

September 4, 2020

Board of County Supervisors
Prince William County
1 County Complex Court
Prince William, VA 22192

Dear Supervisors:

We support your August 4, 2020 decision to adopt Alternative 4 on the Route 28 Corridor Study.

A Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA) is now required to revise outdated language, such as that referenced in Table 2 – Thoroughfare Plan Summary in the Transportation Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan (*PW-3 Tri-County Parkway/Route 28 Bypass*).

The benefits of such a considerable investment in transportation infrastructure should not be limited to efforts moving drive-alone commuters faster to jobs outside the County. In the initiation of the CPA to advance Alternative 4, we encourage you to articulate your goals for concurrently planning for economic development, land use, affordable access to jobs and housing, and cleaner, multimodal transportation improvements.

The CPA should:

- 1) require assessing how investment in Route 28 mobility can be leveraged to spur economic revitalization; and
- 2) clarify that the “purpose and need” of Route 28 improvements is to increase local multimodal mobility, create a more walkable and transit-oriented corridor, reduce pollution, and facilitate the creation of local jobs and equitable access to them.

To more quickly access some funding previously allocated to the Route 28 corridor project by the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) [\$89 million, total], we suggest the CPA divide Alternative 4 into two phases.

- Phase One - Focus on widening the Route 28 bridge across Bull Run, adding bike/pedestrian and future transit capacity as part of the widening, and smoothing traffic flow north to Compton Road. That capacity expansion should qualify for use of the NVTA funding allocation.
- Phase Two – Focus more broadly to include consideration of additional vehicle and bus/HOV lanes on existing Route 28 or the Well Street Extended corridor, to stimulate development of a walkable and transit-oriented corridor in the Yorkshire area, and to move more people within and through the corridor.

Phase Two would be the time frame in which to combine detailed, localized land use planning and placemaking for Yorkshire, together with changes in transportation infrastructure. These functions warrant further analysis.

The Route 28 Corridor Study prioritized the analysis of Alignment 2B only. Alternative 4 was not given sufficient focus and detail during the two years after completion of the prior Feasibility Study.

The CPA process should ensure consideration of an approach to “widening” the Route 28 corridor by building new lanes using the Well Street Extended corridor, approximately 400 feet west of existing Route 28, similar to the Mathis Ave alignment in the City of Manassas.

New capacity in the corridor, paired with the STARS Study recommended improvements on the existing four lanes of Route 28, may adequately reduce traffic congestion as well as enhance economic and community development and retention of existing businesses. There are more beneficial ways to upgrade mobility, besides the approach used to widen Route 1 which required extensive business displacements.

“Mobility” means more than “move cars.” The CPA should require evaluating opportunities for enhanced walkability and bus transit to maximize movement while sustainably reducing congestion and travel times.

Though Yorkshire today lacks even OmniRide service, transit on Route 28 is not a new idea. Since 2008, the Comprehensive Plan has proposed building light rail from Manassas to Dulles.

The NVTA TransAction plan approved in 2017 also includes a Route 28 High Capacity Transit project to *“Construct High Capacity Transit along Route 28 corridor and implement service between Dulles Town Center and the City of Manassas. Alternative modes for further study include BRT and LRT.”*

Prince William County must continue to plan smarter, to ensure that high-cost transportation upgrades concurrently spur local jobs and create more walkable places with reduced per capita driving.

We appreciate your thoughtfulness in evaluating the wide range of concerns before rejecting Alignment 2B. We look forward to the Flat Branch stream valley now becoming a linear park with trails connecting the adjacent neighborhoods, and for Yorkshire planning to demonstrate how transportation improvements can be coordinated with land use, economic development, placemaking, and the creation of affordable housing.

Revitalizing the Yorkshire area will promote social, cultural, and environmental sustainability and neighborhood economic resiliency, while providing new job opportunities, maintaining the sense of community, and offering affordable housing. This is the direction of smart growth planning needed.

Placemaking collectively reimagines and revitalizes public spaces in a community. Community participation in developing the Yorkshire revitalization plan is imperative in order to capitalize on the community's assets, inspiration, and potential, thereby resulting in the creation of a quality public space that contributes to equity, health and well-being.

Sincerely,

Active Prince William

Coalition for Smarter Growth

Piedmont Environmental Council

Prince William Conservation Alliance

Sierra Club, Virginia Chapter

Southern Environmental Law Center