

Transportation Input Session
August 27, 2007
Farmwell Station Middle School Auditorium

Planning Commissioners Present: Robert Klancher, Barbara Munsey and Kevin Ruedisueli

Comments from the public:

Mary Jane Spence – A resident of Potomac Farms, raised a concern about the proposed recommendation to realign Riverside Parkway to a more southerly alignment. She mentioned that someone named Meade Rhodes passed out information in the neighborhood that was erroneous in the way it depicted the optional road alignments. She said she hopes the neighborhood can come together on a decision and not have a divide and conquer method of dealing with the issue between folks in the back of the subdivision and in the front of the subdivision. She doesn't want a six lane road with a lot of traffic going through the subdivision.

Barbara Munsey asked Ms. Spence to provide copies of what was distributed in the neighborhood. That information was provided.

Tad Northcott, Potomac Farms resident, asked for the timing of any road going in place.

George Phillips explained that staff sees an advantage of a southerly alignment. A specific alignment has not been engineered. Riverside Parkway is planned as six lanes and is a collector road not a freeway. There is no timeframe for constructing the road. A design would have to be developed and right of way obtained.

Mr. Klancher indicated that it is not likely that the road would be built within six years but it is development driven by proffers. It may be unlikely but not impossible.

Ms. Munsey said the County is now in the process of utilizing local road bonds so that is another optional source of funding for roads.

George Phillips was asked about the accuracy of the information provided to the neighborhood. He indicated he could not react on the spot.

Fernando Colon, a resident of Potomac Farms, asked about the possibility due to environmental features and issues, of having feeder roads rather than a road bifurcating the neighborhood.

George Phillips responded that no one would lose access and Riverside Parkway is planned as the north collector road to Route 7 on a constructable alignment.

John Hentschel, a resident on the north side of Smith Circle, questions the need for a collector road that goes through the neighborhood. He feels the flyovers, interchanges and the southern collector road should be enough without bisecting the neighborhood. He would support closing Smith Circle to Route 7 and only a local road to the north. He feels you should beef up the southern collector to handle traffic.

George Phillips indicated we could have the consultant take a look at his suggestion.

Mr. Klancher showed the map that depicts the conceptual alignments for both the northerly and the southerly alignments.

Pravin Ghandi, a resident of Potomac Farms, asked who is involved in deciding the alignment options? He wants to know who is calling the shots.

Mr. Phillips said the alignment was looked at as a modeling exercise and staff met with citizens after the proposed draft CTP was released. No particular property owners were consulted. There was a meeting held in June with some residents of Potomac Farms who asked to meeting with Office of Transportation staff. The Board of Supervisors will have the final decision.

Mr. Klancher said the draft plan was done as a transportation analysis by staff and the consultant. The Planning Commission decided to go out to the community to obtain citizen input on the product prior to the Commission making a recommendation.

Ms. Spence said she viewed the County CTP website in the February/March, 2007 timeframe and saw a letter from Howard Hughes Medical Center that supported the southerly alignment. She feels this will save them land for more growth.

Mike Banzhaf, representing Potomac Farms Business Park, suggested the road go in the vicinity of the Bluemount Nursery as it redevelops when its current special exception goes away. The current built sections of the road are in the alignment that was called for in the Countywide Transportation Plan.

Philip LoPresti, thanked the staff and Planning Commission for coming out in the community to hear comments. He said the information needs to show water features and trails. There will never be a road that will cross the Broad Run into Broad Run Farms. He asked if there is data of University Center residents heading west. He doesn't concur with Mr. Banzhaf's recommendation. He suggested focusing on key points like the Gloucester connection. He said there is not enough funding to build all the roads.

George Phillips said Appendix 5 now shows bicycle and pedestrian facilities called for on roads. He said we would take another look at what gets shown on the map.

Mr. LoPresti asked if there is a chance that the current Board will make the decision on the draft Countywide Transportation Plan.

George Phillips said the Plan has been on an accelerated schedule and the public process from the front end is now happening as a part of the Plan review. The Planning Commission is going through its deliberations and it would be difficult to get it through the current Board of Supervisors for a decision.

Mr. Ghandi asked what demographics were looked at in 2030?

George Phillips said the traffic is generated by projected households and jobs. Those projections are made by demographers based on the adopted land use plan for the County. The data is run through the Board of Supervisors for its blessing and then it is sent to the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. This is done by all COG member jurisdictions and the regional information is then developed for use in the model. The draft CTP is a multi-modal plan and just widening highways won't meet the overall transportation needs for the future.

Mr. Ghandi asked if we see more inter or intra County traffic and what the traffic patterns are showing.

George Phillips responded that the east/west movement continues to be predominant because most of the jobs are located to the east. This impacts Route 7, Route 50 and the Greenway. There are no new corridors proposed punching outside of the County. Route 9 traffic continues to grow and currently the plan is to keep it as two lanes with safety improvements. The draft Plan as proposed by the consultant calls for a Hillsboro Bypass to get traffic off Rt. 9 to Route 7 which would be widened and have more capacity. The Planning Commission has removed that option from the Plan but discussions will be upcoming on how to deal with it.

Mr. Ghandi said no matter what you do in the west the traffic comes east and needs to be dealt with through traffic improvements.

Mr. Klancher said half of Loudoun residents work outside the County and half of those who work in Loudoun live outside Loudoun County. The Planning Commission and the Board are looking at a more modern land use model that allows for mixed use where you can live, work and shop within a community without sending everyone to Route 7 to go east from the homes to the jobs and retail.

Phyllis Randall, a resident of Ashburn, asked about road safety improvements being proposed. She is concerned about traffic accidents and deaths in the area. She suggested metering traffic from Route 28 as you merge onto Route 7.

In response to a question about improving traffic operations on Route 7 east of Route 28, George Phillips indicated there is design work ongoing now for operational improvements in that area. The area is very restricted in terms of the improvements that can be made.

Mr. Klancher indicated the long range goal of the plan is to provide options on Route 7, disperse it onto Route 28 and go from there. If you take traffic down Route 7, you hit a bottleneck in Fairfax County.

Ms. Munsey said Fairfax County is at the end of their development process and Loudoun is more at the beginning. Some people in Fairfax County will tell you that the western border of their County is their rural area and the roads are not in place to handle the suburban denser development in Loudoun.

Ms. Randall asked about Hay Road and the safety issues there.

George Phillips said there are some constraints to improving the road as you get closer to the Village of Ashburn and the plan has been to provide alternatives such as Claiborne Parkway for traffic movement.

Ms. Randall said the most important improvement for Ashburn is punching Gloucester Parkway through to Route 28.

George Phillips said that is in the plan. It is being proposed as a part of a pending rezoning but that is still before the Planning Commission.

In response to a question of enticing commuters to utilize the Greenway, George Phillips said the draft CTP is recommending that the road be widened to eight lanes. The County also has park and ride lots and promotes the use of transit to get to work. The County transit service is expanding but not fast enough to meet the demand.

A gentleman asked a question about the need to connect Riverside Parkway in Potomac Farms Business Park to Smith Circle. George indicated he would get back with him with the information.

Ben Tissue of Bluemount Nursery asked if the proposed southerly alignment had an economic analysis done.

George Phillips said it considered traffic, level of service and environmental issues. The right of way issues would be considered during the alignment study.

In response to a question on interchange design from Tim Tymyk and what is considered, George Phillips said traffic projections for 30 years are considered. This is reviewed by VDOT. Sometimes you are fitting an interchange into an existing road network and things are not always perfect such as the close proximity of Pacific Boulevard to Route 28. You have to provide access to properties and that is what the parallel roads are doing.

There was some discussion of roundabouts and rotaries as options to interchanges and traditional at-grade signalized intersections.

George Phillips said the proposed design speed for Riverside Parkway is 40 mph but the speed limit posted is generally lower.

Mr. Ghandi asked what the strategy is for noise issues where roads are being widened near residences.

George Phillips said the draft Plan has a section regarding noise studies and how noise issues would be handled. Different situations call for different measures for attenuation.

James Sullivan, a resident on Smith Circle, asked why Riverside Parkway is a U6M in Potomac Farms and is only built as a U4 in University Center.

George Phillips said it is not in its ultimate condition in University Center. The model utilized a U6M throughout in its analysis. A U4M would have to be studied to see how it would function.

Kevin Trax, a resident on Smith Circle, asked what the current alignment is for Riverside Parkway.

George Phillips said it is currently in the more northerly alignment. The reason is the model says if the road is closer to Route 7 it serves more traffic and gets the road away from the houses and out of the floodplain.

Barbara Carey, a resident of Smith Circle, asked if environmental issues are considered when an alignment is set.

George Phillips indicated that it absolutely is taken into account.

George Phillips announced that the last of the series of seven meetings had been changed from September 20th to September 19th at Harmony Middle School in Hamilton, VA.

Ms. Munsey said comments are still welcomed via email or letter. Input is not closed.

The meeting concluded at 8:45 p.m.