

ROUTE 15 UPDATE

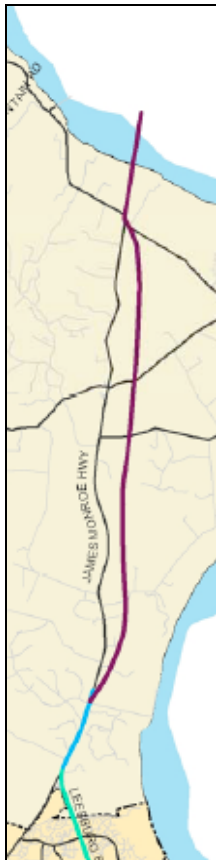
THE CATOCTIN COALITION

8 JUNE 2007

A six-lane outer Beltway through the Lucketts area that will fail as soon as it's built?

Issues of importance: Eminent Domain • Environmental Threats • Destruction of Historic Properties and Parkland • Community Destruction and Fragmentation • Induced Traffic

The 2007 County Transportation Plan (CTP) update, proposed by the consultant hired by the county, calls for an 8-mile-long, six-lane highway through the rural Lucketts area, just east of the present Route 15. This proposal would include a new river crossing. Below is this new proposed route.



The preferred alternative from Technical Memorandum #1

As you can see, This extraordinary plan plows a broad new path through the Catoctin Rural Historic District, through a number of historic properties, working farms, and residential areas. Starting just north of White's Ferry Road, the new highway route appears cut through the historic property of Rockland (on the National Register of Historic Places), the Whitmore Farm (Farmer John's roadside market), Temple Hall Farm Park, the Lee's Crossing Development, behind Lucketts Elementary School, the Community Center and firehouse, and through a number of residential properties and working farms all the way up to St. Clair Lane north of Lucketts. It would then proceed straight at the gas station at the turn of Route 15 and north across the Potomac River.

There are many, many questions you as a taxpaying citizen should ask about this plan, but we may as well start with a pretty basic one.

Has Maryland agreed that to new bridge crossing, and does it plan capacity improvements (more lanes) on its part of Route 15? No. No.

Never in the decades of fervent (and Virginia developer-initiated) discussion has the state of Maryland has ever agreed to discuss a new bridge crossing. Is this

another highway to nowhere—or at least to a huge bottleneck?

Have Lucketts area residents asked for a new highway through this area? No. This proposal was added to the plan in April, *after* the public comment period.

What will be the likely effects of a plan for a new six-lane highway through the Lucketts area? A new six-lane



A six-lane highway near Faith Chapel in Lucketts?

highway most likely would invite intensive residential development and non-agricultural commercial development, which will undermine its booming agri-tourism business base.

The Lucketts area presently has a large and growing rural economic base, with small rural entrepreneurs taking advantage of the area's scenic and historic setting to start new and profitable agricultural enterprises, alongside traditional farming and rural operations. This thriving business base, on our beautiful "working landscape," includes numerous equine facilities, 5 vineyards and wineries, horticulture (Christmas trees, etc.), orchards, fruit and vegetable producers and roadside markets, meat and fiber producers, hay and grain operations, and associated businesses (such as a feed dealer). The popular antiques markets add to this area's appeal for weekend visitors.

How well would this expensive new road alleviate future traffic delays? Traffic engineers use the term "level of service" (LOS), which basically measures time delay on a particular road with a particular traffic volume. The scale is from A to F, with A being the best, and F, failing.

The map on the next page reflects an estimate* of traffic

* It would be interesting to evaluate what assumptions made about predicted traffic volumes, especially considering the likely dramatic changes in energy use and cost in the next decades, and the fact that continuing violation of federal clean air standards in this region could limit road construction.

patterns and volumes in the year 2030, and the consequent predicted LOS. Roads in red have LOS of F (more than 5 hours of delays a day). Orange roads rate E; yellow roads are D and roads with LOS of A to C are green.

The new highway, were it indeed to be built before 2030, would fail upon completion, as would the new bridge.

Would the new highway attract NEW traffic? YES. The draft report specifically discusses that the road's purpose is to draw traffic away from other routes to this new road. In addition, the plan admits that new roads often create new traffic:

"It appears that there is a delicate balance between creating additional capacity along Route 15 that draws enough western traffic to relieve other routes, and providing a major new corridor that could induce substantial traffic."

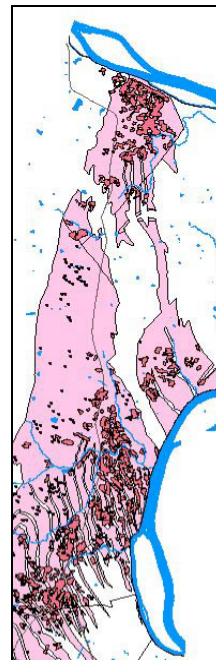
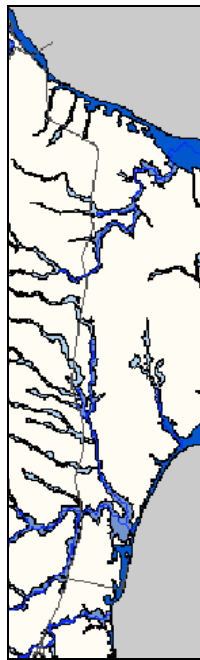
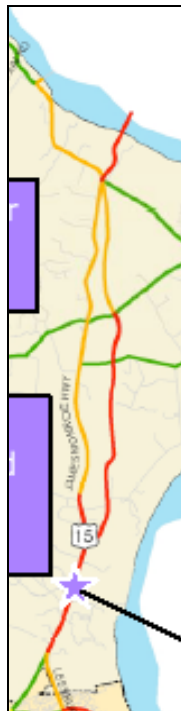
Where's the money coming from to build this new highway? The CTP is so vague on this point that it has been criticized as a profoundly unrealistic plan.

One Supervisor, Jim Burton (I-Blue Ridge, describes the plan as "an unconstrained wish list of roads....there is not enough money in the entire Commonwealth of Virginia to undertake such an effort. A plan that cannot possibly be implemented is not a plan."

Will the money come from new taxes or new debt? A public-private partnership has been floated as a way to pay for this outer beltway. Would private property condemned and taken for such a private, for-profit development effort?

What are the environmental and geological issues of concern? In the opposite column are maps showing floodplains in this area, and the limestone overlay area of northern Lucketts, showing limestone outcrops and sinkholes (caves and underground solution channels are other geographical features present). Even if one discounts the environmental and groundwater concerns, the sheer cost of building through such an area could be gargantuan. There have been three 100-year floods in that area in the past 20 years. Current noncompliance to air quality standards and noise are additional issues.

No public process—again? This bypass proposal was inserted into the CTP on April 30—*after* the public comment period. Leesburg Supervisor Jim Clem and Sugarland Run District Supervisor Mick Staton have demanded that this 6-lane highway be part of the CTP update. Both supervisors voted last year to double housing density in Northern Loudoun over the original Clem-Burton rural zoning plan without public input or hearings. Catoctin Supervisor Sally Kurtz has described that action in September 2006: "The Clem-Staton coup is nothing other than a squandering of civic, social, and natural resources." The plan, she said, was designed for "corporate developers."



These maps, from the county's online mapping service, show the floodplain areas (in blue). The next map shows the limestone overlay district of northeastern Loudoun with rock outcroppings and sinkholes. Go to the website for more detailed maps,

What can you do?

1. Demand that the Board of Supervisors remove this bypass plan from the CTP (bos@loudoun.gov).

2. Ask the Planning Commission why they are even considering taking land for a road through our community that will fail as soon as it's built (loudounpc@loudoun.gov).

3. Come to the Planning Commission public hearing at 6 p.m. June 18 to express your opinion of this outer beltway plan.

4. Notify your neighbors.

If County officials do not hear from many Lucketts area residents—THIS MEANS YOU—they will conclude that we approve this beltway through our community.

Further resources

2007 Countywide Transportation Plan Update documents can be viewed at <http://www.loudoun.gov/transportation/ctp.htm>.