



Frequently Asked Questions on the Route 29 Solutions Improvements Projects

Background

What are the Route 29 Solutions improvement projects?

These projects include the Route 29/250 Interchange (“Best Buy” ramp), extensions of Berkmar Drive and Hillsdale Drive, improvements to the Rio Road and Hydraulic Road intersections, widening of 29 between Polo Grounds Road and Towncenter Drive, and adaptive traffic signal technology. The Route 29 Solutions improvement projects will increase capacity and efficiency along Route 29, while providing alternate routes on parallel roads to help reduce congestion on Route 29. Early projects are already under way now and larger projects will be starting over the course of the next several months.

How did the Route 29 Solutions improvements projects come about so quickly?

The projects that make up the Route 29 Solutions improvements projects (Route 29/250 Interchange; Widening of Route 29; Hillsdale Drive Extension; Berkmar Drive Extension; Rio Road Interchange; Adaptive Traffic Signal Technology) have been a continuing part of community discussions about the Route 29 corridor since 1988, and has been planned and reviewed through numerous studies by Albemarle County, the City of Charlottesville and the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission in its role as the Metropolitan Planning Organization over the past decade – 29H250 Intersections Study (2003, 2004), US 29 North Corridor Transportation Study Final Report (2008), UnJAM2035 Plan (2009), Places29 Master Plan (2011), and the 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan (2014). Each of these documents was created following an extensive public engagement process and adopted by their respective Boards. Because the Route 29 Solutions improvement projects have been part of community long-range plans, these projects are able to proceed once funding was approved. The Commonwealth Transportation Board approved funding for the Route 29 Solutions improvement projects on June 18, 2014, and the first projects are now underway.

Neighborhood Access & Impacts

What are VDOT and the County doing to mitigate construction impacts on area neighborhoods and residents?

The Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission is supporting three committees to ensure that VDOT, Albemarle County, and the City of Charlottesville staff are informed about the Route 29 Solutions projects and are actively working to identify potential issues and begin to mitigate them before, during, and after construction. Project engineers, emergency response and public safety, schools, facilities, economic development, and communications staff are represented on all committees. The three committees are Neighborhood Impact Mitigation, Communications, and Business Assistance.

Will access to my subdivision be impacted during construction?

Construction will be staged in order to maintain access to all subdivisions at all times.

What is being done to prevent cut-through traffic in residential neighborhoods?

During construction, wayfinding signage will be installed along the corridor that will direct through traffic to remain on Route 29. Phase I of the adaptive signal project, which is estimated to be completed by June 2015, will allow VDOT engineers to adjust signal timing in real-time to facilitate traffic flow along Route 29. VDOT is currently developing a model to identify the most likely areas for cut-through traffic

based on the temporary median cuts, signals, and lane reductions currently in the designs.

In addition, VDOT has collected traffic count data in the subdivisions along the corridor in order to establish a traffic volume baseline. VDOT and the County will monitor traffic volumes in these areas during construction. Where cut-through traffic occurs, a series of measures may be deployed to prevent safety issues. These include the use of speed trailers, increased speeding fines and enforcement measures, through-truck restrictions, and installation of temporary traffic calming measures, including speed cushions.

How will emergency responders (police, fire rescue) be impacted during construction?

The Emergency Communications Center (ECC), Albemarle County Police Department (ACPD) and Albemarle County Fire Rescue (ACFR) have been active in discussions with VDOT and County staff on construction impacts. Emergency response vehicles are equipped with preemption equipment that allows priority access for emergency vehicles at all of the intersections along Route 29. These will be maintained during construction and the temporary signal at Berkmar Drive will also have this technology. Patrolmen, emergency responders, and the emergency communications center staff will be regularly briefed on changes to traffic flow.

Albemarle County Fire Rescue is working closely with the Seminole Trail Volunteer Fire Department in evaluating several opportunities to maintain response times during the construction period. Should they become necessary, measure may include a temporary emergency vehicle travel lane along Berkmar Drive and establishing a temporary emergency response team on the eastern side of Route 29.

Rio Road-Route 29 Intersection

What is the purpose of constructing a grade-separated intersection at Rio Road?

The Rio Road grade separated intersection project is intended to move local and through traffic more efficiently and more safely through the Route 29/Rio Road intersection. The grade separated intersection will separate traffic traveling along Route 29 through the Rio Road intersection from local traffic accessing Rio Road and businesses in the vicinity of the intersection, through grade separation. Two lanes for through traffic will travel under the Rio Road intersection and two lanes for local traffic will travel at-grade through the Rio Road intersection, before the lanes rejoin at-grade near Berkmar Drive to the south of Rio Road and near Myers Drive to the north of Rio Road. Separating through traffic from local traffic at this location will allow more efficient operation of the

How will school buses be impacted during construction?

Albemarle County Public Schools Transportation Division is actively involved in discussions with VDOT to identify and mitigate disruption to school transportation.

During the construction of the Route 29/250 Interchange (also referred to as the "Best Buy Ramp"), Elk Hill School may experience 5 minute longer ride times from the start of construction in Spring 2015 through the end of the project, May 21, 2016.

During the Hillsdale North Extension construction, buses servicing the Branchlands neighborhood that transport students to Agnor Hurt, Burley, and Albemarle High School will be delayed up to 5 minutes from January 2016 to October 2017.

The restrictions on movement at the Rio Road interchange will occur between May 23 and September 2, 2016, which will have an estimated 2 weeks of overlap with the school calendar at the end of the 2015-2016 school year and at the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year. The projected impact on ride times is estimated to be no more than 5 minutes during those few days of overlap for the schools that have buses that travel through the Rio intersection (Agnor Hurt, Woodbrook, Burley, Jouett, Albemarle High School, and Ivy Creek School).

What is being done to control construction noise impacts?

VDOT will require the contractor to monitor noise levels at the Right of Way line in the overnight hours (9 pm to 6 am), with a limit of 80 db at the Right of Way, which is similar to the noise level generated by a garbage disposal.

intersection, enhancing Level of Service and safety for all vehicles.

Under standard transportation planning practice, intersections are evaluated for Level of Service, which measures the delay experienced by vehicles at an intersection on a scale from A to F. The Route 29/Rio Road intersection currently operates at a poor level of service, and traffic forecast modeling indicates that congested conditions at this intersection will grow over time if no improvements are made.

How will traffic be impacted during the construction of the Rio Road Grade Separated intersection?

Traffic impacts related to the construction of the Rio Road grade-separated intersection will be limited by the contract terms. VDOT has created Maintenance of Traffic requirements that the contractor must adhere to, including travel lane maintenance and construction schedules, or face steep financial consequences.

The Maintenance of Traffic outlines the following:

All existing right-in, right-out entrances will be maintained during all phases of construction and will remain open after construction is complete.

During the 103 day period between May 23, 2016 and September 2, 2016:

- Rio Road can be closed to East - West through traffic across Route 29.
- Rio Road can be closed to left turns from Rio Road onto Route 29, and from Route 29 onto Rio Road.
- Three northbound lanes and two southbound lanes will be maintained on Route 29 from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.
- Right turns from Route 29 to Rio Road and from Rio Road to Route 29 will be permitted.
- A temporary signalized crossover at existing Berkmar Drive and Route 29 will provide access to and from Route 29. This crossover can be used to detour around Rio Road for northbound and southbound traffic, and can be used to access the east side of Route 29 by southbound Berkmar Drive traffic.
- A temporary median break at Myers Drive will allow northbound traffic on Route 29 to make U-turns or left turns onto Myers Drive.
- A temporary median break on West Rio Road will allow traffic exiting businesses to turn left onto West Rio Road

At all other times during construction, the contractor is required to maintain:

- Four through lanes in each direction on Route 29 from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Construction

What projects are currently under construction?

Night work for the first phase of adaptive signal work is currently under way, which will allow real-time monitoring and adjustment of the signals during construction. This project is expected to be completed by June 2015. It is expected that the second project, the Route 29/Route Bypass 250 Interchange ("Best Buy Ramp") will begin construction in early March.

- Two through lanes in each direction on Rio Road from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.
- All roadway connections and operational movements from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Is the Rio Road grade separated intersection in effect an "expressway" or a first step towards an "expressway"?

No, the Rio Road grade separated intersection is simply an underpass that separates local traffic from through traffic. The length of the project that separates through traffic from local traffic is approximately 3,200 feet, a bit over 1/2 mile. The first Route 29 panel that met in the spring examined an express lane option, but did not recommend that concept.

Why is the Rio intersection prioritized ahead of the parallel roads? Wouldn't putting in the parallel roads first give commuters an alternative to Rt. 29 while construction is going on?

The parallel roads will offer alternatives to using Route 29. However, the Rio Road intersection is already operating at a low level of service and conditions would become worse if the parallel roads were constructed first. By completing the Rio project first, traffic passing through the intersection heading to or from Hillsdale Drive, Berkmar Drive, or the John Warner Parkway will be served by an improved grade-separated intersection at Rio Road that was designed to efficiently handle the volume of traffic using these parallel roads, for both local and through traffic. During construction of the Rio intersection, existing Berkmar Drive and Hillsdale Drive will continue to provide alternatives to using Route 29 both north and south of the Rio intersection.

Why wasn't the Hydraulic Intersection prioritized ahead of Rio? Isn't it the far more congested intersection?

The Hydraulic Intersection is more congested than the Rio Intersection. However, the Rio grade separated intersection project is an isolated construction project while Hydraulic is a much more complex project due to the proximity of the Route 29/250 Interchange ("Best Buy Ramp"). The scope of the Hydraulic Road intersection project preliminary engineering study will include the completed Route 29/250 Interchange ("Best Buy Ramp") and also a connection to Route 250 from Hillsdale South, as recommended by the City of Charlottesville and the Route 29 Project Delivery Advisory Panel.

Will Route 29 be closed during construction?

No! The contractor is required to maintain traffic flow on Route 29 in both directions throughout the construction of the entire Route 29 Solutions package. The greatest disruption will occur between May 23, 2016 and September 2, 2016, as part of the construction of the Rio Road grade separated intersection. During this period, three northbound lanes and two southbound lanes will be maintained at all times between 6 am and 9 pm. During overnight hours,

additional lane closures will be permitted, but Route 29 will remain open in both directions. During that same period, left-hand turns and through traffic on Rio Road will be restricted at the Route 29 intersection. To learn more about how traffic will flow during that period, visit route29solutions.org.

What is the timeline for construction of the entire Route 29 Solutions package?

The first project to begin construction, Phase I of the Adaptive Traffic Signal Technology project, broke ground on October 6, 2014. The final construction project will be Phase II of the Adaptive Traffic Signal Technology project and will proceed when the construction projects along Route 29 (Route 29/250 Interchange, Rio Road grade-separated intersection, Berkmar Drive Extension, Route 29 Widening) are complete in October 2017. This project is expected to be completed during Winter 2017.

Will Route 29 from the 250 Bypass northward be disrupted all at the same time?

No, construction will be staggered to minimize impacts on Route 29 travel. The Route 29/250 Bypass Interchange ("Best

Buy Ramp") will be complete by May 21, 2016, before work commences within the Rio Road/Route 29 intersection. The Rio Road grade separation will be finished on or before Sept. 2, 2016. Road construction on Route 29 Widening will be done behind barriers and two lanes of traffic will be maintained in each direction between 6 a.m. and 9 p.m. Both Route 29 Widening and Berkmar Extended will be completed on or before Oct. 30, 2017. Meanwhile, the first phase of the adaptive signal project will wrap up in June 2015 and will be ready to be deployed to help manage traffic flow during heavy construction periods.

What stormwater management measures will be in place during construction?

During construction, the contractor will implement erosion and sediment controls in order to manage stormwater from the construction site.

What is being done to control construction noise impacts?

VDOT will require the contractor to monitor noise levels at the Right of Way line in the overnight hours (9 pm to 6 am), with a limit of 80 db at the Right of Way, which is similar to the noise level generated by a garbage disposal.

Business Access & Assistance

Will access to businesses along Route 29 be eliminated during and after construction?

All existing right-in, right-out entrances will be maintained during all phases of construction and will remain open after construction is complete. During the 103-day period of construction at Rio Road where cross movements are restricted, some drivers may have to make U-turns or use parallel roads to access some businesses with entrances between Woodbrook Drive and Twentyninth Place. During the 103-day restriction at Rio Road, a temporary median break and traffic signal will be installed at Berkmar Drive to allow traffic on Berkmar Drive to turn left onto Route 29 heading north.

The signalized intersections of Route 29 at the northernmost driveway to Fashion Square Mall (across from Virginia National Bank and Brown's Body Shop) and at Albemarle Square (across from the Goodwill Retail Store) will be removed as part of this project. Local traffic access to these driveways will be maintained via right-in, right-out movements.

What is being done to assist businesses along the corridor during the construction period?

A variety of methods are being assessed to develop a comprehensive assistance program for businesses affected by

transportation construction projects. Those strategies range from enhanced direction signage to business counseling and cooperative marketing. VDOT, Albemarle County, and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) are working together to develop meaningful appropriate assistance to businesses during construction.

How will I access Albemarle Square during construction?

All existing right-in, right-out entrances will be maintained during all phases of construction and will remain open after construction is complete. During the 103 day period between May 23, 2016 and September 2, 2016, access to Albemarle Square will be available to southbound traffic on Route 29 via U-turn at the temporary signal at Berkmar Drive; to northbound traffic on Route 29 at all existing access points to Albemarle Square Drive, and from Rio Road East; and to westbound traffic on Rio Road East at Albemarle Square Drive.

How will I access Fashion Square Mall during construction?

All existing right-in, right-out entrances will be maintained during all phases of construction and will remain open after construction is complete. During the 103 day period between May 23, 2016 and September 2, 2016, access to Fashion Square Mall will be available to southbound traffic on Route 29 at 29th Place; to northbound traffic on Route 29 at 29th Place, Fashion Square Drive, and from Rio Road East; and to westbound traffic on Rio Road East at Mall Drive. All existing right-in, right-out entrances will be maintained during all

phases of construction before May 23, between May 23 and September 2, and after September 2, and will remain open

after construction is complete.

Design

What's being done to make the Route 29 projects attractive and complement the Charlottesville surroundings?

Aesthetic treatments are planned for the Route 29 projects. Charlottesville and Albemarle County worked together to agree on a sound wall treatment and color at the Route 29/250 Bypass Interchange ("Best Buy Ramp") that's similar to the treatments for the McIntire Interchange in the City of Charlottesville. A number of aesthetic treatments are planned for the Rio Road/Route 29 intersection. They include: patterned wall, bridge, and color treatments similar to John Warner Parkway and McIntire Interchange that's visible from all sides; open face barrier railing; vertical columns at specified intervals, and landscaping. The contractor will provide mock-ups for the PDAP to review before construction. Landscaping and bridge treatments are also included in the Route 29 Widening and Berkmar Extended projects.

What stormwater management measures will be in place after construction?

All VDOT projects are designed to be in compliance with all federal and state regulations for stormwater management.

How does the community receive information and provide input during the design-build process?

Public input processes for design-build projects are identical to other project delivery methods. For the Route 29 Solutions package, the selected contractor will be required to submit plans at three different stages of development for each of the three design-build projects - the Rio Road grade-separated intersection, Berkmar Extended and Route 29 widening. Those plans will be reviewed by VDOT's technical team, and will be available for review by the Project Development Advisory Panel (PDAP). PDAP meets every two weeks and interested members of the public may attend the meetings in-person or stream video of the meetings online. All PDAP meetings and material will continue to be made available to the public on the project website at route29solutions.org.

Contacts

If I have questions about the Route 29 Solutions improvement projects, who do I contact?

For questions about the specific projects, project designs, and the construction process, please contact Joel DeNunzio, VDOT's resident administrator in Charlottesville by phone at 434-422-9373 or by email at Joel.DeNunzio@VDOT.Virginia.gov.

Where can I learn more about the Route 29 Solutions improvement projects?

Please visit <http://www.route29solutions.org/> for the latest project information.

Who can I contact about arranging for someone to speak to my neighborhood at an upcoming meeting or event about the Route 29 Solutions projects?

Please contact Emily Kilroy, Albemarle County's community engagement specialist by phone at 434-296-5841 x 3422 or by email at EKilroy@Albemarle.org to arrange for VDOT and County staff to speak to your neighborhood.