

Potential 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 - **included in final recommendations**
- Provide business counseling and technical expertise on site before and during construction **included in final recommendations**
- 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 **included in final recommendations**

Wayfinding & Signage – all recommendations forwarded to VDOT staff and PDAP who are currently reviewing signage considerations

- 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 **included in final recommendations-**
- 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 - **included in final recommendations**
- 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 **included in final recommendations -**
- Marketing campaign focused on “Get to Know Midtown” – feature different businesses **included in final recommendations-**
- Develop a matching grant program that provides support for group advertising initiatives – significant need for assistance with television advertising - **included in final recommendations**

- Develop coupon books that can be used at targeted businesses – **suggested as partnership opportunity for Chamber of Commerce and/or other business organizations**
- 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. **suggested as partnership opportunity for Chamber of Commerce and/or other business organizations -**

Communications – all communications strategies either incorporated into proposed Construction Mitigation Program or already included in VDOT overall Route 29 Solutions Communications Plan

- 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 - **included in proposed Construction Mitigation Program**
- Conduct economic impact study – **options to be reviewed with the Board of Supervisors**
- Research what the vacancy rate is for Route 29 right now – what is the baseline? **options to be reviewed with the Board of Supervisors**
- Procurement – divert County expenditures to support impacted businesses - **options to be reviewed with the Board of Supervisors**
- County as a partner in negotiating with landlords **options to be reviewed with the Board of Supervisors -**

- Consider temporary tax relief – real estate taxes, BPOL, sales tax free zone – conduct a tax analysis to see what would be truly meaningful - options to be reviewed with the Board of Supervisors
- 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. - options to be reviewed with the Board of Supervisors
- Secure lines of credit for businesses in affected area - options are available including the County securing a Line of Credit that could then be used to distribute funds to business owners or businesses approaching their banks to secure a line of credit to help with cash flow the year of construction – toolkit could list willing banks and bankers to contact and could list SBA loan information - options to be reviewed with the Board of Supervisors