

James City County

2001 Requests for Primary and Interstate Transportation Construction Projects

Introduction

James City County respectfully submits its priority primary transportation construction projects. The project list consists of our community's highest priority projects.

Background

James City County and its environs continue to grow rapidly. According to a March 2001 publication produced by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia, James City County ranked eighth in the Commonwealth for localities with the highest population growth since 1990. In regard to traffic generation, the 60,000 residents of the Williamsburg area and the local work force form only part of the picture. During the peak tourist season, an additional 30,000 visitors travel our highways daily. In addition to these challenges, the upcoming Jamestown 2007 celebration will place even greater demands on the local transportation system. To accommodate this national event, many transportation improvements are necessary. Our present highway system is not adequate to accommodate our future growth, to preserve the quiet charm of Colonial Williamsburg, and to provide safe, convenient access for our many visitors to Busch Gardens and other area attractions. James City County continues to focus on projects that will make great strides toward solving present problems and improving the adequacy of our transportation system for years into the future.

Summary of Projects

The County thanks the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) for the completed extension of Route 199. This project has greatly relieved traffic on adjacent roadways and improved access to various parts of the County. The County also appreciates VDOT's substantial progress on one of our priority projects, the Grove Interchange, and looks forward to its completion in the near future.

The County asks that VDOT accelerate projects that have received partial or full funding. These include the *four-lane improvement to the existing two-lane sections of Route 199*, the *Route 60 East relocation*, and the *corridor improvements to Route 199*. James City County is also requesting the Commonwealth's support for two other non-highway projects. The first project involves *corridor landscaping improvements for Route 199*. The second project is the *Capital to Capital Bikeway* in the Route 5 corridor from Richmond to Williamsburg.

Highway Projects

Route 199 - Parallel Lane (four-Lane Improvement of Existing two-Lane Sections)

The design, construction, and completion of Route 199 from Interstate 64 at Lightfoot to John Tyler Highway (Route 5) as a full four-lane facility was the County's first priority for 16 years. With the extension now completed, Route 199 forms a loop around the City of Williamsburg, helping to buffer Colonial Williamsburg from the impacts of significant traffic congestion. The extension has removed local traffic from increasingly congested sections of Richmond Road (Route 60), Ironbound Road (Route 615), Strawberry Plains Road, (Route 616), and Longhill Road (Route 612). However, traffic volumes on Route 199 continue to be burdensome on the existing two-lane sections. The 1997 traffic counts for Route 199 show traffic volumes of more than 24,000 vehicle trips per day--exceeding reasonable levels for undivided two-lane roads.

The four-lane improvement throughout the entire existing two-lane sections remains the County's number one priority. Due to the costs and lengthy environmental review involved with the Tutter's Creek and College Creek bridge crossings for Route 199, the County and VDOT have agreed that the four-lane improvements to the existing section of Route 199 be done in two phases.

Phase I

The first phase includes upgrading the two-lane portions of Route 199 from Pocahontas Trail (Route 60) west to the Colonial Parkway to four lanes. It also includes the crossing over Tutter's Creek. Preliminary engineering work is underway and undergoing Army Corps of Engineers' review. The County has contributed \$409,750 of County revenue sharing funds (RSTP), and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has approved an additional \$1.2 million of RSTP money to accelerate Phase I. The FY 01 to FY 06 Transportation Development Plan (TDP) shows a previous allocation of \$3 million and a 2000-2001 allocation of \$875,000, leaving \$8.5 million to be allocated in the future. **The County requests that the Commonwealth fully fund this project and do everything possible to keep the entire Route 199 four-laning project on schedule for the Jamestown 2007 celebration.**

Phase II

The second phase will include upgrading the two-lane portions of Route 199 from the Colonial Parkway west to Brookwood Drive. This phase will include the bridge widening over College Creek. Preliminary engineering and environmental permitting are underway for this remaining section. As part of the FY 00 to FY 03 RSTP funding process, the County was allocated \$500,000 (for FY 03) for this Phase II improvement. The TDP for FY 01 to FY 06 shows previous funding of \$200,000, a 2000-2001 funding of \$300,000, with \$7.6 million (including the \$500,000 RSTP funds) to be allocated in the future. **The County requests that the Commonwealth continue funding this project and keep its commitment to constructing it in advance of the 2007 celebration.**

The County strongly urges continued Commonwealth support for both phases of the Route 199 improvements.

Route 60 East Relocation

The construction of an alternate alignment of Pocahontas Trail (Route 60 East) between the Anheuser-Busch access road and the Newport News City limits is a priority project. This project will serve developing commercial and industrial areas in James City County and the City of Newport News. Total vehicular traffic in this area as indicated by VDOT's average daily traffic volumes exhibited an increase from 1,650 ADT to 12,686 ADT between 1980 and 1998.

The present configuration of Pocahontas Trail produces traffic tie-ups, promotes traffic accidents, and impedes ingress and egress to residents and businesses. Ball Metal (240 employees), Anheuser-Busch Brewery (1,100 employees), Busch Gardens (4,000 employees during peak season), and the Wal-Mart Distribution Center (250 employees) generate high commuter and truck traffic volume in this area. Also, the newly opened James River Commerce Center (220 acres) is dependent upon good access to attract and retain industrial prospects. The Commerce Center contains the Ball Metal warehouse expansion (180,000 square feet) and Service Metal Fabricators, a business with 95 employees. Although recent improvements at the BASF entrance and several other intersections provide some relief, Pocahontas Trail continues to be a dangerous corridor for both residents and businesses.

In James City County, almost 1,000 acres of industrial land is being actively marketed in this area. The Commonwealth has designated approximately 3,500 acres in the Grove area as an Enterprise Zone. The Enterprise Zone seeks to create an improved climate for private sector investment, development, and expansion, thereby improving the overall physical and social conditions within the zone. A new alternate alignment of Route 60 would dramatically improve access to this area and will allow the County and Commonwealth to realize the full benefit of the investments made in the Grove area.

James City County requests prompt funding for construction of this roadway. The MPO has also recognized the regional significance of the Route 60 East relocation project and has approved \$6.5 million (including money for the portion in Newport News) in RSTP funds for FY 00 through FY 03. There is also \$1.3 million of previously approved RSTP funding for Newport News and James City County available for this project. This money would be used for preliminary engineering, right-of-way acquisition, and some construction in both James City County and Newport News.

Route 199 Corridor Improvements

With the opening of the Route 199 extension, the level of service problems through the Route 199 corridor from Brookwood Drive to Route 5 have been exacerbated. Moreover, the traffic volumes on Route 199 are expected to continue to increase steadily. Given the existing conditions and the upcoming Jamestown 2007 celebration, intersection improvements are clearly essential. A joint committee of James City County, Williamsburg, and VDOT representatives studied a wide range of improvements for this area, specifically the Jamestown Road/Route 199 intersection. The conclusion of this effort was the selection of a locally preferred alternative chosen by the City of Williamsburg and James City County. The region has provided full financial support to this project, evidenced by the \$3.5 million of RSTP money previously approved by the MPO and CTB. **The County requests the Commonwealth's continued support of these much-needed corridor improvements.**

Non-Highway Projects

Route 199 Landscaping

The County requests that any new Route 199 widening project contain funding for landscaping. Route 199 serves as one of the main entrance corridors for James City County, the City of Williamsburg, and Colonial Williamsburg. It is important that this heavily traveled tourist corridor be well landscaped to preserve the charm of this historic area. The upcoming Jamestown 2007 celebration, an event of national significance, makes this landscaping even more important. Due to the narrow time frame in which the improvements to Route 199 will be made in relation to the celebration, it is imperative that the landscaping be folded into the widening project. The County believes these landscaping improvements will help to enhance the County's scenic beauty which is critical in the effort to ensure the historic triangle continues to be one of the nation's top tourist destinations.

Capital to Capital Bikeway Project

The County requests continued Commonwealth support for the Capital to Capital Bikeway project. The Capital to Capital project proposes a combination bikeway and pedestrian facility in the Route 5 corridor from Richmond to the City of Williamsburg. The separate multiuse path in James City County would serve the broadest range of users and provide both State and local benefits, including promotion of tourism; interconnection of neighborhoods; safety for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians; and environmental sensitivity. The feasibility study was completed and preliminary engineering work is ready to be undertaken.

Conclusion

James City County respectfully submits its most critical road improvement projects. The County feels strongly that all these projects are crucial to the development of our community. All are supported by the Peninsula Area Transportation Study and the James City County Comprehensive Plan. The County appreciates the Department's difficult task of trying to make too few dollars cover so many needed construction projects, and requests the Department recognize and fund the solutions to problems of state significance:

- # Full funding and the minimization of delays for the widening of the existing sections of **Route 199 to four lanes** in those areas where only two lanes presently exist;
- # Funding for design and construction of **Route 60 relocation**;
- # Funding for the **improvements to the Route 199-Jamestown Road intersection** and support of the **locally preferred alternative**;
- # Funding **for landscaping along the Route 199 corridor**; and
- # Proceeding with the next phases of preliminary design and environmental study for the **Capital to Capital Bikeway project** consistent with a resolution adopted by the Board of Supervisors on November 10, 1998.