



Route 28 Environmental Assessment Alternatives Coordination Meeting

Prince William County Department of Transportation
Monday, August 26, 2019, 1:00 PM

A meeting was held on the above date and time for the Route 28 Environmental Assessment (EA). Meeting participants are listed below:

Name	Organization	Phone	Email
Rick Canizales	Prince William County	703-792-6825	rcanizales@pwcgov.org
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* Participated by telephone/WebEx

The discussions are summarized below by agenda topic. Action items are highlighted in **bold** text.

1. Introductions

Meeting attendees introduced themselves (see table above). Stuart began the meeting and indicated that it was an opportunity for the Project Team to provide an update on project activities, particularly the alternatives development process in regard to refinement of alignments in specific areas and estimated impacts to streams and wetlands, and for the agencies to provide preliminary feedback on the aforementioned.

2. Update on Alternatives Development Activities (PowerPoint)

Summary of Project History

Stuart provided a short summary of the history of the project:

- Prince William County Comprehensive Plan. The Tri-County Parkway Location Study was completed in 2005. One of the alternatives considered followed an alignment that would extend Godwin Drive from the existing Godwin Drive/Sudley Road intersection and then traverse north across Bull Run Regional Park to intersect with I-66 and ultimately Route 50 in Loudoun County. Because it followed an alignment generally conforming to an alignment depicted in the Comprehensive Plans of Prince William County, Fairfax County, and Loudoun County, it was called the “Comprehensive Plan Alternative”. However, the Commonwealth Transportation Board approved a different alignment. For various reasons a Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision were not completed. The Prince William County Board of Supervisors subsequently approved Resolution No. 17-428 on September 5, 2017 to initiate a Comprehensive Plan amendment to remove the “Tri-County Parkway/Route 28 Extended” designation of the alignment depicted in the Plan and add “Godwin Drive Extended North to Route 28 North of Bull Run”.
- Route 28 Corridor Feasibility Study (2017). This Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA)-funded study was the precursor study to the EA, and it evaluated, screened, and ranked a range of alternatives within the Route 28 corridor.
- Comprehensive Plans of other jurisdictions. Fairfax County, the City of Manassas, and the City of Manassas Park have Comprehensive Plans with discussions of the Route 28 corridor within their jurisdictions.
- Regional financially Constrained Long-Range Plan (MWCOC CLRP). The Route 28 project is included in the federally-mandated long-range transportation plan for the National Capital Region.
- NVTA northern Virginia regional transportation plan (TransAction) and Six Year Program. NVTA’s FY2018-2023 Six Year Program includes partial funds for planning, design, and construction of Route 28 corridor improvements.

Rick added that the NVTA is the regional body that allocates funds based on recommendations from the local jurisdictions in northern Virginia, including the Cities of Manassas and Manassas Park, and Prince William, Fairfax, and Loudoun Counties, and given that the project is in the NVTA’s Six Year Program demonstrates a regional endorsement and priority of the project.

Update on Project Activities Since Last Meeting

Stuart summarized project activities since the last meeting, which included: initiation of Section 106 consultation with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR), property owner notification letters (per state code), and finalization of the traffic analysis report. Activities related to the alternatives development process included refining typical sections and alignments of alternatives and preparation of a working draft Alternatives Development Technical Report. Concurrently, the project team is working on draft sections of the EA and the Section 4(f) Evaluation.

Alternatives Development Process

Stuart explained that the alternatives development process was based on the standard Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) process and the PowerPoint slide showed a graphic of the general steps.

Lee asked why the project was not following the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)/404 merged process, which is designed to improve the efficiency of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) NEPA process by using early and active interagency coordination to focus efforts on reaching an environmentally sound project. Stuart noted that locally administered projects such as this one are specifically excluded from the joint agency Memorandum of Understanding relating to when and how a merged process to satisfy both NEPA and 404 environmental review requirements will be pursued. Rick added that the County anticipates funding for construction of the project from a bond referendum, which will be voted on this November. Based on the outcome, this project could ultimately be completely locally funded, thereby not required to complete the NEPA process and obtain FHWA approval. In that case, the County may initiate the process to request a Section 404 permit directly from the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Stuart added that the project process is actually mirroring the merged process, as evidenced by the ongoing coordination with the agencies, and Robert added that the role of VDOT in this project is in a technical oversight capacity. Lee noted that the determination of the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative (LEDPA) is dependent on several process steps, including comments received during the public comment period.¹

Stuart then stated that the alternatives development process being completed as part of the EA is being guided by the project purpose and need, the conceptual alternatives developed in the 2017 Feasibility Study, and the environmental constraints in the corridor, as described below.

- *Purpose and Need.* The purpose and need of the project is to: reduce congestion and delay on Route 28; improve overall travel times; and enhance network reliability.

¹ Subsequent to the meeting, Lee provided the following clarification: USACE identification of the LEDPA is a formal determination made as part of a USACE permit decision. USACE concurrence that an applicant's preferred alternative appears to be the preliminary LEDPA is a non-binding preliminary determination. A preliminary LEDPA concurrence indicates that the USACE anticipates the applicant's preferred alternative would satisfy the 404(b)(1) Guidelines, but this concurrence is not a final determination and does not mean the USACE has authorized or will authorize the applicant's preferred alternative. A preliminary LEDPA determination may need to be revisited if conditions or circumstances change the foundations upon which the determination was made.

FOR THIS PROJECT STUDY to receive concurrence on the preliminary LEDPA determination (after sufficient documentation, analysis, and review), it would need to undergo the Merged Process. IF THIS PROJECT STUDY becomes entirely locally funded, the USACE project manager would review the permit application, go through a thorough alternatives analysis at the time of permit review, and ensure that the proposed alternative satisfies 404(b)(1) guidelines, etc. IF the project manager issues the permit verification after this formal review process, that is the formal LEDPA determination.

Mackenzie Scott, DEQ, adding the following: DEQ also has the same process regarding the "preferred alternative" and things may change during the permit process. DEQ also issues a 30 day public notice that could potentially cause a project to go to a public hearing or be delayed based on the comments received.

- *Conceptual Alternatives.* Stuart stated that there were two types of basic alternatives in the Route 28 corridor: one along the existing alignment of Route 28 and those that follow alternative alignments along other roads or on new alignments, thus providing an alternative route to Route 28. He added that there are limited crossings of Bull Run (Route 28, Old Centreville Road/Ordway Road, or I-66), which is a contributing factor to traffic congestion because of the limited availability of parallel or alternate routes.
- *Environmental Constraints in the Corridor.* Stuart presented mapping of representative streams and wetlands within the study area. He noted the presence of these resources along the alignments for Alternatives 2A and 2B along Flat Branch, as well as the wetlands in two areas at Bull Run: Old Centreville Road and Route 28. Stuart also presented mapping of parks and historic properties in the northern portion of the study area, including Bull Run Regional Park and contributing resources to the Manassas Battlefield Historic District (MBHD), which include Mitchell's Ford Entrenchments, Blackburn's Ford, and First Manassas Battlefield. He explained that all combined, these resources represent severe limitations in the development of alternatives in this area with respect to meeting the requirements of Section 4(f) (an FHWA regulation limiting the use of land from public parks and historic properties for federal aid projects) and Section 106 regulations pertaining to effects on historic properties, while at the same time attempting to identify the LEDPA under Section 404(b)(1) of the Clean Water Act.

Alternatives Not Retained for Detailed Study

Stuart presented each of the seven preliminary alternatives from the 2017 Feasibility Study that were not retained for detailed study. He described each alignment and explained why each was not carried forward, as summarized below.

- *Alternative 3 – Godwin Drive Extended* (i.e., the old Tri-County Parkway alignment extending northward to I-66). Unacceptable impacts to streams, wetlands, and parks that were identified in the Tri-County Parkway Location Study still make this alternative unviable.
- *Alternative 5 – Reversible Lanes on Route 28.* Operation of reversible lanes would negatively impact access to existing development and circulation (due to median barriers, no left turns from or onto Route 28 would be permitted from Manassas Drive to Bull Run). Stuart noted that the limits of this alternative are similar to Alternative 4 (which is carried forward for detailed study), but with the large number of intersecting streets and business access points along Route 28, this alternative would require consolidation of entrances to permit access to Route 28.
- *Alternative 6 – Widen Old Centreville Road.* Impacts to residential properties and neighborhoods that border the alignment. Stuart noted there was a high level of opposition to this alignment during the 2017 Feasibility Study, and Rick added that commercial and community properties (including a recreation center and a school) were along this alignment.

- *Alternative 7 – Reversible Lanes on Old Centreville Road.* Access and circulation impacts, including left-turn restrictions similar to Alternative 5, and increased cut-through traffic through neighborhoods.
- *Alternative 8 – Bus Transit and/or VRE Expansion.* Not feasible as a stand-alone alternative due to lack of required population density. Stuart also noted that existing bus/transit services serve the study area, including VRE stations in Manassas and Manassas Park.
- *Alternative 9 – Euclid Avenue Widening & Extension.* Highest estimated cost (of the alternatives carried into the second screening in the 2017 Feasibility Study) with fewer traffic benefits, including increased traffic in historic downtown Manassas. This alternative would have a substantial longitudinal encroachment on the Bull Run floodplain (more than 1.5 miles). Rick noted that there is frequent flooding in the neighborhoods east of the proposed alignment, which could be exacerbated with the introduction of a new roadway on the Alternative 9 alignment.
- *Alternative 10 – Eastern Bypass.* Largest impacts to wetlands, streams, and floodways; large impacts to residential properties; deed restrictions across certain properties; and would not meet future traffic demands in the corridor.

Stuart closed this summary by asking if there were any questions or issues with the alternatives not retained for detailed study. Lee asked if the alternatives discussion would be detailed in the EA, and **Stuart confirmed that preparation of an Alternatives Development Technical Report is underway and, once alignments and associated impacts are finalized, will be provided for review.** Stuart noted that the technical report was a precursor to the EA documentation, which is anticipated to be completed in Fall 2019. There were no additional comments on the alternatives not retained for detailed study.

Alternatives Retained for Detailed Study (2A, 2B, and 4) & Preliminary Impacts

Stuart presented each of the three alternatives from the 2017 Feasibility Study that were retained for detailed study in the EA. He described each alignment and then showed a table summarizing the preliminary estimate of impacts for streams, wetlands, and floodplains.

- *Alternative 2A – Godwin Drive Extended (Connection to Route 28 South of Bull Run).* This alternative would create a bypass of existing Route 28 by extending Godwin Drive north from the existing Godwin Drive/Sudley Road intersection, paralleling Flat Branch, then turning east and joining existing Route 28 south of Bull Run. In the second screening of the 2017 Feasibility Study, this tied with Alternative 4 as the second highest-ranked alternative.
- *Alternative 2B – Godwin Drive Extended (Connection to Route 28 North of Bull Run).* This alternative differs from Alternative 2A in the location where it would join Route 28 – Alternative 2B would join Route 28 north of Bull Run. Alternative 2B is collocated with Old Centreville Road/Ordway Road for part of its alignment and both would use the same existing crossing of Bull Run. In the second screening of the 2017 Feasibility Study, this was the highest-ranked alternative.

- *Alternative 4 – Widen Route 28.* This alternative would widen Route 28 on existing alignment between Liberia Avenue and the Fairfax County Line. In the second screening of the 2017 Feasibility Study, this tied with Alternative 2A as the second highest-ranked alternative.

Both Alternatives 2A and 2B are consistent with the County Comprehensive Plan for extending existing Godwin Drive. Elizabeth noted at this point that both Alternatives 2A and 2B would utilize an existing crossing of Bull Run.

Stuart also presented the No Build Alternative, which would be included for the purposes of comparison to the Build Alternatives in the NEPA document. He explained the other programmed projects in the region that would be included in the evaluation of the No Build Alternative. Fairfax County is widening Route 28 to six lanes (ultimately eight) from the Fairfax County Line to Route 29, and as Rick noted, the Prince William County project would tie into that widening project.

Summary of Impacts to Streams, Wetlands, and Floodplains. Stuart presented a table of preliminary impact estimates to water resources for each of the three build alternatives. Stuart explained that the “250-foot” value represented the impacts within the 250-foot-wide corridor established in the 2017 Feasibility Study; this 250-foot-wide corridor was assumed to allow for flexibility during the design stage. The “Refined” value represents an estimate of impacts for the alternatives based on a more realistic typical section as well as shifts of the alignments to reduce impacts to the environmental resources presented during the Environmental Constraints portion of the presentation. Stuart concluded that while efforts to minimize environmental impacts to water resources as compared to the 2017 Feasibility Study were successful, Alternatives 2A and 2B still had higher impacts than Alternative 4, which would widen on existing alignment within a highly developed area.

Lee asked if Alternative 4 meets the purpose and need for the project, and Rick replied that Alternative 4 would add only one lane in each direction within an already congested corridor with many intersections whereas Alternatives 2A and 2B would provide a four-lane limited-access bypass on new alignment. The latter would be more effective in meeting the purpose and need for the project. **Lee stated that it would be helpful to have a table that summarized all impacts, including elements of the purpose and need, in addition to streams, wetlands, and floodplains, and said she could provide an example to use as a template.**

Rick further noted that Alternative 4 would have a large number of business impacts (up to 90 businesses), which do not have a large set-back from the roadway. He asked how the typical section was refined for Alternative 4 (while noting that the typical section reduction for Alternatives 2A and 2B were already completed in consultation with the County). Stuart confirmed that the typical section was reduced in the same manner as Alternatives 2A and 2B per VDOT standards, and Rick stated that the typical section needs to take into account the intersections and associated turn lanes and suggested it would be more reasonable to run the width at intersections along the length of Route 28. **Stuart agreed that the project team would review the typical section for Alternative 4, particularly at intersections, and provide a typical section to the County for review prior to the submittal of the Alternatives Development Technical Report.** It was noted that business impacts include either full property takes or access

impacts, so the estimate of business impacts will differentiate between the two different types of impacts.

Elizabeth noted that there would be a public meeting to review the alternatives in October (tentatively scheduled for October 9 with a follow-on meeting for specific parcel/business owner concerns). Paolo will notify the group of the date, time, and location of the Public Information Meeting and the follow-on meeting. Rick emphasized that the meeting will focus on all three of the alternatives under study, and not just Alternatives 2A and 2B.

Agency Feedback

Stuart asked what other information the agencies would need to see as part of the next steps and their reviews. Lee asked when the Preliminary Jurisdictional Determination (PJD) request would be sent to Terri.² Surbhi responded that it was drafted and anticipated to go out next week, with the site visit to occur sometime between September 20 and October 31 given the property owner notifications that had been mailed the previous week. Surbhi also indicated that Stantec, Parsons' subconsultant, would be taking the lead on coordinating the PJD with USACE. Hannah, DEQ, and Stephanie, EPA, asked to be copied on the transmittal and PJD correspondence as they would likely attend the site visit as well.

Rick informed the group that there were several factors that could affect the direction of the study, including the bond referendum for project construction funding which will be voted on this November and the change in five members of the County Board of Supervisors, who will start their tenure this January. The project could continue on the path of preparing a FHWA NEPA document or change gears and proceed with no anticipation of federal funding and just apply for permits. He stated that the allocation of local funding came with the expectation that the project could move to construction faster than if it needed NEPA approval.

Lee responded, and Barb concurred, that agency concurrence on an alternative would still be contingent on: alternatives analysis, public comments and responses, Section 106, and Section 7 consultation with US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for threatened and endangered species.

Rick noted that the County already owns much of the right-of-way required for the new alignments for Alternatives 2A and 2B, to which Lee responded that comparison of costs should be included in the summary of impacts provided for their review.

When Rick asked for an order-of-magnitude timeframe of when to expect a preliminary LEDPA determination, Lee noted, and Barb, Hannah, and Mackenzie concurred, that there is the expectation of a 30-day agency review period for draft and final reports, and noted that total review time would also depend on how quickly their comments were addressed.

² Subsequent to the meeting, Lee indicated that Anna Lawston, rather than Terri, would be the USACE contact for the JD confirmation.

3. Schedule

Lee will provide an example summary of impacts table that Parsons will include in the Alternatives Development Technical Report, which is expected to be completed by mid-September. The next Public Meeting is scheduled for October 9, 2019, with a Technical Advisory Committee Meeting at least two weeks prior. **Paolo and Surbhi will coordinate to schedule the Technical Advisory Committee meeting in mid-September.** The EA document is anticipated to be ready for review by Fall 2019.

4. Next Steps

- Finalize Alternative 4 typical section for County review/approval.
- Finalize Draft Alternatives Development Technical Report for County/agency review by mid-September.
- Schedule Technical Advisory Committee Meeting and Public Meeting for alternatives. *(Subsequent to the meeting, the date and time for the Technical Advisory Committee meeting was confirmed to be September 19, 2019, 9-11 AM.)*

Prepared by: Jenny Kleinman and Surbhi Ashton

This meeting summary reflects the preparer's understanding of the discussions at the meeting. This summary shall initially be considered as draft, open to comments for a period of five (5) business days beyond the date of initial issuance. If no comments are received within five (5) business days, this meeting summary shall be considered final.