

Route 7 Safety Meeting Notes-October 29, 2024

Officials and Contact Info

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Transportation information, including updates from Route 7 Safety meeting, can be found here <https://www.clarkecounty.gov/government/transportation>

VDOT Information Presented at the Meeting:

The roadway is greatly exceeding the capacity anticipated during construction in the late 1960's. The Annual Average Daily Traffic has increased from 17,977 vehicles per day in 1997 to 27,758 vehicles a day in 2023. A review of crash data (excluding deer and other animals) for the past three years reveals there were 295 crashes with 155 persons injured, and 8 fatalities. Rear end collisions accounted for 40% of crashes and fixed object off the roadway accounted for another 27%. Speed was a factor in 137 accidents, distracted driving 36 accidents, and alcohol in 19 accidents.

VDOT Improvements Update

IMPROVEMENTS COMPLETED

Pavement Markings

- Edgelines widened from 4 inches to 6 inches
- Optical Speed bars installed on Rt 7 WB approaching Rt 612 (Shepherds Mill Rd)
- 24-inch STOP bars installed on 20 secondary route approaches to Rt 7 and in 3 crossovers
- Double yellow centerline extensions installed on 20 secondary route approaches to Rt 7 and in 3 crossovers

Signs

- Dynamic intersection conflict warning flashers on Rt 7 EB and Rt 7 WB approaching Rt

601

- 8 additional warning signs installed on Rt 7 EB for intersections with routes, 635, 632, 7 Bus West, and 612.
- 7 additional warning signs installed on Rt 7 WB for intersections with both Rt 612 intersections, Rt 608, 7 Bus East, and Rt 635.

Signals

- High Visibility Backplates installed on the signal heads at the Rt 7 intersections with Rt 632, Rt 7 BUS West, Rt 7 BUS East.

Shoulder Widening, Rumble Strips, and Guardrail Improvements

- UPC 110827. From Rt 7 (E) BUS to Shenandoah River Bridge.
- UPC 112899. From Shenandoah River Bridge to Rt 601. Shoulder and rumble strips completed, Guardrail Improvements under construction.

Improved the Sight Distance on southbound Shepherds Mill to the East by flattening the slope.

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

- Radar signal detection to an effort reduce rear end and red-light running crashes at the intersections of Triple J/Crums Church, Rt 7 BUS West, and Rt 7 BUS East

PLANNED AND FUNDED IMPROVEMENTS

- There is an existing programed safety project to widen the paved shoulders, install rumble strips and upgrade the guardrail from Frederic County line to Rt 7 BUS (W). This project is scheduled for advertisement and is planned to be constructed in 2025.

PROJECTS TO BE SUBMITTED FOR FUNDING

- Northbound right turn lane on Rt 601, Eastbound turn lane extension in Loudoun Co

UNFUNDED RECOMMENDATIONS

- Widen and extend the westbound right turn lane onto Shepherds Mil (Rt 612) north. Page 17 of the report.
- Extension of the westbound left turn lanes at Valley Springs Lane and Pine Grove Rd/Longwood Ln at (Rt 679). Page 28 of report.
- Extension of the westbound right turn lane at Good Shepherd Rd (Rt 604). Page 28 of report.

FEEDBACK RECEIVED FROM PUBLIC

What are your top concerns?

Speed- by far the greatest concern

Volume-of traffic and accidents (volume from Bear Chase on weekends specifically mentioned)

Ability to safely enter and exit Route 7- lack of breaks in the traffic because no stop lights from Berryville to Loudoun, concerns about visibility (trees and hills blocking visibility), difficulty judging vehicle speeds when you pull out

Inadequate crossovers- no painted lines, people overcrowding the crossovers.

Aggressive Drive including tailgating, people running red lights (Kimble and West Main mentioned specifically)

Shepherds Mill-concerns about cut-through traffic, inadequate turning lane, conflicts with traffic leaving gas station, conflict with power pole (reduced visibility), concerns about crash data on right hand turns because many people going west use Wickliffe Road-making everyone go right will be a death trap.

Safety of kids getting on buses

Trucks, tractor-trailers, and construction vehicles-especially using left lane coming up or going down the mountain

Deer population

Band-aid approach

Lack of court enforcement of existing fines/penalties

Fog

What ideas do you have?

Reduce speeds-actually reduce the speed limit, increase fines for speeders, increase law enforcement presence/visibility (even if it requires more local/state funding), use empty police vehicles, change legislation to allow for speed cameras and other enforcement tools, install flashing speed displaying signs, allow for variable speed limits depending on conditions/volume and/or reduce speeds at dangerous intersections like 601.

Install traffic light(s) east of Berryville to create breaks for people to pull onto Route 7

Education- Better teen driving courses, teach drivers rules about using inside lane when making left turn onto Route 7, teach drivers about heavy trucks and stopping distances required, and provide information/warnings to hikers who park at park/ride lot at top of the mountain.

Longer acceleration and deceleration lanes (601 and 612 specifically mentioned)

Crossovers-consider closing some crossovers (some favored closing crossover at 612, others disagreed), add pavement markers (fluorescent used in Australia), widen some to allow for buses

Add lanes to Route 7 (mountain specifically mentioned by several, could added lanes on mountain be reversible to switch for commuting patterns (open east in mornings, west in afternoons).

Add right Turn lane at 601

Public transit options like a commuter bus, add park and ride along Route 7

Intersections-improve visibility issues, possibly limit turns at some intersections

Traffic calming measures like a roundabout

Kill permits for deer

Get other county builders to help pay for improvements

Convert to limited access highway to reduce angular collisions, no lights-ramps only, access roads, only controlled intersections like Loudoun.

Need Regional approach-Loudoun and Frederick involvement, NOVA VDOT district involvement, treat entire corridor instead of individual pieces

Don't allow large vehicles/tractor trailers during rush hours, maybe through DMV permitting

Flashing Signage for fog, warning for headlights on 7 and 601

Studies should be done on impact of roadways when future developments are being proposed

Closing off Shepherds Mill at Route 340 to thru traffic as was done during Route 9 work.

Add road markers to indicate safe traveling distances

Install light alerting drivers of emergency vehicles at Retreat Road intersection

Add potholes to slow people down

What questions do you have and/or what other information would be helpful for us to share with the public?

What can citizens do to help change speed camera legislation?-*waiting to hear back from VDOT*

What is the process for reducing the speed limit on Route 7? How can Route 17 in Fauquier County have a 45 mph speed limit and flashing speed signs?-*waiting to hear back from VDOT*

Why can't a stoplight be installed at the top of the mountain at 601?-*waiting to hear back from VDOT*

When will next traffic plan analysis be completed? 2022 seems outdated with new development in Berryville? ***Not sure exactly what this is in reference to, different plans are updated at different intervals.***

What review happens holistically with other counties? This should be done in conjunction with neighboring counties. ***We will be reaching out to adjoining localities to discuss the concerns noted at this meeting.***

Average age of drivers involved in accidents? ***There were a number of questions about crash data, the VDOT crash analysis tool can be found at***

<https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoieMjhlZjFhZDAtNTIjMC00MDA1LWWEyOTMtYWYwM2NiMmRiMmRkliwidCl6jYyMGFINWE5LTRYzEtNGZhMC04NjQxLTVkOWYzODZjNzMwOSJ9>

Total accidents? ***See above***

Injury accidents? ***See above***

Fatalities? ***See above***

How do we get increased speeding fines for 7? ***-waiting to hear back from VDOT***

Stats on frequency of airlifts/serious injuries? ***See above***

Is the sun a factor in accidents? ***See above***

How can citizens donate to public safety departments? ***The volunteer fire companies and the Sheriff's Office accept donations.***

Need more notice for next meeting to allow for more participation. ***We will schedule as far in advance as possible.***