

October 29, 2019

Clarke County Board of Supervisors
Public Information Meeting

6:30 p.m.

At a public information meeting of the Board of Supervisors of Clarke County, Virginia, with the Virginia Department of Transportation, held in the Berryville Clarke County Government Center, 101 Chalmers Court, 2nd Floor, Berryville, Virginia conducted on Tuesday, October 29, 2019.

Supervisors:

Present: Mary L.C. Daniel – Berryville District; David S. Weiss – Buckmarsh / Blue Ridge District; Terri T. Catlett - Millwood / Pine Grove District; Barbara J. Byrd – Russell District; Bev B. McKay – White Post District

Absent: None

County Staff Present

David Ash, Cathy Kuehner, Brian Lichty, Lora B. Walburn

Constitutional / State Offices / Other Agencies

Jay Arnold, Nicholas Crouch; Daniel Davies, Dave LaRock, Tony Roper, Jon Turkel

Town of Hillsboro: Mayor Roger Vance, Vice Mayor Amy Marasco

VDOT: Ed Carter, Edinburg Residency Engineering; Keith Rider, District Engineering Manager; Sandy Myers, Public Affairs Staunton District; Ken Slack, Public Affairs Staunton District

Press

Mickey Powell – The Winchester Star

Others Present

Doug Lawrence, Richard Marks, Richard Thuss, Jim Wink, and other Clarke residents

1) Call to Order

Chairman Weiss called the Board of Supervisors meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

2) Adoption of Agenda

Supervisor Byrd moved to adopt the agenda as presented. The motion carried by the following vote:

Barbara J. Byrd	-	Aye
Terri T. Catlett	-	Aye
Mary L.C. Daniel	-	Absent
Beverly B. McKay	-	Absent
David S. Weiss	-	Aye

3) Route 9 Detour Mitigations

Chairman Weiss welcomed those in attendance. He introduced Hillsboro Mayor Roger Vance and Vice Mayor Amy Marasco. He opined that Clarke's Board of Supervisors was as concerned about the proposed Route 9 detour as the Town of Hillsboro. Further, the Supervisors were working with officials from Hillsboro and the Virginia Department of Transportation [VDOT] to address concerns; and, this evening, VDOT would focus detour mitigation on Route 7 and Route 340.

Chairman Weiss announced that following presentation attendees would have an opportunity to ask questions. He set a three-minute limit to comment and asked that speakers limit comment to this evening's topic.

Chairman Weiss then gave the floor to Ed Carter, VDOT Edinburg Residency Engineer.

DETOUR MITIGATIONS - CLARKE COUNTY FOR RT. 9 PROJECT

Based on current data analysis the following actions are being implemented to mitigate the anticipated traffic increases along Rt. 340 and Rt. 7 in Clarke County resulting from the Rt. 9 construction project in Hillsboro.

- Increased law enforcement – Speeding was identified as a major concern with existing traffic. It is anticipated that it will be amplified with the increased traffic from the detour. Funds have been approved for dedicated law enforcement along the detour route during the construction phase of the project.*
- Signal modifications Rt. 340 & Rt. 7 intersection – Both left turn movements from Rt. 340 south to Rt. 7 east and Rt. 340 north to Rt. 7 west will be upgraded to Flashing Yellow operation. This will allow left turning vehicles to proceed after yielding to oncoming traffic when the oncoming traffic has a green signal indication.*

The three signals will have equipment installed establishing high speed communications, allowing continuous monitoring of the intersection and live signal timing adjustments based on changing traffic conditions.

- *Widening west bound Rt. 7 off ramp at Rt. 340 – Trench widen the Rt. 7 off ramp for 500' at Rt. 340 to establish two lanes on the ramp. This will allow continuous right turns onto Rt. 340 north and alleviate stacking on the ramp during evening peak hour traffic.*
- *Mitigate cut through traffic on Rt. 612 during peak hours – Restrict Rt. 612 to Local Traffic Only. Prohibit left turns onto Rt. 612 from Rt. 340 south during AM peak traffic. Prohibit right turns onto Rt. 612 from Rt. 7 west during PM peak traffic. Establish traffic count stations to monitor traffic counts on Rt. 612 throughout the project.*
- *Upgrade warning lights at Rt. 7 and Rt. 601 – Dynamic warning flashers will be installed east and west on Rt. 7 that detect vehicles on Rt. 601 attempting to enter the intersection. These flashers will activate when the vehicle approaches the intersection instead of continuously as they do now.*

Law enforcement will be stationed at the intersection with emergency lights activated as needed.

Ed Carter introduced VDOT personnel, advising that they would be available to answer questions during and after the meeting.

- Keith Ryder District Engineering Manager
- Sandy Myers Public Affairs Staunton District
- Ken Slack Public Affairs Staunton District

Supervisor Daniel joined the meeting at 6:34 pm.

Highlights of Ed Carter's presentation include:

- Based plan on comments received over the past couple of months.
- VDOT's Edinburg Residency is working diligently with Hillsboro and the Northern Virginia Residency.
- The mitigation plan is fluid allowing for adjustment.
- VDOT will modify signal lights to allow 24-hour monitoring by the Traffic Operations Center providing it the ability to change remotely as needed / indicated.
- There are currently traffic and road condition issues on Route 612 that have the potential to increase when the project starts.

- Commuters typically try to save time; therefore, while they may take alternate routes at the beginning, they may not remain on these for long opting to stay on the designated detour route.
- Until commuters become acclimated, additional law enforcement will be placed at the Route 601 intersection.

At 6:41 pm, Vice Chair McKay joined the meeting.

Ed Carter concluded his review of the mitigation plan and turned the floor back to Chairman Weiss.

Chairman Weiss called for comment from the Supervisors.

Supervisor Byrd stated that she lived approximately a quarter mile from the intersection of Route 340 and Route 7 intersection by Trapp Hill Road. She asked who would be paying for the extra law enforcement and medical services.

Ed Carter responded that law enforcement was an approved budget line item to pay for the additional law enforcement. As far as medical services, there is no way to identify that the person[s] transported were there because of the detour; therefore, there is no way to identify the cost.

Chairman Weiss added that at the moment there was no money in anyone's budget to address increased cost for emergency medical service.

Supervisor Catlett commented that she had heard a lot that the project was data driven; so, as the project goes on, will VDOT continue to take data at those key areas in Clarke County.

Ed Carter responded that VDOT Staunton District would be looking at traffic volume that increases on secondary roads. It will also monitor whether the signal modifications are working. He stated that VDOT does plan to do actual counts of Route 612.

Supervisor Catlett asked what success would look like, how would VDOT know whether what they were doing was adequate / fitting?

Ed Carter provided the following responses as to how VDOT would identify success:

- If there are no backups on Route 340 because of the light changes.
- If traffic does not get stacked up on Route 7 west bound because of the lane widening.
- If the counts do not increase or drop on Route 612.
- If accidents are not encountered on Route 601 and Route 7. *VDOT will be measuring speeds.*

Ed Carter stated that additional traffic is expected during the project noting that such things happened all over the state during construction programs. He opined that Clarke would enjoy the mitigations brought about by this project after its completion. He pointed out that some of the items were included in the Route 7 Safety Study.

Supervisor Byrd expressed concern for commuters' ability to access Route 340 from Route 611, Summit Point Road, which is a major commuter road from West Virginia. She asked if Route 611 traffic could be funneled onto Route 632, Crums Church Road, which has a traffic signal.

Ed Carter responded that VDOT could monitor the situation noting that commuters in these situations tend to find their own routes that are best for them. He assured that if difficulties were encountered, such as an increase in collisions, Traffic Engineering would enact a plan to address.

Vice Chair McKay asked whether there would be an increase in Clarke's Route 7 traffic once the Route 9 traffic-calming project was complete.

Ed Carter responded that VDOT had no way to predict whether the increase in traffic would continue past project completion.

Ed Carter reminded that the Hillsboro Project was creating a flow-through situation with a roundabout where now it has a stop light. When the project is complete, it will provide pedestrian facilities – not adding road width. The roundabout will allow traffic to continue flowing as opposed to stopping at the light. He opined that commuters would want to return to the route because it is non-stop.

Mayor Vance added that Hillsboro had not projected these figures; however, he thought Mr. Carter's hypothesis was accurate because the project is intended to improve the commute through Hillsboro. Hillsboro expects the same traffic volume just at a safer speed, more regulated, and less congested environment.

Mary Daniel expressed appreciation for VDOT's presentation and apologized for being late in arriving for the meeting. She further expressed appreciation for the fact that VDOT was not purporting to have all the answers and was reassured by VDOT's assertions that this was a fluid plan that can be changed if there is a problem.

Ed Carter said that he wished to reiterate that it was a fluid plan and the best thing that VDOT had to offer to accommodate the most people and to address the most concerns that it has heard. He assured that if something did develop VDOT would address.

Chairman Weiss opened the floor for questions from the audience advising that he would not require speakers to come to the podium but did ask that they state their name, address, and to keep comments to three minutes.

Chairman Weiss explained that Mr. Carter was working diligently to help Clarke and was the one in July 2019 to bring to the Board's attention the intent to close Route 9 during the project.

Tim Flagiano, Bluemont area of Raven Rocks Road: Asked VDOT to talk a little bit about the current peak hour capacity on Route 7. He said that Hillsboro has asserted that there is lots of excess capacity on Route 340 and Route 7. He asked at peak hour what percentage of capacity of the roadway is existing being used and how much for is this additional traffic going to add to that? If it would put it over? If it would keep it within?

Ed Carter deferred response to Keith Rider. Mr. Rider responded that the Route 7 capacity was adequate to handle the additional detour traffic volume that would be or could be routed from Route 9. VDOT did the analysis.

Mr. Flagiano asked if VDOT had percentages.

Mr. Rider responded that he did not have percentages off the top of his head; however, VDOT did conduct a study and did analyze Route 7 for the volume capacity, the lane capacity determining that it was adequate for the increased volume.

Mr. Flagiano clarified that VDOT was saying that the volume itself would not introduce delays on Route 7.

Mr. Rider responded in the affirmative.

Ed Carter added that what causes delays on roads 90% of the time is not volume but the incidents that occur. Unfortunately, the higher the volume the greater the chance for incidents. One thing that will be critical on this with be fast incident clearance, which is one thing the additional law enforcement will help with being able to respond more quickly.

Steve Wernle, Route 612: Two questions. VDOT said it would prohibit left turns from Route 340 onto Route 612 and from Route 7 onto Route 612 right turns.

Ed Carter responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Wernle asked VDOT for its definition of prohibit asking if a police officer would be there from 6 am to 9 am every single day.

Ed Carter responded that if that is what it requires, yes.

Mr. Wernle opined that commuters would continue to make the turns if there is nothing keeping them from doing it other than a sign. He further opined that it would require a police officer. He provided an example from Purcellville where there was a sign prohibiting cut through, which he had disregarded until it was finally rerouted so that you had to go a longer way.

Ed Carter responded that was why VDOT was doing the mitigation plan with no left turns. The local traffic only sign – there really is not a way to verify unless there is an out-of-state tag. At the beginning, there will be a significant police presence; and, word will get out once commuters learn that they will be ticketed. He stated that VDOT would not be able to stop every one.

Mr. Wernle put forth that a police car sitting there would deter a high percentage. He opined that Route 340 and Route 7 were better ways to go.

Mr. Wernle asked his second question, whether VDOT had considered reducing the speed limit on Route 612. He purported that the speed limit was crazy for that little skinny road. Further, the road he came out on that is off Shepherds Mill, if you do not go fast enough, you will be hit because the cars come up over a blind hill.

Ed Carter responded that VDOT conducted a speed study two years ago; and, at that time, results did not justify reducing the speed limit.

An unidentified person interjected that Mr. Carter did not live in the area nor did his children live in the area.

Chairman Weiss asked the speaker to wait until he could recognize her at the appropriate time.

The unidentified speaker continued opining that the study means nothing unless you live there.

Mr. Wernle asked what would justify lowering the speed limit.

Ed Carter explained that VDOT looks at traffic volume, accident history, geometrics, width, number of houses, and current speeds.

Keith Rider added that the rule of thumb for a speed study on a road when you are analyzing changing a speed limit on a roadway is to get traffic counts and speed data and analyze the 85th percentile of the data collected. Example: If 85% of vehicles are travelling 55 MPH, it is normally the safe speed on a section of road taking in all other factors. He stated that it is based on peoples comfort on driving speed.

Chairman Weiss interjected that they were his constituents and he agreed. However, this was a meeting to discuss Route 9 detour mitigation; therefore, he was willing to stay after the meeting, if necessary, to answer questions on the speeding issue. He asked members of the audience to limit questions to those in direct relation to mitigation efforts on Route 7 and Route 340. He noted that Route 612 is issue in the mitigation plan, but the speed on Route 612 is not.

Ed Carter stated that contrary to popular belief VDOT does not have the authority to lower speed limits at its discretion. It must be a recognized study stamped by a professional engineering saying that based on his license that is the right thing to do based on recognized standards.

Scott Kidby, Raven Rocks Road, near Bluemont: Currently, from Route 9 down to the major feeders getting into the commuter cities, there are number of feeder roads, all of those roads, including one with a middle lane merge, either have on ramps, over passes, or underpasses. Moving the traffic back to Route 340 and through Route 7 means the traffic will be passing through a number of uncontrolled intersections – ones that don't have on ramps, don't have lights, and don't have under or over passes. He asked how VDOT would deal with these feeder roads opining that there would not be an opportunity to merge onto Route 7. He opined that during peak hours on Route 7 there would not be enough gaps to allow access from the feeder roads.

Keith Rider responded that it was difficult to say what the additional traffic will do noting that the traffic volumes on Route 9 are projected to use Route 340 and Route 7. He opined that the best thing for VDOT to do is to monitor and make adjustments as the detour is in place and the project is being constructed. He reiterated that the plan was fluid and the situation would be monitored.

Scott Kidby asked what VDOT would monitor other than accidents.

Keith Rider responded that if you see a major queue occurring on feeder roads trying to enter Route 7, VDOT could try to adjust.

Scott Kidby asked if VDOT would have equipment out monitoring the queues.

Keith Rider responded that VDOT would have portable cameras placed along the route that would feed back to the Traffic Operation Center [TOC].

Scott Kidby put forth the following feeder areas: Shenandoah Retreat, Pine Grove, Purcellville, Round Hill, and Williams Gap. He opined that the number of roads was beyond reason for VDOT to say it was going to monitor all of them.

Ed Carter responded that one thing that would help is to get the speed down to where it belongs, which would help create gaps.

Keith Rider opined that this was the great unknown, how many gaps will there be when you are at an intersection.

Scott Kidby responded that right now you could wait 7 to 10 minutes to get out from an uncontrolled intersection.

Joe Donovan, President Blue Ridge Mountain Civic Association: He asked where additional law enforcement would come from Clarke County, Loudoun County.

Ed Carter responded it would come from Clarke and Loudoun County. He advised that VDOT has met with the Virginia State Police [VSP] and Clarke County law enforcement. VDOT is providing the funds for the additional resources.

Mr. Donovan asked the percentage of increased law enforcement.

Ed Carter responded that according to VSP, its area out of Kernstown has the Clarke County Area; and, Loudoun County has its own VSP headquarters. These regional offices are coordinating this effort to place additional people over and above normal staffing levels on the detour route.

Mr. Donovan ask Mr. Carter if it was possible for him to supply the information so that they could understand exactly what that means.

Ed Carter asked Mr. Donovan what he wanted to know.

Mr. Donovan responded that throughout the talk this evening VDOT has stated that there will be increased law enforcement, and he would like to know how many.

Ed Carter stated that there would be two additional officers on Route 7 from Route 340 to the top of the hill.

Mr. Donovan commented that this was nothing and that two would not be enough.

Mr. Carter further explained that the two additional officers would be on speed duty with another officer, from Loudoun County, at the intersection of Route 601.

Mr. Donovan cautioned Mr. Carter to be careful with what he was promising.

Mr. Carter responded that he was telling Mr. Donovan what VSP was telling VDOT.

Mr. Donovan asked if Mr. Carter could help him define or understand his definition of fluid. He then asked when the project would start.

Mayor Vance responded early winter with the actual detour starting in the April / May timeframe.

Mr. Donovan again asked Mr. Carter how he defined fluid, and whether he agree to come back and meet with constituents every 30 days so they can understand that fluid dynamic level of involvement in action.

Mr. Carter responded that he would after the project starts. He also advised that he provided update every 30 days at the Board of Supervisors Regular Meetings.

Chairman Weiss stated that the Supervisors wanted to remain fluid and did not want to set unrealistic expectations.

Mr. Donovan urged Chairman Weiss to agree to a meeting 30 days after the start of construction.

Chairman Weiss responded that he had no problem with meeting 30 days after the start of construction; however, he did have an issue with saying tonight that the Board would meet every 30 days for the rest of the project. He opined that this would be a time constraint and very difficult for citizens and staff. He encouraged constituents to contact their Supervisors with their questions.

Ed Carter responded that he would be updating the Supervisors at every monthly Board meeting. He opined that he was sure the Supervisors would convey constituent concerns.

Keith Rider added that Ed Carter would keep him informed, and he would provide Mr. Carter updates on his group's monitoring of the detour and improvements made to alleviate issues.

Ross Oldham, off Route 601: He asked about the metrics that VDOT grabbed on the current volume asking if he could get that information to see the average number of accidents experiencing now because he would like to know what the trigger point is for the next fluid change as a percentage of accidents to trigger change. He said that his concern was right there at Route 7 and Route 601, where he has to take it every day going east. He said that the volume and turn lanes going west was miniscule, which is going to be a problem. Again, he asked what the trigger point was to mitigate the number of accidents that will occur. He asked if Mount Weather was involved in discussions.

Richard Thuss, Wickliffe Road: Commented that VDOT's fluid plan will be far slower than social media. He said that his son-in-law, living in Harpers Ferry and teaching in Loudoun County, told him that sites are being set up on social media to monitor traffic and some are suggesting Wickliffe Road. He opined that commuters would use social media to stay informed as to routes and location of law enforcement. He remarked that more law enforcement on all the roads and intersections, at least for a period of time, was needed to monitor and to keep traffic slowing down. He opined that people that drive would rather be driving at speed than virtually stopped, and they will take a longer road. He opined that this is what happens with every traffic study he has seen that says people want to be moving instead of being stuck for even a shorter time trying to get off Route 340 to Route 7.

Keith Rider responded that VDOT was hoping to alleviate the problem by monitoring queues on Route 7 and Route 340 and adding turn lanes to allow traffic to make a left-hand turn.

Paris Rasnic, Wickliffe Road across from Moose Apple Christmas Tree Farm: Proposed a solution to the mitigation problem by temporarily reducing the speed limit to 35 MPH on Wickliffe, Shepherds Mill and other potential commuter roads. He put forth that he had heard that over the last year there were 20 tickets issued for greater than 70 MPH on Shepherds Mill Road. He added that three pets have been killed and the drivers did not stop. He continued that there were many curves on Wickliffe Road and reducing the speed would help slow them down.

Mr. Carter asked Sheriff Roper if he thought he had the resources to enforce a 35 MPH speed limit.

Sheriff Roper responded that he did potentially, but his office has to plan for these things for such actions are data-driven.

Supervisor Byrd asked Sheriff Roper about problems on Triple J Road, which is 35 MPH and a commuter road, asking how many more deputies he would need to take care of the existing problems and the ones that will occur with the detour.

Sheriff Roper responded that the only answer he had was, "we don't know what we don't." He stated that what he would do was enforce the law to the best of their ability, and those laws are based on best practices, on how to get things done, and will respond appropriately. He continued that if he needed to add more deputies he would come back to the Supervisors.

Supervisor Byrd asked who would pay for the additional deputies.

Sheriff Roper responded that someone has to pay.

Chairman Weiss clarified that Supervisor Byrd was talking about long-term enforcement on roads that are not identified in the detour, which would be a county-fund issue.

Leslie Lambert, off Castleman Lane: Clarified that VDOT was adding a flashing yellow with a turn off of Route 340 onto Route 7 west. She asked if there was any plan to extend the turn lane opining that the flashing yellow would not be enough alone to handle the volume. She also asked for clarification on the changes being budget line items for VDOT budget or Clarke County budget.

Keith Rider responded that it was VDOT's budget.

Ms. Lambert continued that every day she sees West Virginia plates on Castleman, which is a gravel road that is only graded twice a year and is riddled with potholes. She asked VDOT to look at traffic counts on Castleman and to consider grading it.

Terry Rosenthal, Cannon Ball Road: Said that VDOT had mentioned several time additional lanes going on and off Route 7 and Route 340 but had not given a construction date.

Ed Carter responded that VDOT is paying for the permanent fixture that needs to be done whether there was a detour or not and will help with the detour. He continued that as soon as VDOT had environmental clearance it hoped to begin construction in this current season and complete by the end of December if the weather holds.

Unidentified Person, no location given: Commented that on Shepherds Mill Road right now it is 55 MPH and asked if VDOT could explain why it is 55 MPH.

Chairman Weiss asked if the person in question could wait until after the meeting to address this issue.

Richard Marks, Blue Ridge Mountain Road: Said that he wanted to echo the comments on Route 601 and the backup. He opined that redoing the lights to trigger off Route 601 was absolutely asinine. He stated that putting a blue light at the top of the mountain would cause people to slow down or an accident. He said that the safety audit in September VDOT identified from .4 miles west of the Shenandoah River to 18.7 miles, which is the Loudoun County line, one of the most dangerous things in Clarke County because of the turns and steepness of the grade. He asked VDOT to consider not allowing tractor trailers between 5:45 am to 8:30 am and lights on always on Route 340 to Route 9.

Maninder Singh, owner J&J Corner Store and Citgo gas station at the intersection of Shepherds Mill Road and Route 7: He asked how long the project would last and the peak hours for vehicles turning on to Route 612.

Keith Rider, responding to project length, stated that the project impacts to Clarke County would not begin until Phase 3 of the Hillsboro Project. He stated that the length of the project was dependent upon contractor schedule; and, at this time, a contractor has not been selected.

Ed Carter added that VDOT would know better once bids are back, a contractor selected, and a construction meeting held.

Keith Rider, responding to peak hours, stated that the morning peak is 6 to 9; and, the evening peak is 4 to 6.

Kelly McCoy, Harry Byrd Highway: Asked if they had discussed the impact on school bus safety relaying that within the first three weeks of school opening this year four people

passed a school bus with light on and stopped. She reminded that this impacted the County's livelihood, commuters, and the schools.

Van Armstrong, Chestnut Lane: Asked if it was still planned that Route 9 would be open in the morning on the eastbound route?

Ed Carter responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Armstrong asked what the change in traffic distribution was heading down to Route 340 with the Route 9 component open in the morning.

Keith Rider asked if Mr. Armstrong could provide his contact information so that he could send him the report.

Ed Carter stated that one of the reasons that the contract was established that they could not close without Route 9 eastbound during peak hours.

Mayor Vance and Vice Mayor Marasco confirmed that was correct and Route 9 could not close eastbound before 9:30.

Ed Carter continued that the heaviest volumes of the traffic that is detoured should continue to stay on Route 9. The contractor can close Route 9 completely, including the morning and evening peak hours, for no less than five days at a time and no more than 30 days at a time and no more than 60 days during the life of the project. He stated that due to the magnitude of the work, especially with utilities, there would be times during the project that the contractor will have to close and work through night and into the next day. He noted that large equipment would be used during the project. He noted that the project was estimated to take twelve to fourteen months beginning February 2020. The actual impact of the detour does not begin until sometime in April and all is weather dependent. After April, the contractor will have the option to close 5 days at time for up to 30 days.

Mr. Armstrong asked what were the alternates to a flashing yellow light southbound Route 340 onto eastbound Route 7.

Keith Rider responded that VDOT was installing high-speed communications, upgrading the equipment in the cabinet, and putting up portable cameras to monitor queues. He assured that when queues are detected in the turn lanes the green time will be extended to allow traffic to flow.

Mr. Carter added that VDOT has this in other high-volume places and it works well allowing traffic to clear quickly.

Keith Rider informed those present that VDOT would develop timing plans for all three signals: two at Route 340 and 7, one at Route 7 Business.

Sue Coals, Chestnut Lane off Shepherds Mill: She asked about no through traffic on Route 612 wanting to know if local traffic can turn on Route 7.

Ed Carter responded that the no left turn and the no right turn is because there is no way to differentiate what traffic will do during peak hours. The local traffic only signs is for people who live on Shepherds Mill Road.

Sue Coals gave an example of how she gets out on Route 7 before 6 am. She added that traffic begins at 4:30 am. She also noted that the one-lane bridge on Shepherds Mill would be a problem.

Melanie, Chestnut Lane off Shepherds Mill: Asked if there would be enforcement for u turn

Ed Carter stated that VDOT is going to monitor counts on Shepherds Mill; and, if counts do not drop as they should, VDOT will stop the u-turns.

Melanie restated what VDOT had asserted that it does not have the ability to drop the speed limit on a road; however, the best comment she has heard is the lower of the speed limit on Shepherds Mill.

Ed Carter clarified that VDOT does not have the authority to arbitrarily lower without the appropriate traffic engineering study.

Melanie asked if VDOT had the authority to lower during the project.

Ed Carter responded not without the appropriate study.

Tony Copwell, Route 9 just west of Hillsboro: He stated that he has attended several meetings on the proposed detour. He opined that some of the problems he saw with the Route 340 and Route 7 plan is that in the morning people get jammed up on Triple J and creates almost a racetrack effect when commuters hit the green and start heading east. Now, there will be extra volume coming off the ramp east off of Route 340; and, all of that traffic will be bumper to bumper doing 55 to 60 MPH and people trying to merge onto Route 7 east will not have gaps to get in. What will happen is the same problem at Clarke's Gap when people hit the brakes to allow someone to enter and get rear-ended. He reminded that the sun would be in your eyes. He suggested adjusting the lights to spread the traffic out, or signs saying through traffic stay in left lane. He made another suggestion to have Security at Mountain Weather distribute notices to delivery trucks providing notice such as, "No left turn onto Route 7 West, please use Route 50 to get to Interstate 81."

Supervisor Byrd remarked that the Supervisors recently took action to limit through-truck traffic on Route 601.

Janel Melgaard, Blue Ridge Mountain Road, Bluemont: Stated that she did not quite understand the blue light thing.

Ed Carter responded that it meant a law enforcement officer would be stationed in that location with lights on.

Chairman Weiss added that there are two issues: one is a stationary flashing light; the other is an actual police vehicle.

Ed Carter, responding to Ms. Melgaard's concern about removing the yellow lights, assured that VDOT was replacing the lights with dynamic flashers that would trigger from vehicles on Route 601.

Keith Rider explained that the flashers are actuated as flashing beacons that will have a message on Route 7 and will indicate that there is traffic on Route 601 that will be making a turning movement.

Judy Whitehouse, lane off Route 601: Asked what happens when traffic backs up in afternoon from Mount Weather.

Keith Rider responded that the light would flash constantly. He noted that the whole idea of the flasher is to provide advance warning for this major crash intersection.

Ms. Whitehouse mentioned the fog on the mountain and asked if these lights would be easier to see in the fog.

Keith Rider responded that these will be led lights, which should be seen better in low-visibility conditions.

Ms. Whitehouse asked why bicyclists were allowed on the road.

Chairman Weiss said that this would be answered after the meeting.

Ross Oldham, off Route 601: Opined that the plan for Route 601 would not work.

Sandra Fanning, Shenandoah Retreat: Commented on the difficulty of entering Route 7 safely now and asked the possibility of getting a stop light at Route 643 and Route 7 and Route 601 and Route 7.

Keith Rider responded that VDOT had studied Route 601; however, it is not a very conducive location for a traffic light.

Ed Carter responded that Route 643 was also not conducive. He stated that VDOT had studied this intersection. He stated that there were other factors that include not wanting to stop traffic on the mountain in winter, whether going up or coming down. He reminded that VDOT keeps equipment up there now to tow vehicles when they get stuck. He said that VDOT understands and does not disagree with any of the concerns put forth for those

concerns exist today; and, if VDOT had the funds, there were many things it would like to do along that route.

Leslie Lambert, off Castleman Lane: Opined that reducing the speed limit on Route 612 during construction was a good idea and asked if there was enough time to conduct a study before construction began in April or May.

Chairman Weiss stated that the meeting tonight was not to say that these are the answers to all the problems. He said that neither the Board nor VDOT knew if the mitigation plan would work, but this was the best plan at the moment. He stated that he knew this would make it worse, but Hillsboro needs to do what it must for its people, its region.

Ed Carter responded that even before the Route 9 project came about the speed limit on Route 612 has been a question.

- VDOT's study is approximately two and a half to three years old.
- Traffic on Route 612 has changed.
- Another study on Route 612 is planned and is money in the budget to conduct the study.
- There is time to conduct the study before the Route 9 project.

Richard Thuss: Said that he understood that VDOT could not temporarily lower the speed limit on Wickliffe and Shepherds Mill without a study. He asked if VDOT would monitor the speeds on those roads now so that if speeds do increase VDOT will have data to support potential lowering of the speed limit.

Ed Carter responded that VDOT does have plans to look periodically at speeds on these roads including Routes 7, 612, and every other place where people have concerns about speed during this process.

Unidentified person, no location given: Asked if VDOT would be looking at the impact of foot traffic from the Appalachian Trail across Route 7 where there is no formal crosswalk.

Ed Carter stated that VDOT has done all it can do at that location.

Chairman Weiss commented that the Supervisors were sensitive to this issue and had asked VDOT to explore options. Short of building a pedestrian bridge over Route 7, there is nothing left that VDOT can do.

The unidentified person asked if there could be a painted crosswalk.

Ed Carter responded that this could not be done since crosswalks give a false sense of security to persons using them because the law says that if you are in a crosswalk traffic will stop for you; however, there is no way you can make traffic going 65 MPH stop at the

top of the mountain. He opined that the best VDOT could do is warn people that there is pedestrian traffic there. Unfortunately, it is just a bad place; and, the same situation exists on Route 50.

Jo Bighouse, Shepherds Mill Road: Asked how VDOT planned to conduct the speed study on Route 612 and whether it would be over a 24-hour period noting that there could be 200 cars in a two-hour period in the morning and nothing else the rest of the day. She asked if there was anyway VDOT could look beyond just that parameter.

Keith Rider responded that data would be broken down into 15-minute increments than by hour. He assured that VDOT could break down the data any way it needed. He told Ms. Bighouse that the first thing VDOT does is look at the road classification, than look at the 24-hour count, and, for the speed limit, the vehicles that are collected, the speeds that were recorded for each vehicle, then, the engineering judgement is the 85th percentile of the speeds traveled is the safe speed. Mr. Rider asked for her name and contact information to provide her the requested information.

Maninder Singh: Asked VDOT for the current traffic count on Route 7, and how much traffic was expected to increase.

Keith Rider responded 16,000 vehicles on Route 9.

Ed Carter added that the current count on Route 7 coming from Frederick County is roughly 33,000, from Route 340 up to the top of the mountain is 26,000 to 28,000.

Maninder Singh asked about the number of vehicles coming from Purcellville into Clarke County.

Ed Carter said that the 26,000 to 28,000 is from both directions.

Mr. Singh asked VDOT how much it was expecting traffic to increase after the Route 9 detour began.

Keith Rider responded that it depended on what direction vehicles decided to take. When the full detour is in place, approximately 70% of 16,000 vehicles will come down Route 340 to Route 7.

Ed Carter stated that these projects were determined before it was decided to keep Route 9 open during peak morning hours. He reiterated that Route 9 can be shut down for a maximum of 30 days at one time, and the least amount of time for a shutdown is five days. He stated that VDOT would not know which dates until a contractor was selected.

Keith Rider added that increased traffic might be seen during the incremental closures, which will be in the morning.

Ed Carter added that the afternoon traffic might increase by 4,000.

Paris Rasnic, asked VDOT if it planned to block off one turn lanes coming from Berryville onto Route 340 and Route 7 going north on 340.

Ed Carter responded that it is currently a single lane, but VDOT is planning two lanes one going left with one going right, that must yield to the sign. He explained that VDOT was widening the ramp to extend the turn lanes.

Mr. Rasnic said that he proposed, if that was all VDOT was going to do, VDOT needs to keep it a single lane coming out of Berryville all the way to past the intersection so that the lane turning right onto Route 340 does not have to stop.

Ed Carter put forth that this might be something for VDOT to look at once it saw how things would operate.

Keith Rider added that VDOT was trying to create more pavement for the right-turn movement onto Route 340 heading north. He said that VDOT hoped that with the new signal timings and the improvements being made at the signal that when the signal is red the queue will not back up.

Janel Melgaard: Asked about the flow of traffic on Route 7, whether east or west, halfway down the mountain is Retreat Road on which is located the major volunteer fire and rescue company that services the mountain area. She asked if VDOT would have a sign flashing for emergency vehicles.

Keith Rider responded that the flashing light was planned for Route 601.

Supervisor Byrd asked the following:

- 1) Two additional state troopers on Route 7; will there be additional state troopers on Route 340?

Ed Carter responded that VDOT currently plans two for Route 7; however, if Route 340 becomes a problem, VDOT has the funds to add. Right now, based on the data, it does not appear that it will be any worse than it is today.

- 2) Has VDOT spoken to John H. Enders Fire or Rescue Company, Blue Ridge Fire and Rescue Company, or Mount Weather Fire and Rescue about adding personnel?

Fire, EMS, and Emergency Operations Director Brian Lichty responded that concerns were raised; however, at this time, there is no plan in place. He continued that he has discussed with the Clarke's mutual aid partners, Loudoun County and Mount Weather, the potential for changing the response plans should the need arise.

- 3) How does VDOT propose to keep enough people on call to remove incidents?

Ed Carter responded that the only thing VDOT was addressing was law enforcement's ability to be there on the scene a lot faster. He opined that law enforcement determines who comes to remove the accident. He confirmed for Supervisor Byrd that VDOT stages a wrecker at the top of the mountain during inclement weather.

- 4) Supervisor Byrd thanked Ms. McCoy for her comments about school buses opining this will become a real problem.

Ed Carter responded that he understand this concern; however, the problem exists today. He reminded that VDOT is not an enforcement agency, and it cannot control violations of law.

Ms. McCoy commented that there was a week last year where there were so many accidents at Shepherds Mill, day after day, that all the buses in the area got delayed. She opined that it was about volume, impatient drivers, and people not paying attention; and, all the problems Clarke has now will be magnified.

Ed Carter responded that VDOT does think about the details, but is limited as to how many of them it can address. He opined that he had not heard anything here this evening that was not a legitimate concern.

Chairman Weiss asked for comment from Hillsboro Mayor Roger Vance.

Mayor Vance thanked the Supervisor for holding the meeting and inviting them to participate. He stated that Ed Carter and Keith Rider did a really fabulous job of trying to explain the situation. He agreed totally with Mr. Carter's previous statement that all of these were legitimate concerns. He informed those present that Hillsboro faced these same issues every day. Mayor Vance said that all were dealing with a lot of recklessness, a lot of behavior that is illegal, and that may not come from where we live.

Mayor Vance continued that the tristate area is a network; and, he is amazed to see the impact all around the region of the project on which he has worked for 15 years to address these same issues in his area. He opined that this is the guiding force to get the project done as soon as possible. He has been working with Staunton and Northern Virginia District VDOT offices over the past several month to craft a plan to help Hillsboro get the project done in a little over a year instead of a little over three years. Mayor Vance opined that there would be "pain and suffering" under this project.

Mayor Vance emphasized a plan that was crafted to help accelerate and mitigate the main issues.

- For the majority of the project, eastbound Route 7 through the morning peak will be open through Hillsboro, which will take a considerable amount of the heaviest volume of traffic

going east bound specifically to mitigate the impacts on the intersection here with the traffic light.

- During the full closure, it was agreed between the engineers, VDOT and Hillsboro project, that there are certain eliminates of the project that cannot be built under traffic. The engineers agreed to the number of days this should take:
 - 60-day maximum period of time believed that certain discrete work could be completed.
 - Incentivizing contractor to minimize the time utilized for full closure.
- Hillsboro is allowing the contractor to work 24-hour per day including nights and weekends.
- Hillsboro is pushing hard to beat the projected twelve to fourteen months for the duration of the project.
- It is a fluid situation. Two days ago, Hillsboro met with the Virginia State Police and the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office, with whom it will continue to meet.
- The first week after project start, a meeting is planned to review and adjust where necessary.
- Hillsboro is conducting similar meetings, which has helped shape much of the mitigation around town and the local detour, which will be taking some of the regional traffic.
- Persons in the area have expressed many of the same concerns, and Hillsboro has taken the input and made positive changes.
- Hillsboro has Cider Mill Road that seems a lot like Shepherds Mill Road.
- Hillsboro has done the same thing with right and left turns to try to control.
- Hillsboro also has more law enforcement assigned for the project.
- Hillsboro is talking to trucking companies and is doing all it can do to discourage truck traffic.

Mayor Vance remarked that he really appreciated the comments. He opined that he and Vice Mayor Marasco came to hear the concerns, and he was certain that VDOT would take many of the comments back to see what more could be done to mitigate concerns. He concluded by stating that safety was the bottom line, and all were focused on making it as safe as possible.

Chairman Weiss thanked Mayor Vance and Vice Mayor Marasco for attending, for their cooperation in mitigating a plan, and for not closing Route 9 for the duration of the project. He stated that a safety audit was recently performed by VDOT, which would review the safety plan at the December Board of Supervisors meeting. He complimented those in the audience for coming to the meeting, showing interest, being courteous, kind, and brief. Chairman Weiss concluded by stating that the Supervisors would hold more meetings on the Route 9 Detour Project as necessary; and, in the interim, asked constituents to contact their Supervisor, who would relay concerns to VDOT.

Ed Carter thanked the audience for their courtesy. He reiterated that he had not heard a concern that was not legitimate assuring that Mr. Rider and he would review some of the suggestions made this evening. He concluded by thanking the audience for their time.

4) Adjournment

At 8:12 pm, Chairman Weiss adjourned the meeting.

Next Regular Meeting Date

The next regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors is set for Tuesday, November 19, 2019, at 1:00 p.m. in the Berryville Clarke County Government Center, Main Meeting Room, 101 Chalmers Court, Berryville, Virginia.

ATTEST: October 29, 2019

David S. Weiss, Chair

David L. Ash, County Administrator

Recorded and transcribed by Lora B. Walburn, Deputy Clerk to the Board of Supervisors