

Compiled List of Strategies for Route 29 Solutions Business Assistance Program

Technical Support

- Develop a Survival Toolkit to serve as an advance planning guide for businesses including a “Construction Readiness” checklist
- Provide business counseling and technical expertise on site before and during construction
- Assist businesses in developing customer loyalty strategies - customer contact information starting now so that businesses have an effective way to keep in touch during construction

Wayfinding & Signage

- Signage – both for individual businesses and for broader navigation – permanent directional signs at the local-express split, midtown exit signage
- Make sure well-defined travel alternatives are in place
- Provide accurate information about alternative routes
- Descriptive signage that gives clear directions for business access during construction - “This way to...”
- Create effective temporary signage – visible and easy to read – branded and coordinated with marketing efforts
- Investigate usage of electronic wayfinding signage
- Consider modifications to the county’s sign regulations

Marketing

- Produce Public Service Announcements (PSAs) from community leaders encouraging loyalty to businesses during construction
- Plan a Buy local campaign – identify local businesses along the corridor to channel work to once construction begins such as sign makers, restaurants, print shops, etc. - encourage lunch promotions, etc. for construction workers, create reoccurring business
- Identify a pool of marketing, advertising and design firms to provide discounted or pro bono assistance, develop a focused marketing plan and media/social media campaign
- Marketing campaign focused on “Get to Know Midtown” – feature different businesses
- Develop a matching grant program that provides support for group advertising initiatives – significant need for assistance with television advertising
- Develop coupon books that can be used at targeted businesses
- Coordinate events to draw people to the area during construction – concert series like Fridays After Five, “Saturdays in the Square” at Albemarle Square, local bands, artisan venues, etc.

Communications

- Encourage the business community to engage its customers for support; build community up, appeal to our common interest in a strong local economy
- Enlist local media as active communications partners
- Comprehensive communications effort well in advance of construction – posters, flyers, email blasts, etc. - coordinated with businesses ahead of time to alert/prepare customers
- Establish a clear and immediate line of communication between businesses and project team – hot line
- Create a Get – Around Guide/ Map that helps people navigate the area during construction, use real time app to assure people that they can find their way around
- Send Regular AMail announcements during construction regarding significant construction situations
- Include tax inserts with semi or annual updates
- Business block captains that meet regularly with project staff on site – establish office/meeting space in the new Northside Library
- Communicate with neighborhood associations to build mutual support – “we are in this together “- Sponsored breakfast meetings where businesses can communicate directly with neighbors
- Focus on “community assistance”, not just business assistance

Financial/Regulatory

- Consider expediting development review/approval processes for businesses in the construction areas
- Conduct economic impact study
- Determine the current baseline vacancy rate for Route 29
- Procurement – within procurement guidelines, utilize impacted businesses for County services
- Partner with impacted businesses in negotiating with landlords
- Consider temporary tax relief – real estate taxes, BPOL, sales tax-free zone (conduct an analysis to see what is enabled and what would be appropriate)
- Designate “Enterprise Zones” to encourage development or redevelopment in the immediate area, to include real estate and Business/Professional/Occupational Licenses (BPOL) tax abatement, no application fees, no tap fees, and other benefits as appropriate (conduct an analysis to see what is enabled and what would be appropriate)
- Assist businesses in affected area to secure lines of credit - options include the Albemarle County Economic Development Authority providing a Line of Credit that could then be used to distribute funds to business owners or providing a tool kit for businesses approaching their banks to secure a line of credit to help with cash flow during construction (toolkit could list willing banks and bankers to contact and could list SBA loan information)