

# ROUTE 15



## **Route 15 Safety and Operational Study: Stakeholder Meeting #7**

Loudoun County Government Center

Dulles Conference Room

October 22, 2018, 6:30 – 8:30 PM

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

**Attendees:** Sign-in sheet was recorded by DTCI staff

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

1. *Comment:* Supervisor Higgins thanked the committee and noted major milestones in the plan for the southern part of the corridor. A project manager has been assigned and the location survey is underway. A lot of work lies ahead in the design process, and the project team is working to figure out how to move forward with feedback throughout the design phase of the project. Many of the questions/concerns that have been raised regarding driveways, access, etc. will be answered in the design phase moving forward. Common goals are to improve safety, reduce congestion, and do so in a way that is minimally invasive to the corridor with context sensitive design.

2. *Comment:* VDOT gave an update on the Phase 1 improvements for the northbound auxiliary lane extension. The median grading has been completed, and pavement and marking crews to follow in the next few weeks.

**Question:** Is this design on the Loudoun.gov route 15 website?

**Response:** Yes, it will be posted this week.

**Comment:** A Stakeholder claimed residents of Little Spring Road oppose the plan and VDOT hasn't achieved concurrence regarding the design.

**Response:** A Little Spring Road resident in the audience confirmed they were consulted and agree with VDOT's design.

3. *Question:* Will VDOT be using the roundabout tool to evaluate the Montesor Road roundabout? Will the county engage the highway safety improvement office at VDOT?

**Response:** More advanced tools than high level planning tools will be used to review this roundabout – VISSIM simulation and other methodologies (SIDRA).

**Question:** Why isn't Mr. Reed involved from VDOT central office, as he oversees evaluating safety along highway corridors?

**Response:** VDOT will assign the appropriate staff members to evaluate the engineering and design of the project. The county does not dictate the individual VDOT staff members that will review projects.

# ROUTE 15



4. *Question:* Why haven't we evaluated a signal at Montesor Rd?

**Response:** The Board of Supervisors endorsed a roundabout, so that is what will be moved forward at this time. As the project evolves, and design is worked out, the intersection is subjected to more detailed operational analyses, and the performance of a signalized intersection will be compared to the roundabout. Access and right of way impacts will also be considered in the ultimate design.

**Question:** Stakeholder meeting proposed signalization analysis at that location. To be clear – a roundabout was put forward without comparison to a signal?

**Response:** VDOT requires that a proposed signal at an existing unsignalized intersection be evaluated for a roundabout first, which was completed and reported in the traffic analysis. Unlike the Route 15 and Whites Ferry Road intersection, the Montesor Road intersection is currently unsignalized. A roundabout at Montesor Road was evaluated and the traffic analysis determined it was feasible at this location.

5. *Comment:* The County provided an update on the survey contractor. The surveyor has been contracted for the southern portion of the corridor (Congestion Report area). Because the corridor is a fairly large area, it will be a somewhat lengthy process (3-6 months). The County will send out notifications to property owners because there will be a need for surveyors to access people's properties. Field level survey will also need to be performed to evaluate streams, wetlands, etc. Communication of access to properties will be provided to owners in advance.

6. *Question:* When would we expect to get a first glimpse on alignment?

**Response:** The alignment for how to widen is one of two major considerations, the other is what is known as the typical section of the roadway or the cross section. There are many ways to build a four-lane road, and they can look very different. We anticipate that there will also be a fairly involved process to include the community. This process won't begin until we get a design engineer working, survey is completed, and a design is on paper. When we get into the design phase, a traffic study in context of the design improvements will be conducted. It will likely be a year before we see any concept designs.

7. *Question:* How many County attorneys are designated to ROW?

**Response:** County attorneys are assigned to its projects based on workload.

8. *Question:* What is the requirement for eminent domain? Is there a threshold for condemnation?

**Response:** No, the county will first negotiate with the land owner to try to reach an agreement. Eminent domain will be considered as a last resort in order to maintain the project's schedule. Supervisor Higgins stated that given the amount of existing right-of-way along the corridor, the ability to negotiate with landowners should result in avoiding the use of eminent domain.

# ROUTE 15



9. *Question:* What is the amount of property impacts that we have now?  
**Response:** There could be 20-30 properties that may be impacted by the Route 15 widening, but we will not know specifics until the design gets underway. Other things like setbacks, utilities, storm water management facilities and grading may impact properties beyond the physical footprint of the roadway.
10. *Question:* Will you do preliminary testing of the wells prior to the construction, in case there are sink holes that impact water quality of private properties?  
**Response:** This consideration will be further evaluated.
11. *Comment:* Locating utilities is in the survey contract, but until there is an alignment, we won't know any impacts and needed relocations. Fortunately for the project, there aren't many underground utilities in this area.  
*Question:* While you're doing this, will you be relocating utilities underground or extending gas lines out there?  
**Response:** No.
12. *Question:* Will the shared use path be included into this design process?  
**Response:** Yes.
13. *Question:* Why can't you award a construction contract before right-of-way acquisition is finished?  
**Response:** The County's contractor must have free and clear access to the entire work area when Notice to Proceed is issued.
14. *Question:* (In reference to the CIP funding slide) - Is this a funding schedule? When will the project be complete? What happens in 2020 if no funding is available?  
**Response:** The slide shows that funding for design is 2019-2020, as design will take up to 2 years. Then ROW acquisition and construction will follow. NVTA noted that if the county is ready to construct sooner, money can be moved forward.
15. *Comment:* Why haven't you contacted the folks that specifically border the bypass and why is this bypass proposal aligned with the development application that was submitted near Lucketts?  
**Response:** The proposed bypass is not aligned with any development application. The supervisors do not have any knowledge of a development application (newer than 15 years ago).
16. *Question:* How do we incorporate local businesses into this discussion?  
**Response:** Every access point will be evaluated during design processes and affected businesses will be contacted.

# ROUTE 15



17. *Question:* Is there a CIP project page for this section of Route 15 for the next County budget? Even a place holder for future appropriation?

**Response:** Funding for the design and construction of improvements proposed by the Route 15 Safety and Operations Study will be part of the FY2020 CIP discussion. A proposed budget for this section of the project was submitted through Smart Scale.

18. *Question:* Shouldn't there be flexibility regarding left and right turn lanes at all intersections for Route 15?

**Response:** Turn lanes will be provided based on traffic needs which will be determined during the design phase.

19. *Question:* At what point does safety take priority? We all like our rural land and development opportunities, but at what level is safety prioritized?

**Response:** Safety is the top priority, followed by congestion mitigation. The county is also trying to apply both safety and congestion relief in a context sensitive manner. They may not be in direct conflict but need to be coordinated.

20. *Question:* So then why isn't the safety board from VDOT being brought into the study?

**Response:** VDOT has been involved from the start of this project and will be reviewing all designs as this project evolves. VDOT will evaluate safety of every design component.

21. *Comment:* Supervisor Higgins thanked the room for their participation in this process. There are many divergent thoughts. No one is going to get everything they want, but I hope we can gather input from all parties to create the best concept for all.