



Route 28 Corridor Environmental Assessment

Technical Committee Meeting

Prince William County Department of Transportation
Thursday, September 19, 2019, 9:00 AM

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

Name	Organization	Phone	Email
Rick Canizales	Prince William County	703-792-6825	rcaizales@pwcgov.org
Elizabeth Scullin	Prince William County	703-792-4051	escullin@pwcgov.org
Paolo Belita	Prince William County	703-792-6273	pbelita@pwcgov.org
Robert Iosco	VDOT	703-259-2764	robert.iosco@vdot.virginia.gov
Chloe Delhomme	City of Manassas	703-257-8235	cdelhomme@ci.manassas.va.us
Stuart Tyler	Parsons	571-437-3098	stuart.tyler@parsons.com
Surbhi Ashton	Parsons	703-856-7908	surbhi.ashton@parsons.com
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Mike DePue	NOVA Parks	703-359-4615	mdepue@nvrpa.org
Blake Myers	Bull Run Civil War Round Table	703-868-1728	Jb11thva@cox.net
Bryan Foster	City of Manassas	703-257-8226	bfoster@manassasva.gov
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Dinora Castillo	Manassas Park	703-335-8815	d.castillo@manassaspark.gov

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 (Parsons) began the meeting and indicated that it was an opportunity for the Project Team to provide an update on project

activities since the last Technical Committee Meeting that was held in November 2017, and for the attendees to ask questions or provide comments on those project activities or next steps.

Rick (Prince William County) introduced himself and said he wanted to clarify that VDOT is preparing a separate but complementary study, the Route 28 Operations Study (funded through VDOT's STARS Program), to provide more immediate/spot-level improvements along existing Route 28. This EA, on the other hand, is studying long-term improvements in the corridor, which includes the potential bypass option. Rick stated that the Route 28 Operations Study is holding a public meeting on Monday, September 30.

Rick also informed the group that the County has included \$200 million for construction of the Route 28 improvements being studied in the EA in a bond referendum that will be voted on this November. If the bond referendum is approved, the County Board of Supervisors, which will include five new members who will start their tenure this January, will make the final decision on how to proceed with the improvement projects included in the bond referendum.

2. Update on Alternatives Development Activities (PowerPoint)

2017 Route 28 Corridor Feasibility Study

Stuart provided a short summary of the 2017 Route 28 Corridor Feasibility Study, which is guiding the alternatives development process for the EA. Stuart stated that there were two types of basic alternatives considered in the Feasibility Study: one along the existing alignment of Route 28 and others that followed alternative alignments along other roads or on new alignments. 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. The Feasibility Study evaluated, screened, and ranked ten alternatives within the Route 28 corridor through two levels of screening. Stuart described the four alternatives that ranked highest in the second screening:

- Alternatives 2A and 2B, which 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 or north of Bull Run, respectively. Stuart noted that both of these options are consistent with the County Comprehensive Plan for extending existing Godwin Drive.
- Alternative 4, which would widen Route 28 to six lanes on existing alignment between Liberia Avenue and the Fairfax County Line.
- Alternative 9, which would provide a bypass to the east of existing Route 28 using, and widening, the Euclid Avenue corridor, as well as portions on new location.

Environmental Assessment (EA)

Stuart explained the EA process and which alternatives are being evaluated as part of this EA:

- *EA Process:* The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) concurred with the preparation of an EA instead of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). An EA has a similar, but streamlined, process compared to an EIS; both have generally the same

activities related to identification of sensitive resources and development of alternatives to minimize impacts. However, the purpose of an EA is to determine if there would be “significant” impacts that would warrant an EIS, which depend on the context and intensity of impacts. Then in consultation with FHWA, the decision would be made whether the project would be elevated to an EIS or if a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) would be issued to conclude the environmental process.

- *Alternatives Retained for Analysis in the EA:* The EA will evaluate the three top-ranked alternatives from the 2017 Feasibility Study (2A, 2B, and 4, as described above). Alternative 9, which was the lowest-ranked alternative in the second screening in the 2017 Feasibility Study, was eliminated from further evaluation due to the impacts identified for this alternative, its relatively higher estimated cost, and its relatively lower traffic benefits.

EA Activities

Stuart presented the EA activities that are currently ongoing and/or were recently completed:

- *Delineation of Waters of the US (streams and wetlands), identification of threatened and endangered species habitat, and surveys for actual occurrence of threatened or endangered species:* Stream/wetland delineation has been completed and a Preliminary Jurisdictional Determination (PJD) from the US Army Corps of Engineers has been requested (site visit, see below). There is suitable habitat for three federally listed threatened or endangered species (dwarf wedgemussel, harperella, and northern long-eared bat) in the study area, and experts are in the field starting today (9/19/2019) to determine if there are occurrences.
- *Cultural Resources:* Section 106 consultation has been initiated with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR). Two reports (Phase I architectural survey and battlefields assessment) were submitted on 9/16/2019. Findings from the architectural survey include the following: four post-World War II-era neighborhoods were recommended not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP); 93 buildings were recommended not eligible; and one resource (Mitchell’s Ford Entrenchments) is already listed and was recommended to remain listed. Portions of two Civil War battlefields (boundaries defined by the American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP) Potential National Register boundary (PotNR)) are located within the area of potential effects. DHR has 30 days to review and respond regarding the eligibility recommendations. Section 106 consulting parties, as identified in consultation with DHR, were also sent copies of the letter and will be sent the reports if they are requested.
- *Property Owner Notification Letters:* Property owner notification letters were mailed for upcoming field work for the following activities: noise monitoring (estimated to be completed during the week of October 7, 2019); threatened and endangered species surveys (occurring today September 19, 2019 and through the weekend); and the PJD site visit by USACE.
- *Finalized Traffic Technical Report*

- *Alternatives Development*: Refined alternatives/detailed analysis to be documented in a draft Alternatives Development Technical Memorandum, the purpose of which is to document that all efforts were made to avoid and minimize impacts. Stuart explained that USACE is constrained by regulations to approve for permitting only the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative (LEDPA) that meets the project purpose and need, so the environmental documentation will have to show that all efforts were made to avoid and minimize impacts to streams and wetlands, while at the same time balancing impacts to other resources as well.

Alternatives Review and Development

Stuart presented mapping of parks and historic properties in the northern portion of the study area, including Bull Run Regional Park, Mitchell's Ford Entrenchments, Blackburn's Ford, and First Manassas Battlefield. Stuart also 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. He explained that all combined, these resources represent 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 for USACE. Stuart also noted that there are two roadways – Ordway Road and Route 28 – that cross over/through these resources and trying to constrain improvements to existing right-of-way is an opportunity to minimize impacts.

Alternatives Refinement

Stuart stated that the 2017 Feasibility Study utilized a standard 250-foot-wide corridor width to evaluate alternatives and estimate impacts, and that part of the purpose of the EA is to estimate impacts for the alternatives based on a more realistic typical section to include estimates of construction limits, as well as shifts of the alignments to reduce impacts to sensitive environmental resources. He then presented two examples of the ongoing engineering refinements to Alternatives 2A and 2B:

- *Alternative 2A*: The ongoing refinements are shifting the alignment south to avoid the historic properties as well as Bull Run Regional Park and minimize impacts to wetlands in the area.
- *Alternative 2B*: The ongoing refinements are shifting the alignment to overlap with the existing roadway right-of-way along Ordway Road to cross Bull Run and connect to existing Route 28 in order to minimize impacts to Bull Run Regional Park and the battlefields.

Stuart concluded that while efforts to reduce impacts to environmental resources as compared to the 2017 Feasibility Study have been successful, Alternatives 2A and 2B will still have higher impacts to natural resources than Alternative 4, which would widen on existing alignment within a highly developed area. However, Alternative 4 would still have greater impacts on businesses.

Harun Rashid (NVTA) asked whether shifting the alignment even farther south would further minimize impacts. Stuart responded that alternatives development must strike a balance between impacts to all resources, including residential displacements, which would be higher if the alignments were moved further south. He added that the Project Team is looking at using retaining walls in the areas along Bull Run as a way to minimize impacts to environmental resources without overly impacting residences.

Agency Coordination

Stuart briefly described the ongoing coordination with the permitting agencies, particularly the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and USACE. He noted that in meetings to date, although none of the agencies have indicated that Alternatives 2A and 2B are not permissible, they have emphasized the need for robust analysis. Stuart explained that as part of the LEDPA determination, USACE considers not only the magnitude of potential impacts, but also whether that alternative is “practicable” in terms of impacts to other resources, and if it meets the purpose and need of the project. Stuart noted that there were ongoing discussions regarding the ability of Alternative 4 (widening existing Route 28) to fully meet the purpose and need.

Additional coordination is ongoing with: DHR (as previously described), Fairfax County Department of Transportation (regarding adjacent projects), NOVA Parks (the owner of Bull Run Regional Park), and others.

Public Involvement

Stuart briefly described past public involvement efforts, which include the project website (www.route28study.com) as well as two public meetings in Prince William and Fairfax Counties as part of scoping (held on 12/5/18 and 12/6/18, respectively). He then informed the attendees of two upcoming public meetings:

- Alternatives Public Meeting, to be held on 10/9/19 at Yorkshire Elementary School (7610 Old Centreville Road in Manassas) from 6:30-8:30pm with a formal presentation at 7:00pm. Meeting notification postcards are being sent on Monday 9/23/19 to parcels within 1-mile of the study area.
- Follow-up Community Meeting for Potentially Affected Property Owners, to be held on 10/23/19 at the County building, exact time TBD.

Paolo (Prince William County) explained that the purpose of the follow-up meeting is to separate property-specific questions from the main informational meeting. **Paolo stated that he would send meeting details to attendees.**

Questions and Comments

Stuart summarized the next steps (public meetings followed by EA and its technical memoranda) and closed by asking if there were any questions or comments on the EA process or alternatives under development.

Bryan Foster (City of Manassas) asked if the Project Team had a sense of whether the EA would result in a FONSI or an EIS. Stuart responded that the magnitude of the potential impacts would play into that decision, and the quantities of those impacts are still under analysis – but that the ongoing work was showing that impacts to streams/wetlands and historic properties, which were resources that agencies indicated critical concern for during early coordination, could be reduced in the EA as compared to the impacts reported as part of the 2017 Feasibility Study. Stuart noted that the determination would also consider potential for mitigation to unavoidable impacts (such as purchase of wetland credits or compensation to property owners), and that while his personal sense was that it could be a FONSI, the decision will ultimately be made by FHWA. Bryan asked if the EA made a recommendation or not. Stuart explained that it was a two-step process. First, the EA would be prepared and made available the public and agencies for review and comment. Second, responses to comments would be prepared and substantive comments incorporated in a Revised EA, which would be submitted to FHWA along with a letter recommending and requesting a FONSI (unless it becomes clear that an EIS would be required).

Elizabeth (Prince William County) noted that USACE has its own NEPA process that includes alternatives analysis and review, and that while the current EA process may be affected by the outcome of the bond referendum, the USACE process would not. Stuart agreed and further explained that if the project became locally-funded, it would not be necessary to complete the EA and obtain FHWA approval; however, permitting from USACE would also require some type of NEPA document.

The EA is currently scheduled to be completed in late Fall 2019, and the key steps to make that schedule were the alternatives technical report and field surveys, as well as agency review.

The group discussed the various meetings being held for projects in the Route 28 corridor, reiterating that the VDOT Route 28 Operations Study public meeting was being held on September 30 and the public meeting for the EA was being held on October 9. A public hearing for the Fairfax County Route 28 widening project, which extends from the existing bridge over Bull Run to the interchange at Route 29, is being held on September 23.

Blake Myers (Bull Run Civil War Round Table) stated that the existing topography of Alternative 2A in the area of Mitchell's Ford Entrenchments and behind the townhomes was steep and noted concern about the feasibility of any new roadway in that section. Stuart acknowledged his concern and stated that assumptions would be detailed in the alternatives technical memorandum.

The meeting concluded with Paolo stating that he would send a copy of the meeting presentation and meeting minutes, as well as the information on the alternatives public meeting, to all attendees.

3. Schedule

The Alternatives Public Meeting is scheduled for October 9, 2019, with a property owner follow-up meeting on October 23, 2019. The Alternatives Development Technical Report is expected to be completed by the end of September. The EA document is anticipated to be ready for review Fall 2019.

4. Next Steps

- Finalize Draft Alternatives Development Technical Report for County/agency review by the end of September.
- Alternatives Public Meeting
- EA and Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation
- Bond Referendum in November

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.