

Corridor 501 Comments

www.Route501.org

September 2004

VDOT budget puts brakes on all new construction

If you've been keeping up with the latest news from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), you already know not to expect any new construction projects during the next six years. According to VDOT officials, "VDOT will make essential bridge repairs, complete construction projects underway, and bring others in the planning stage to an appropriate phase; after that, there will be few major improvements left in the transportation program."

In finalizing the 2005 to 2010 Six-Year Transportation Program, the Commonwealth Transportation Board reduced the already-cut budget by more than \$1 billion. Forty-one percent of the remaining \$6.3 billion budget must be used for road maintenance and fixing major safety problems with bridges. VDOT is bound by law to put maintenance and safety issues first.

So, what does that mean for the 501 Coalition?

The only major project that will be ongoing in the localities surrounding Route 501 is the Route 29 Madison Heights Bypass, north of Lynchburg. And while coalition members agree that this project deserves priority status, they see the importance of keeping issues and priorities surrounding Route 501 on the minds of legislators and VDOT leaders.

Safety is the mission of the 501 Regional Coalition. The long-term goal is to see the entire 501 Corridor improved to four lanes, from Lexington to the North Carolina state line. However, Coalition members have seen much success from identifying the most troublesome spots on the highway and presenting the group's top priorities as a unified, regional force.

This spring, the Coalition revised its priority list, removing completed projects and re-ordering priorities slightly. The list has now grown from ten to eleven projects. In addition, a new list of safety and spot improvements was created. These are generally lower-budget, faster-turnaround projects, which may be addressed through alternate funding. (See lists on page 2.)

This approach means that VDOT and the Commonwealth Transportation Board get a strong message from several localities at once. "The Coalition provides useful information that helps VDOT make recommendations to the Transportation Board," says Don Austin, Resident Engineer in the Lynchburg District. "It's worthwhile to keep these projects on the agenda, especially if you look at the safety aspects."

Wayne Bales, Area Manager of Georgia Pacific's OSB Facilities, states "VDOT may not

\$100,000 grant received

The Coalition received notification from Congressman Virgil Goode's office that \$100,000 in federal funding would be designated for a 501 Coalition Project. This funding was part of the Omnibus Appropriations Bill and was approved in October 2003.

Currently, the Coalition is working with VDOT to determine how this funding would best be spent.

have the budget to improve Route 501 right away, but for our business and many others like us, safety issues for drivers along the roadway are an everyday problem. We have approximately 270 trucks traveling from Naruna to Big Island every day. It's important for the 501 Coalition to keep pushing for safety improvements and funding for these regional priorities."

Because of regional cooperation and strategies, the 501 Coalition continues to be a unique force that makes legislators and VDOT officials take notice. Members feel that it's important to stay in the public and political eye, despite budget shortfalls over the next six years. Traffic increases along Route 501 are certain, as are safety hazards along the aging roadway.

Before



The stretch of Rt. 501 between Big Island and Lynchburg is known for hairpin curves, poor sight distances and accidents.

After



While the curves are still there, the wider roadway and shoulders show how a small change can make a big difference.

501 Coalition's Regional Priorities

Major Project Priorities

1. Construct southern leg of Route 501/29/460 Lynchburg/Rustburg Bypass. (City of Lynchburg and Campbell County)
2. Complete engineering, right of way acquisition, and construction of the Brookneal Bypass. (Campbell County)
3. Reconstruct Route 501 from Route 672 to the Georgia Pacific Plant; widen to 24 feet, adding shoulder and guardrail to meet current standards. (Bedford County)
4. Construct eastward bypass from Route 360 to Route 501. (Halifax County)
5. Construct interchange at Route 501 and Route 221. (City of Lynchburg)
6. Construct southern bypass from Route 501 to Route 58. (Halifax County)
7. Improve Route 501 from Eagle Eyrie to Coleman Falls; straighten curves and widen to 36 feet, providing two southbound lanes and one northbound lane. (Bedford County)
8. Four-lane Route 501 from just south of Route 615 to Campbell County line. (Halifax County)
9. Four-lane Route 501 from Brookneal to Winfall. (Campbell County)
10. Improve Route 501 from the bridge at Judith Creek (Route 671) to Eagle Eyrie; widen to 36 feet, provide truck/passing lane in the northbound direction. (Bedford County)
11. Improve Candler's Mountain Road area of Route 501. (City of Lynchburg)

Safety/Spot Improvement Priorities

Bedford County

- Reconstruct roadway to provide standard shoulders and guardrail between Rt. 612 and 0.50 miles north Rt. 672; 1.47 miles in length.
- Reconstruct curve and provide left and right turn lanes at Rt. 122 intersection; 0.46 miles in length.
- Provide left and right turn lanes at Rt. 647 realignment; 0.44 miles in length.

Campbell County

- Safety projects at the intersection of Rt. 501 and Rt. 24 in Campbell County.
- Provide northbound left turn lane at southernmost entrance to Rt. 917.
- Provide northbound left turn lane at the northernmost entrance to Rt. 917.
- Provide northbound left turn lane and southbound right turn lane at Rt. 933, (Thomasville Road) or address intersection in the Brookneal by-pass project.

Halifax County

- Install traffic signal and construct right and left turn lanes at intersection of Rt. 501 and Rt. 360 in Town of Halifax
- Provide right and left turn lanes at intersection of Rt. 501 and Rt. 642.
- Provide right and left turn lanes at intersection of Rt. 501 and Rt. 628.

Note: The City of Lynchburg's safety/spot improvement priorities exceeded the budget parameters set for inclusion on the above list, and were therefore considered as "major projects."

Accident-prone

The following information was gathered by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) from Jan. 1 – Dec. 31, 2003:

South Section

(Lynchburg to N.C. State Line)

Total accidents	105
Fatal accidents	5
Persons killed	6
Injury accidents	57
Persons injured	102
Pedestrians injured	1
Property damage accidents	43
Amt. of damage	\$610,425*

North Section

(Lynchburg to Rockbridge County)

Total accidents	21
Fatal accidents	0
Injury accidents	6
Persons injured	7
Property damage accidents	15
Amt. of damage	\$110,950*

* Estimates from State Police Reports.

Projects in progress

Intersection of Rt. 501 and Brown's Mill Road (Rt. 686)

This project was once the Coalition's No. 3 priority. It includes addition of a center turn lane at this Campbell County location. Expected date of completion is Summer 2005.

Intersection of Rt. 501 and Colonial Highway (Rt. 24)

The process to reconstruct this intersection, just south of the Village of Rustburg, has just begun. Engineering studies were authorized in July. Construction should begin sometime in 2005.

Engineering & Environmental Studies for Brookneal Bypass

Several meetings of the Coalition have focused on VDOT studies of this bypass. And while studies have continued, funding for right-of-way acquisition and construction are not included in the Six-Year Plan.

A public information meeting was held in August 2002 to discuss route alternatives, and VDOT is continuing to study the different options for the bypass route.

Success Stories: Completed Projects



This busy commercial intersection can now handle truck traffic more smoothly.



This simplified intersection in Volens now has much-improved sight distance.



L.P. Bailey highway has been widened to better accommodate two converging routes.

Intersection of Rt. 501 and Philpott Road (Rt. 58)

This project will keep traffic moving through this Halifax County intersection by reconstructing the road to include right and left turn lanes and a thru lane. This project was completed in June 2004.

Intersection of Rt. 501 and Rt. 603 in Volens

This treacherous stretch of Rt. 501 has been the site of many accidents. Formerly a five-way intersection, the reconstruction has provided right and left turn lanes and improved sight distance by straightening a severe curve and eliminating two blind spots.

Intersection of Rt. 501 with Stage Coach Road (Rt. 40) and Hog Wallow Road (Rt. 632)

This project brought much-needed safety improvements to the L.P. Bailey Highway segment of 501, just south of Brookneal in Halifax County. Modifications included construction of a left turn lane and widening to create right-shoulder turn/deceleration lanes.



Trucks and buses have an especially hard time with 501's curves near Big Island.



Turning on and off of this section of 501 has become a much safer proposition.



Hundreds of reflectors have been imbedded in 501's pavement around Lynchburg.

Eight locations between Lynchburg and Big Island

This important series Bedford County projects included safety/spot improvements along one of the worst stretches of Rt. 501. The area is also one of the most heavily traveled by trucks delivering wood chips to the Georgia Pacific paper mill in Big Island. In general, improvements included relocating ditch lines, widening the road, and paving shoulders.

Sue Montgomery, Bedford County's Coalition representative said that while additional improvements are certainly needed in this area, the spot improvements "appear to be a short-term success." Traffic and accident studies seem to indicate a slight decrease in accidents this year.

Intersections of Rt. 501 and Swinging Bridge Road (Rt. 605) and Lewis Ford Road (Rt. 643)

This dual-site Campbell County project included the construction of center left turn lanes and right-shoulder turn lanes at Rt. 605 (Swinging Bridge Road) and less than a mile away at Rt. 643 (Lewis Ford Rd.).

Both intersections had been the site of several serious accidents, many of which occurred as vehicles were turning off of 501.

The new lanes should eliminate the turning hazard, and also aid traffic on Swinging Bridge Road—a cutover from 501 to Route 40 that is often used by logging trucks.

Safety improvements from Candler Mountain Road to Boonsboro Road

Roadway reflectors were installed along Route 501 through the City of Lynchburg. This heavily-traveled Lynchburg Expressway section of Rt. 501 was in dire need of these simple safety improvements, which will make the center line and the edges of the pavement easier to see at night and during rainy conditions.

This project was accomplished through a safety grant from VDOT, awarded to the City.

501 Coalition launches new Web site: www.Route501.org

The 501 Regional Coalition recently released a new Web Site, which will ensure that the issues and priorities surrounding Route 501 are easily accessible. The site includes all of the information critical for educating legislators and decision-makers about the issues.

It is also meant to supplement printed materials, such as this newsletter, in spotlighting VDOT's and other public meetings and by reporting the Coalition's progress.

Important contact names and phone numbers for local and state legislators, as well as those of members, are also included on the site.

The Coalition welcomes you to visit the new Web site at www.Route501.org, and provide us with any feedback that you may have. You may contact Mike Davidson at 434-592-9595 or jmdavidson@co.campbell.va.us with your comments.

A bit of history:

Though the 501 Regional Coalition was founded in 1995, the need for safety improvements along the route have been brought to the attention of state highway officials repeatedly over the years. In fact, an article in the *Lynchburg News* from March 10, 1954, reported a meeting between members of the Lynchburg Chamber of Commerce and road experts "to come up with suggestions for improving the stretch between Lynchburg and Glasgow on Rt. 501."



In March 1954, E.A. Ware, J.C. Oliver, A.T. Taylor, and Carter Glass, Jr. met to examine Route 501 from the Lynchburg side of the foot of Locke's Mountain. Their findings were reported to the Virginia Highway Commission.

Write your own success story

The 501 Regional Coalition is welcoming business members to join the cause. Dues range from \$25 to \$500 and are based on number of employees.

In addition, members who have a personal stake in the success of our mission may also elect to become sponsors. Please see www.Route501.org for more details.

A Publication of the U.S. 501 Regional Coalition: Bedford County, Campbell County, Halifax County, Town of Brookneal, Town of South Boston, and City of Lynchburg

For a full list of localities represented and businesses active with the 501 Coalition, call Mike Davidson at (434) 592-9595 or visit www.Route501.org

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