

US Route 501 Regional Coalition

July 13, 2005

The regular meeting of the US Route 501 Regional Coalition was held at the Community & Economic Development Conference Room, County Office Building, Rustburg, Virginia on July 13, 2005.

Those Present:

Sue Montgomery, Bedford County
Phyllis Campbell, Town of Brookneal
Lee Ann Carr, Bedford Chamber
Ron Lovelace, Bedford County
Don Austin, VDOT
Dale Grigg, VDOT
Bill Guiher, VDOT

Paul Harvey, Campbell County
Rick Youngblood, VDOT
Stanley Murphy, VDOT
Barbara Hartley, Lynchburg Chamber
Bill Gillespie, Town of Brookneal
Mike Davidson, Campbell County

Also Present:

Jamie Banton, Campbell County, Administrative Assistant

Because of the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Coalition, Mr. Davidson called the meeting to order at 2:01 pm. Mr. Davidson provided the invocation. Mr. Davidson added one item, the FY2006 newsletter, to the agenda under New Business. The April 13, 2005 meeting minutes were accepted without changes.

Financial Report

Mr. Davidson provided the Coalition with a current financial report. A total of \$21,804.53 remains in the Coalition account. Mr. Davidson explained that invoices to member localities for FY2006 dues would be mailed within the next 30-60 days.

Old Business

// Mr. Davidson stated that the Coalition needed to elect its annual Chairperson for the FY2006 program year. Ms. Montgomery stated that she felt that Mr. Ron Lovelace, a citizen representative from Bedford County, would make a great Chairperson, and she explained that Mr. Lovelace was not new to transportation issues. Mr. Lovelace has served on the Bedford Chamber and Lynchburg Chamber transportation advocacy groups.

On a motion by Ms. Montgomery, seconded by Mr. Harvey and duly adopted by unanimous vote, the US Route 501 Regional Coalition elects Ron Lovelace as its FY2006 Chairperson.

// Mr. Davidson advised the Coalition at the April meeting that funds may be needed to convert the Coalition's website to a new software platform that would be used by Campbell County. The County has not yet changed its software package, so no funding has been required for this purpose to date. Mr. Davidson stated that conversion of the site software would be needed in the near future.

// Mr. Davidson asked Mr. Austin for an update of highway matters. Mr. Austin provided a brief update on the following projects.

- Grant Funding: The funding obtained by Congressman Virgil Goode's office, approximately \$99,000, was approved and will be applied to the Route 917/US Route 501 connection at Naruna. The grant funding will be carried over each fiscal year until it is used.
- Browns Mill Road (Route 686) Project: Construction on the Browns Mill Road project has begun.
- Halifax Roundabout Update: The Town of Halifax has requested information on providing a roundabout at the intersection of US Route 501 and US Route 360. While roundabouts have been popular in Europe for years and have increased in popularity in Maryland, New York and Arizona, public education of their use is important. Historically, roundabouts lower the number and severity of accidents, but drivers unaccustomed to their use may become confused. Public education will be needed if the Halifax roundabout is constructed.

New Business

// Mr. Davidson asked the VDOT representatives for an update on the 501 Brookneal By-pass. Mr. Austin requested that Stanley Murphy, the District Environmental Engineer, provide the update.

Mr. Murphy stated that VDOT has been working on the environmental documents for some time. In February, his office sent up the Preliminary Project Draft to the Federal Highway Administration for review. The review and approval of the Federal Highway Administration is needed before federal funds can be used for a particular project. Mr. Murphy stated that the response he received from the Federal Highway Administration was that the levels of service (traffic delays – how long does traffic have to wait) do not justify the project. While the highway has areas of local concern, the project does not meet the thresholds for which federal funding could be used. The accident data for the project area does not justify the project either. If the Federal Highway Administration will not help fund the project cost, VDOT cannot do the project.

Mr. Murphy stated that the Federal Highway Administration concluded that there is not enough volume to merit consideration for federal funding. VDOT cannot find any analytical data to back-up the request. The latest traffic counts list the daily volume on US Route 501 at the bridge as 6,650, at Juniper Cliff Road as 7,800 and at Wickliffe Avenue as 7,540.

In response to Mr. Murphy's explanation, Mr. Davidson stated that if the 501 By-pass project cannot move forward, he wants the state dollars designated to other projects on 501. The Coalition decided to revisit their priorities list at their next meeting.

// Next, Mr. Davidson stated that in a continued effort to communicate the Coalition's efforts to the public, the time has come to start preparations for the next newsletter. Betsy Brittingham, the Coalition's contact at Blair

Communications, recently left to become a teacher. Mr. Davidson stated that the Coalition's new contact is Pam Bailey. He requested a volunteer committee to work with Ms. Bailey on the newsletter. Mike Davidson, Jerry Lovelace and Lee Ann Carr agreed to volunteer. Mr. Davidson stated that he would have a cost estimate on the newsletter at the September meeting.

The meeting of the US Route 501 Regional Coalition adjourned at 3:10 pm. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 28, 2005, 2:00 pm, in the Campbell County CED Conference Room, Rustburg, Virginia.