin survey, data collection and prepare the preliminary design. At this point a Public Hearing is held and the plans are presented to the public to receive and address feedback. This information is collected and submitted to the Board of Supervisors, along with the NEPA documents for design endorsement. Then plans are prepared and submitted to VDOT and Building & Development for review in a series of submissions starting at the 60%, 90%, and 100% design phases. When reaching the 60% design phase, plats are started so that right of way negotiations with property owners can begin to discuss any easements and right of way that may be necessary.

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7. *Question:* Has it always been the case that VDOT must review the RFP and the engineering design process.

**Response:** Yes, because federal funding is being used, VDOT must review the RFP to ensure that it meets the federal guidelines. VDOT must also review the design plans at the 30%, 60%, 90%, and 100% plan submission phases.

8. *Question:* Can you put this in a timeline for us?

**Response:** The design of the project will take anywhere from 2 to 3 years to complete. Funding for design was allocated in FY 2019; the County's fiscal year began on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018. The right of way and utility relocation phase of the project is largely based on the negotiations with the affected property owners and takes anywhere from 1 to 2 years to complete. Upon completion of design and right of way acquisition, construction can begin and it is estimated to take anywhere between 2 to 3 years to complete the construction. The earliest construction could be awarded would be the summer of 2022, with the earliest possible completion date in summer of 2024. The long range could be the start of construction in 2024, with a completion date in 2027.

9. *Comment:* Susan Glass informed the stakeholders of the recent update to the Leesburg North Landing special exception. The rezoning and special exception applications were approved by the Board of Supervisors on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018 at the Business Meeting. DTCl does not know the timing and schedule of construction, but the owner has the zoning approval needed to move forward.

10. *Comment:* Susan Glass informed the stakeholders of the current Envision Loudoun updates. No changes are currently proposed to the rural primary roadway network. If Route 15 Concept B is advanced, a separate Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPAM) would be required to extend the limits of widening. Concept A would also require a CPAM for the Lucketts bypass. This process would be similar to the CPAM that was approved earlier this year that was processed for the Route 15 Congestion Report improvements to allow the road to be widened to four lanes to Montresor Road.

11. *Question:* Can you elaborate on the no-build concept? Does mean that the staff recommends doing nothing to the corridor correct?

**Response:** The purpose of the no-build concept is to be used as a baseline for congestion analysis; it represents the future conditions if no improvements are made to the corridor. Staff does not have a recommendation at this time.

12. *Question:* In Concepts A and B, are you proposing a signal on both sides of the Point of Rocks bridge?

**Response:** Yes, a new signal would be installed at the intersection of Lovettsville Road and Route 15 to increase the safety for the turning movements at the intersection. The impacts and features of the recommended signal will be considered during the design

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process. The proposed signal would be in addition to the existing signal that is located in Maryland at Route 15/Clay Street.

13. *Comment:* Concern was expressed about Lucketts bypass and its impact to the existing residences and land that has been placed into conservancy.

**Response:** The Lucketts bypass will be further detailed in the design stages of this project and will include a noise impact analysis and mitigation studies. The ultimate location of the bypass is yet to be determined and will utilize the Section 106 process to avoid and mitigate impacts when possible.

14. *Question:* Based on the changes in growth based on length of widening, are you saying that widening induces demand, and does the model consider cut through traffic?

**Response:** The growth rate is increased with further widening to take into account the volume that would no longer detour to side roads and alternate secondary routes due to the increased performance along Route 15. The model utilizes screenlines to depict the total volumes moving north/south through the network on the mainlines and side streets. Cut through traffic is projected to be reduced due to the proposed improvements.

15. *Question:* Has there been a discussion with Loudoun County Fire & Rescue on the improvements and what did they say?

**Response:** DTCl staff met with multiple agencies including the County Fire and Rescue Office. Fire and Rescue noted that they currently have issues operating along Route 15 because vehicles have no room to maneuver to get out of the way of emergency vehicles. Fire and Rescue supported the addition of paved shoulders and widening Route 15 to improve response times.

16. *Question:* Have we looked into the rural economy impacts that will be associated with widening the corridor to 4-lanes? Also, what are we doing to place more emphasis on transit and remove single occupancy vehicles?

**Response:** As we move into design, farm vehicles and access to farms and rural businesses will be taken into account. The purpose of the recommended median is to provide turn lanes as needed and separate oncoming traffic. DTCl met with Maryland agencies and are working with them to discuss the use of the Point of Rocks MARC train station park and ride lot for future bus service.

17. *Question:* Would it be possible to analyze something similar to Modified Concept B, but with a signal at Montresor and Stumptown?

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**Response:** Roundabouts were analyzed because they were preferred by the public, and signals would not fit well into the context-sensitive design. There is no funding for additional analysis. As this project moves to the P.E. and NEPA process, multiple alternatives must be considered and evaluated to determine appropriate intersection control along the corridor.

18. *Question:* Can we do more to get the word out to the public about what is taking place on Route 15, such as sending out letters, social media, and emails?

**Response:** Supervisor Higgins agreed to provide notifications via mail for the upcoming public meeting. Additionally, the stakeholders need to continue relaying information and notices about the upcoming events.

19. *Question:* Is there a way the stakeholders can see the recommendation from the Safety and Operations Study before it goes to the Board?

**Response:** DTCI will discuss this request with the County Administration to see if this is possible; however, there is an existing policy that does not allow staff to share the contents of the item until after it is posted on the Loudoun County website which typically occurs on the Thursday before the Board meeting.

20. *Question:* In the event any of the entities object to the design, what is the process?

**Response:** During the Section 106 process, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) has the final decision on what can halt the project. DHR will work to assure that all impacts are properly mitigated to keep the project moving forward.

21. *Comment:* Susan Glass informed the stakeholders of the next steps for the Safety and Operations Study. Meetings with the partner agencies will be held in August to get their input on the concepts. Next will be a public meeting in late September or early October, followed by the final stakeholder meeting (for the Safety and Operations Study) to discuss the input received at the public meeting. Finally, the Route 15 Safety and Operations Study will be issued and staff will prepare a staff report for a future Board meeting that will take place in late fall 2018 or early winter of 2019. The Board may consider the recommendations as a part of the funding plan in the CIP which will dovetail into the budget discussions for FY2020.

22. *Question:* What will be the format for the upcoming public meeting?

**Response:** A VDOT style open house is planned, which includes a brief orientation of the display boards, followed by the public walking around the room to view the boards and discuss any questions with staff. The public will be asked to submit comment cards to provide their input on the concepts.

23. *Question:* Can we get access to the PowerPoint that was used in tonight's meeting?

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**Response:** Yes, the PowerPoint will be posted on the Route 15 website tomorrow (7/17) along with all of the material used in tonight's meeting.

24. *Question:* Can we have the meeting notes from the 3-hour meeting with Ian Lockwood?

**Response:** No notes were taken with this meeting. Martha Polkey of the Catoctin Coalition agreed to email the meeting presentation to the stakeholder group.

25. *Comment:* We request that all stakeholders send the feedback regarding the concepts by August 1<sup>st</sup>. Thank you all for attending.