November 9, 2015

NEPA Re-evaluation

Route: Hillsdale Drive Extension Project
Location: City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County, Virginia
VDOT Project #: U000-104-119, PE101, R201, C501; UPC # 60233
From: 500' North of Greenbrier Drive
To: Hydraulic Road

Subject: Reevaluation of Environmental Assessment (EA)/Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for Hillsdale Drive Extension.

Background

An EA was signed on September 20, 2004, and the FONSI was approved for the subject project by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) on March 8, 2006. A written reevaluation was signed by FHWA on March 5, 2008 to address changes in project alignment modifications following the approval of the EA/FONSI. This written reevaluation is being submitted prior to completing the final design phase of the project.

This project is listed in the FY 2014-2019 Six-Year Improvement Plan (SYIP), the FY 2015-2018 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), the FY 2015-2018 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Constrained Long Range Plan (CLRP).

Project Description

The proposed construction of the Hillsdale Drive Extension would be located in the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County, Virginia. The new roadway project would begin approximately 500 feet north of Greenbrier Drive and terminate at Hydraulic Road. The original project window included the areas bordered by Route 29, Greenbrier Drive, Hydraulic Road and Brandywine Drive and encompassed approximately 119 acres. In addition to the no-build alternative, four different build alternatives or alignments within this window were compared and included in the study. On March 7, 2005, the City of Charlottesville passed a resolution approving the location of the proposed Hillsdale Drive Extension utilizing the Alternative “C” alignment. On July 21, 2005, the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) approved the new location corridor. The City of Charlottesville approved the major design features on February 22, 2011, and the County of Albemarle Board of Supervisors concurred on March 2,
2011. In 2014, the CTB approved funding for the project to move forward into the right of way phase, with construction slated for 2016.

The Hillsdale Drive Extension Project is approximately one mile in length and would provide a new three-lane roadway between Greenbrier Drive in Albemarle County and Hydraulic Road in the City of Charlottesville. The three lanes will consist of one lane in each direction and a center turn lane. One section of the project will narrow to two lanes, eliminating the center turn lane, to minimize impacts and allow continued operations at an existing commercial building and the U.S. Post Office. The new Hillsdale Drive Extension begins at existing Hillsdale Drive just north of Greenbrier Drive. A section of new roadway would be constructed between the existing detention pond and Rosewood Village Assisted Living facility and align with Pepsi Place to create a new four-way intersection. The existing section of Hillsdale Drive to the east of the detention pond would be removed, and a new on-road bike lane would be provided on the new section of Hillsdale Drive from Greenbrier Drive to the northern project terminus with existing Hillsdale Drive, where it connects with existing bike lanes. South of Greenbrier Drive, the new Hillsdale Drive Extension would follow the alignment of Pepsi Place as it travels between the Laurels of Charlottesville and the Senior Center with a new section of roadway being constructed between the Pepsi Plant and the U.S. Post Office properties. This new section of roadway would bridge over the storm water detention channel and then travel through one of the multi-tenant commercial buildings at the northern end of the Seminole Square Shopping Center continuing south to Zan Road where a new signalized four-way intersection with Seminole Court would be created.

The new roadway then travels south along the Zan Road alignment. It creates a roundabout intersection where Zan Road and Line Drive intersect. It would then continue south following the Line Drive alignment. The new roadway would include an intersection with India Road and then pass on new alignment to the east of the new Homewood Suites Hotel connecting to the existing section of Hillsdale Drive Extension adjacent to the Whole Foods store and to the signalized intersection at Hydraulic Road. In order to provide for bicycle and pedestrian access, south of Greenbrier Drive, a shared use path would be constructed on the east side of the roadway and a sidewalk will be constructed on the west side. Additionally, landscaping and lighting would be used throughout the project to blend the new roadway with the existing adjoining properties and to improve the established visual environment of the area while promoting multi-modal transportation.

Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice

Guidance for socioeconomics and Environmental Justice (EJ) has been updated since the previous reevaluation and, therefore, the following summarizes the research that was conducted for this reevaluation. Consistent with the Council on Environmental Quality’s (CEQ) Environmental Justice Guidance under the National Environmental Policy Act (CEQ, 1997), the criteria for identification of minority populations within the study region includes census tracts in which 1) the minority population percentage exceeds 50%, or 2) the minority population is "meaningfully greater" than the minority population percentage in the "general population or other appropriate unit of geographic analysis." Populations of minorities that are 10% higher than that of the study region were considered to be meaningfully greater than that of the study region. The 10% threshold also represents "a readily identifiable group" of minority persons, pursuant to DOT Order 5610.2(a).
Using current U.S. Census data, there are two Census Block Groups that fall within the study area. Of the two, one Census Block Group (000800-4) is considered an EJ population based on minority percentages and on income. This area has a 27% African American population, with a total minority percentage at 52%. It also has a high percentage of families in poverty, at 24%, although there are no low-income housing facilities in the vicinity of the project according to the census data. However, City records indicate that the Hearthwood Apartments has 200 low-income units at 2111 Michie Drive and the Charlottesville Redevelopment & Housing Authority owns low-income properties located at 2021-25 Michie Drive. This project will not disproportionately affect this population because the construction of this road will occur solely in commercial areas and will not impact any homes, but will increase residents' mobility through the commercial area. It is also anticipated to positively affect regional economy and employment by decreasing congestion, and increasing accessibility. Based on impacts and analysis are anticipated no disproportionately high and adverse impacts to minority or low-income (or EJ) populations.

Census Block Group 010601-3 has a high percentage of elderly individuals in its population. Two assisted living facilities, one development marketed to seniors and a community senior center is located within the project area. This project will not disproportionately affect this population because it will not require any displacements or relocations of those facilities and will provide greater accessibility to and from those locations.

The land use in the study area consists of residential and commercial development. Adjacent to the project area, the land use is primarily commercial. Consequently, the construction of this extension of Hillsdale Drive will not result in the displacement of any residential properties, but has the potential to displace one commercial building within the Seminole Square Shopping Center. The commercial building that may be impacted includes multiple businesses as well as vacant storefronts. This project will not displace any non-profit organizations or community facilities, although Region Ten Community Services organization has a satellite office nearby at 2000 Michie Drive.

Right of Way/Relocations

The proposed project alignment does not include any residential displacements or relocations. Likewise, there are no relocations of farms or non-profit organizations. The original EA estimated that four to 15 relocations may be required through the project corridor. Through careful placement of the road, the use of modular design of the Seminole Square Shopping Center and cooperation from the property owner, the right of way acquisition required has been limited to no more than three commercial storefronts where the roadway is proposed to split through the one commercial building noted above in the Seminole Square Shopping Center. The parking lot that was previously associated with Cinema 4 is now the parking lot for a Homewood Suites, and that development was completed, with property owner cooperation, to co-exist with this planned roadway so no improvements need to be demolished or acquired. Commercial relocations are not anticipated to be a problem in this area. Charlottesville and Albemarle County are thriving communities with opportunities for business in and near Seminole Square Shopping Center. It is anticipated that the relocation process can be resolved

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1 The commercial building anticipated to be impacted is a strip mall with multiple tenants. At this time, only one of the three storefronts that are anticipated to be impacted by the roadway project is occupied and leased. The commercial building owner does not have immediate plans to lease the remaining two properties prior to construction of the Hillsdale Drive Extension project; however, the project does impact three potential businesses at this location.
satisfactorily in a reasonable amount of time. Some businesses may be impacted by the partial acquisition of the parcels where they are located and the City will continue to meet with affected property owners to minimize right of way acquisition as the roadway design is completed and will adhere to the Uniform Act to compensate impacted property owners.

**Historic/Archaeological Resources**

The City’s Consultant and their architectural historians confirmed that no historic structures survey is recommended as stated in the 2008 NEPA reevaluation. The Virginia Department of Historic Resources’ V-CRIS database was reviewed, and no previously identified above-ground historic resources were identified within the current Area of Potential Effects (APE) established for the project. One architectural resource (104-0149 “Meadow Farm”) was previously identified within the APE, but it is now extant and has been removed from the V-CRIS database. The available online GIS records for the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County, including property and building information, were reviewed and no structures 50 years or older were identified within the APE. As a result, no further work is recommended for above-ground historic resources.

Additionally, the City’s Consultant and their archaeologists confirmed that the archaeological sensitivity throughout the APE remains low and that no archaeological survey is recommended as stated in the 2008 NEPA reevaluation. There is one previously recorded archaeological site (44AB101) within the vicinity of the project; however, this site has been compromised by commercial development and its location lies outside of the current project alternative. While the Virginia Department of Historic Resources’ archaeological site file lists the resource as “not evaluated,” this project will not impact the former site location and, therefore, will have no effect.

**Section 4(f) Resources**

Meadow Creek Stream Valley Park is publicly owned by the City of Charlottesville; however, it is located a tenth of a mile from the proposed project area and the roadway project limits do not encroach on any of the park boundaries. The Rivanna Trail runs through the limits of the park. This park is a Section 4(f) resource; however, it will not be impacted or used by the project. Additionally, the viewshed for the park would not be affected due to the commercial and industrial buildings between the proposed Hillsdale Drive Extension project and Meadow Creek Stream Valley Park.

There are no other Section 4(f) resources within the project study area.

**Agricultural/Forestal Districts**

No agricultural activities or prime and unique farmland were identified in the project study area.

**Water Quality Impacts and Permitting Information**

On March 16, 2004, wetland delineations were completed along the proposed project alignment and a subsequent jurisdictional determination (JD) was issued by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) on May 27, 2004. Because wetlands and other waters of the United States are affected over time by both natural and man-made activities, changes in jurisdictional boundaries can be expected to occur. As such, the USACE has designated that JDs are valid for
a period of five years. More than five years have spanned from the date of the JD issuance and, therefore, new wetland delineations were warranted. On October 22, 2014, new wetland delineations were completed and the USACE issued a new JD on March 12, 2015. The USACE confirmed the presence of potential Waters of the United States, including one (1) perennial stream, one (1) intermittent stream, one (1) freshwater emergent wetland, and one (1) freshwater pond (open waters).

Based on the previous NEPA reevaluation conducted in 2008, the project design plans, which included a culvert for the crossing over the unnamed tributary to Meadow Creek, involved 161 linear feet and 0.01 acre of intermittent stream impact, 0.26 acre wetland impact, and 0.53 acre of open water impacts. During the design process, and in an effort to implement avoidance and minimization measures, the culvert was replaced with a pre-cast arch structure that spans over the intermittent stream channel (unnamed tributary to Meadow Creek) and its 100-year flood plain. Implementing this change will avoid permanent impacts to the intermittent stream during construction. After establishing the permanent drainage easement for the structure at unnamed tributary to Meadow Creek crossing, the permanent stream channel impacts for the project are anticipated to be 80 linear feet (based on right-of-way plans dated July 14, 2015). The proposed design change would not affect the quantities of impacts to wetlands and open water.

The City will continue to avoid and minimize wetland and stream impacts as the project continues through the final design process. Any unavoidable permanent or temporary impacts to jurisdictional areas, which result from final design of the project, will be properly permitted and mitigated in accordance with appropriate local, state and federal regulations.

The project should have no permanent effect on groundwater resources. Any possible temporary effects to groundwater resources related to construction activities will be mitigated in a timely manner and avoided where possible.

Temporary impacts associated with erosion and sedimentation will be mitigated by compliance with all applicable regulations and by exercising all reasonable precautions to minimize impacts to the surrounding environment.

**Threatened & Endangered Species**

With the use of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation’s Division of Natural Heritage (VDCR) Biotic Data System, a search for occurrences of natural heritage resources for the study area was conducted. While biotics were present in the general area, further analysis using the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries’ Fish and Wildlife Information System (VDGIF) documented that the James Spymussel (Peurobema collina, FESE) was the only species observed within two miles of the project area. However, the location of the James Spymussel is within Ivy Creek, which is located two miles from the project area. Therefore, mussel surveys have not been and need not be conducted.

On May 4, 2015, the Northern Long-eared Bat (Myotis septentrionalis) was officially listed as a federally threatened species. In result of a search within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service database conducted on August 3, 2015, the Northern Long-eared Bat was identified within two miles of the study area. A habitat survey for the Northern Long-eared Bat has not been completed. Measures to ensure avoidance and minimization of impacts to this species are being developed; however, in the interim, VDOT has developed guidance that includes a time-of-year restriction for tree removal (greater than 3-inches diameter breast height), which must be
performed outside the species roosting season (April 15th through September 15th). Additionally, any tree removal should be limited to trees located within 100 feet of the existing road surface. Coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the VDGIF and VDCR will be conducted during the permitting phase of the project. Since the project will adhere to the above criteria, FWS concurred that the project will not likely adversely affect the Northern Long-eared Bat.

Air Quality Issues

The Charlottesville/Albemarle area is located in an attainment area for the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS), which include carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, lead and particulate matter. The Charlottesville/Albemarle area is currently in attainment for all NAAQS and, therefore, conformity requirements do not apply.

Based on guidance from VDOT, quantitative carbon monoxide hot-spot modeling was not necessary to characterize the air quality impact of the project because the projected design year 2038 traffic volumes are less than 59,000 vehicles per day, as identified in the guidance. Therefore, the proposed project is not expected to cause or contribute to any violations of the NAAQS, worsen any existing violations, or interfere with the attainment of any applicable NAAQS. See attached memorandum for additional information.

Noise

The potential noise impacts related to the proposed Hillsdale Drive Extension were assessed in accordance with FHWA and VDOT noise assessment guidelines. The EA/FONSI and previous reevaluation indicated design-year traffic volumes would not cause any exceedances in the Noise Abatement Criteria to properties along Alignment C. In August of 2015, additional research was conducted for the final design noise analysis and determined that Design Year (2038) noise levels associated with the project do not approach or exceed the noise abatement criteria at any noise sensitive land uses in the study area. Therefore, noise abatement is not warranted.

Hazardous Waste

Information was obtained from federal and state government websites and databases regarding registered hazardous waste sites regulated under RCRA, CERCLA, National Priority List (NPL), CERCLIS, the Facility Index System (FINDS), Emergency Response Notification System (ERNS), State Priority List, Underground Storage Tank (UST) Registry, Spill Reports, and Solid Waste Facility Information. Each of these database reports confirmed that there are no additional sites of concern recorded since the previous NEPA reevaluation and Phase I and II studies.

Indirect and Cumulative Impacts

The Hillsdale Drive Extension project is consistent with local comprehensive planning regarding land use goals in the surrounding area and the project would be expected to improve overall mobility and connectivity among surrounding land uses and transportation facilities. As mentioned in the FONSI, the potential for growth and land use changes as a result of the proposed project is fairly low. Most of the study area is urban in nature and previously developed. Although the proposed project is not likely to cause a substantial change in type or intensity of land use, the project may induce redevelopment and revitalization of the existing commercial areas. However, the area would experience growth and development in the study
time frame with or without the proposed project, as evidenced by population and employment projections.

There are a number of other roadway improvement projects that are under construction within the vicinity of the project that are all contributing to a more efficient transportation system within the area. The improvements include four existing projects that are currently under construction:

- Route 29/Route 250 interchange improvements
- Route 29 widening, Polo Grounds Road to Towncenter Drive
- Adaptive traffic signal control technology
- Route 29/Rio Road grade-separated intersection
- Berkmar Drive extension, from Hilton Heights Road to Towncenter Drive
- Hillsdale Drive South, from Hydraulic Road to Holiday Drive

Local planning and redevelopment efforts have been coordinated along with these roadway improvements in order to benefit and ensure a cohesive community. Fire, police, and rescue emergency services are all expected to benefit from the improved transportation facilities.

Overall, the proposed project is not expected to substantially contribute to adverse cumulative impacts. When considered along with other planned and proposed development, beneficial cumulative impacts could occur to resources that are directly affected by the proposed project. This includes improved mobility and access for study area businesses and residents.

**Conclusion**

The Virginia Department of Transportation does not consider that the findings described in this reevaluation will result in significant impacts to the human or natural environment.

The Department recommends and requests FHWA’s concurrence that the changes described in this written reevaluation, in conjunction with the approved FONSI and previous written reevaluation, will not result in significant environmental impacts to the human or natural environment.

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