

James City County Requests for 2006-2011 Six-Year Improvement Program Projects

Introduction

James City County respectfully submits its priority Six-Year Improvement Program 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 asks that VDOT expeditiously complete or accelerate projects that have received partial or full funding. These include the **four-lane improvement to the existing two-lane sections of Route 199, Route 60 East relocation, improvements to Route 199/Route 31 intersection, and improvements to the Monticello Avenue/Ironbound Road Intersection**. James City County is also requesting the Commonwealth's support for four other non-highway projects. The first project involves **corridor landscaping improvements for Route 199**. The second project is the **Virginia Capital Trail** in the Route 5 Corridor from Richmond to Williamsburg. The third project is the **Greensprings Trail** connecting the County's existing Greensprings Trail located behind Jamestown High School to Jamestown. The fourth project is the **Peninsula Light Rail Project**, a light rail system spanning from the City of Hampton, through James City County, and extending to the City of 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 traffic counts for Route 199 show traffic volumes of more than 28,000 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. We are encouraged by the construction activity that has taken place thus far and it appears that the project is on schedule to be completed prior to 2007. We encourage close monitoring

of the work by VDOT to ensure that the schedule is met.

Route 199/Route 31 Intersection

These intersection improvements are also part of the Public-Private Transportation Act (PPTA) project and are critical improvements. While the roadway portion of the project is moving forward, the necessary pedestrian facilities were not originally included in the PPTA contract. We understand that this has been corrected. These pedestrian facilities are a very important part of the project approved by the County and the City of Williamsburg. The County and the City of Williamsburg have agreed to fund certain enhancements for this project (fencing, median treatment, etc.). **We request that VDOT ensure that adequate pedestrian facilities be funded and constructed with this project.**

The County strongly urges continued Commonwealth support for both phases of these 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 9,244 ADT between 1980 and 2003.

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 (450 employees) generate high commuter and truck traffic volume in this area. Also, 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 of Virginia 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. Recently the City of Newport News and James City County recommended that the project be divided into two sections and VDOT concurred. This should facilitate more rapid progress on the first section.

James City County requests prompt funding for construction of this roadway in two sections: The first section extends from Route 60 at a point east of Blow Flats Road in James City County to the Fort Eustis Interchange in Newport News. It is suggested that the section be constructed in advance of the remaining section. To facilitate more rapid progress, the MPO has recognized the regional significance of the Route 60 East relocation project and has allocated \$13.518 million from its Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP) in FY 2002-2003 along with a projected allocation of an additional \$1.729 million in FY 2007. This money would be used for preliminary engineering, right-of-way acquisition, and some construction in both James City County and Newport News. The County requests that VDOT rapidly complete preliminary engineering and right-of-way acquisition on the first section in order to protect the right-of-way and allocate a balance of funding to construct that section.

Monticello Avenue/Ironbound Road Intersection

The Monticello Avenue/Ironbound Road Intersection is of increasing importance to James City County as the New Town project develops. Traffic in this area is projected to increase dramatically and the improvements at this critical intersection will ensure that the levels of service on both these roadways remain adequate. The project has been fully funded, including allocations of \$3.072 million from the Regional Surface Transportation Program. It is critically important that this project continue to move forward in a timely manner. **The County requests continued Commonwealth support for this project and that the project be completed prior to the widening of Ironbound Road.**

Non-Highway Projects

Route 199 Landscaping

The County requests that all Route 199 projects 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 event, 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 and intersection projects. 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.

Virginia Capital Trail

The County requests continued Commonwealth support for the Virginia Capital Trail. The 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 has begun.

Greensprings Trail Project

The County requests continued Commonwealth support for the Greensprings Trail project. The Greensprings Trail project proposes a multiuse trail connecting the existing Greensprings Trail located behind Jamestown High School to Jamestown. The multiuse trail in James City County would serve the broadest range of users and provide both State and local benefits, including promotion of tourism; historic preservation and education; a safe means of alternative transportation for pedestrians and bicyclists; and would be a great asset to the 2007 Jamestown event and beyond. The County has agreed to participate by assisting with right-of-way acquisition and construction of parking areas.

Peninsula Light Rail Project

The proposed Peninsula Light Rail Project is of great interest to James City County. Improved passenger rail service for the Peninsula has been under consideration for several years. The Peninsula Light Rail Project would provide an alternative to travelers on the Peninsula, particularly commuters, in a 25-mile-long corridor most likely within the CSX right-of-way. The project would provide such much needed congestion relief on Interstate 64 which would in turn provide relief for the primary roads within James City County, especially Route 199 and Richmond Road. **The County requests that the Commonwealth recognize the need for light rail on the Peninsula and provide support for this project.**

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 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 following solutions to problems of state significance:

- **On schedule completion of the widening of the existing sections of Route 199 to four lanes;**
- **On schedule completion of the Route 199/Route 31 intersection improvements, with adequate pedestrian facilities;**
- **Funding for the construction of Route 60 relocation with priority given to the section between Route 60 at a point east of Blow Flats Road in the County to the Fort Eustis Interchange in the City of Newport News;**
- **On schedule completion of the Monticello Avenue/Ironbound Road intersection improvement, with improvements being completed prior to the widening of Ironbound Road;**
- **Funding for landscaping along the Route 199 corridor;**
- **Proceeding with the next phases of design and construction for the Virginia Capital Trail project consistent with a resolution adopted by the Board of Supervisors on November 10, 1998;**
- **Continued support for the Greensprings Trail project; and**
- **Support for the Peninsula Light Rail Project.**

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