



## Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization

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January 28, 2015

Secretary Aubrey Layne  
Patrick Henry Building, 3rd Floor  
1111 East Broad Street  
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Secretary Layne:

The Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO Policy Board greatly appreciates the support that you and Governor McAuliffe have demonstrated to improving the Commonwealth's local and regional transportation network and fully supports your commitment to funding and completing achievable transportation projects in a timely manner.

The planned Route 29 Solutions project in Albemarle County and the City of Charlottesville is a great example of this commitment. A project considered and reconsidered for decades is now being realized. Population growth estimates by the UVA Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service in 2012 project 34% growth in Albemarle County between 2020 and 2040 and projected growth of 16% in Greene County for the same time period. Population estimates on January 27 show that Albemarle County is just below the 20-year projection with a 4.8% increase between 2010 and 2014 but Greene County is exceeding its 20-year projections. The City of Charlottesville alone has experienced a 9.9% growth in population between 2010 and 2014, or 2.5% yearly average.

A state budget amendment that could significantly impede the planned Route 29 Solutions infrastructure investment in Albemarle County has been introduced in the General Assembly by Delegate Rob Bell. This language amendment requires that any major, proposed improvements on the primary system in the VDOT Culpeper District be delayed until the HB2 prioritization process approved in 2014 can be implemented and applied to those projects.

Projects in the Route 29 Solutions Package have been thoroughly vetted over 25 years with a number of public processes including the 29H250 Intersections Studies, the Places29 Master Plan, and the US 29 North Corridor Transportation Study Final Report. The projects have also been the subject of public hearings held by the County Board of Supervisors, the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and the Virginia Department of Transportation, including the Commonwealth Transportation Board. The Solutions Package has been endorsed by the Charlottesville City Council, the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors, the MPO and the Commonwealth Transportation Board.

The Route 29 Solutions project on which this budget amendment focuses, the Rio Road Grade-Separated Intersection, has been reviewed and planned many times since 1988 in conjunction with the Route 29 Bypass Study. The major recommendations of this study include grade separations at the major intersections of the 29 corridor. This study provided the basis for subsequent studies at US-29 and Hydraulic Road. (PDC/CA-MPO, 2013) A Timeline of the Route 29 Solutions Package is attached to this letter.

The MPO Policy Board remains committed to its support of the Route 29 Solutions projects and the stated desire for expeditious construction, and does not support legislation or budget provisions that jeopardize progress on any of the Route 29 Solutions Package components or that may cause the loss of any funding for infrastructure included in the package.

Additionally, HB2 as passed will help to level the field for rural and urban communities competing for future state transportation funds. The CTB and VDOT have worked feverishly to implement this program in a timely and equitable manner. Delegate Bell's budget amendment would single out one area, the Culpeper District, to fall under the new regulations before the rest of the Commonwealth, and just as important, attempts to overturn the transportation planning process and CTB authority already in place. There are at least five other major projects in the Culpeper District that would be jeopardized by the proposed amendment. This budget amendment would have negative consequences, not just for the C-A MPO but for the entire Culpeper District and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Thank you for your consideration in working to defeat this budget amendment. We appreciate your continued advocacy for effective and efficient transportation improvements and operations and your continued support for the Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Sincerely,

Kristin Szakos  
Chair  
Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO

cc: The Honorable Terry McAuliffe, Governor  
Alison DeTuncq, CTB Representative, Culpeper District  
Delegate Robert B. Bell  
Delegate C. Matthew Fariss  
Delegate R. Steven Landes  
Delegate Edward T. Scott  
Delegate David J. Toscano  
Senator R. Creigh Deeds  
Senator Emmett W. Hanger, Jr.  
Senator Bryce E. Reeves

## Timeline of Route 29 Solutions Package

### 1988 – Route 29 Bypass Study

VDOT conducted a Route 29 Bypass Study. The major recommendations of this study include a grade separation at the major intersections of the 29 corridor. This study provided the basis for subsequent studies at US-29 and Hydraulic. (PDC/CA-MPO, 2013)

### 1988 – Piedmont Environmental Council

Piedmont Environmental Council funded a study, to conduct a review of transportation alternatives with special attention to an expressway on US-29 North. The resulting design included a continuous flyover built above the US-29 corridor, beginning just south of Hydraulic Road and extending to the US 250 Bypass. Business owners felt this proposal would not provide better access to their properties and had concerns that the fly-over would diminish visibility to their businesses. (PDC/CA-MPO, 2013)

### 1990 – Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) Resolution

The CTB adopted a resolution calling for a three-phase sequence of improvements to the US-29 corridor, based on recommendations from VDOT. These sequences included widening of US-29 and grade-separated intersections, such as Rio Road. The third phase included the Western Bypass, contingent on traffic and economic conditions. (PDC/CA-MPO, 2013)

### 1990s – County Resolutions

County resolutions on the grade separated interchanges from the early 1990s.

### 1992 – Three-Party Agreement

Albemarle, Charlottesville, and the University of Virginia signed a [three-party agreement](#) in 1992 that recommended the [Meadow Creek Parkway](#) be built before the interchanges at Rio and Hydraulic Roads.

### 1994 – Intersection Proposal

VDOT proposed design alternatives for the intersections of Hydraulic Road, Greenbrier Drive, and Rio Road along the US-29 corridor. The proposal was designed with nearly the sole focus on highway engineering, assessing grade-separated intersections. At the US-29/Hydraulic intersection, the study recommended a tight urban diamond interchange, which City Council rejected, citing concerns about impact on businesses, the cost and aesthetics. (PDC/CA-MPO, 2013)

### 1995 – City Council Resolution

In January 1995, City Council passed a resolution requesting that the Hydraulic interchange project no longer be under consideration. This resolution is a result of opposition from the business community. The following month, the CTB voted to end planning for the interchanges and accelerated purchase of land for the bypass.

### 1998 – Route 29 Pedestrian Study

VDOT completed a Route 29 Pedestrian Study, to identify opportunities and develop community-driven recommendations for further improving the pedestrian environment on US-29. The study area included the segment of the 29 corridor extending from Barracks Road to Airport Road. (PDC/CA-MPO, 2013)

### 2001 – Kulash Proposal

The Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) funded a study (known as the Kulash Proposal). The main design recommendation was a grade-separated intersection at US-29/Hydraulic Road, with US-29 going under Hydraulic. While the end result would have provided better access to businesses and created better through traffic, the business community had concerns about the impacts during construction. (PDC/CA-MPO, 2013)

### 2003 – 29H250, Phase I

VDOT initiated this study, recognizing that there were several previous efforts that looked at the US-29 corridor. This study includes several recommendations for the US-29/250 area, to improve the traffic conditions on that portion of the corridor. This study assumed that, whether or not the Western Bypass was constructed, improvements to existing US-29 will be needed. Consequently, traffic modeling in this study included runs both with and without the Western Bypass.

Project recommendations included widening of US-29 and grade-separated intersections at various locations.

Click [here](#) for the Phase I Report

## **2004 – 29H250, Phase II**

This project was a continuation of the 29H250 Intersections Study, Phase I. In this subsequent report, the study area expanded northward to include the Greenbrier/US-29 intersection and westward to the Barracks Road and US-250 Bypass interchange. This study resulted in recommendations for a widening of US-29, improvements to the Best Buy ramp and a parallel road network that would take pressure off of US-29.

Click [here](#) for the Phase II Report

## **2004 – UnJAM 2025**

The Thomas Jefferson PDC developed a united transportation plan, which included the MPO and rural areas. This document served as the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), which is required for MPO areas, but also helped to coordinate transportation with the surrounding rural communities. In the Constrained Project List, the plan included 5 projects that addressed the US-29 corridor:

- Improvements to US 29, between Rivanna and Airport Road (I-15)
- US29/250 Improvements (I-16)
- Berkmar Drive extended (N-1)
- Hillsdale Drive Extension (N-2)
- Route 29 Corridor Study (ST-2)

Click [here](#) for the UnJAM 2025 Plan

## **2007 – The Access Management Report for US 29**

The Access Management Report is part of the US 29 North Corridor Transportation Study, which is included in the Places29 Mast Plan. The Access Management Report states that “US 29 should be categorized as an Expressway, a high-capacity, multilane thoroughfare designed to carry through traffic at higher speeds. To enhance safety on an Expressway, as well as to maintain reasonable speeds, access should be limited to signalized intersections or controlled access interchanges.”

Click [here](#) for the Access Management Report

### *Media Story*

February 28, 2007: Places29 master plan framework goes public \*

<http://www.cvilletomorrow.org/news/article/7576-places29/>

May 3, 2007: Supervisors react to concerns about Places29

<http://www.cvilletomorrow.org/news/article/7542-places29/>

June 27, 2007: NCBC members hear more on grade-separated intersections on U.S. 29

<http://www.cvilletomorrow.org/news/article/7501-ncbc-members-he/>

## **2008 – US-29 North Corridor Transportation Study**

The North Corridor Study is also part of Places29. This study is intended to guide transportation along US-29 to a context-sensitive, multimodal network. This study focuses on the link between transportation and land use, but includes specific transportation improvements. Those recommendations include:

- Construction of grade-separated interchanges
- Extension of Berkmar Drive North,
- A parallel road network.

Click [here](#) for the Corridor Transportation Study

## **2008 – Other Notable Events**

April 25, 2008: Danville and Lynchburg Chamber presidents advocate for 29 bypass

[http://www.cvilletomorrow.org/news/article/7246-ncbc\\_us29/](http://www.cvilletomorrow.org/news/article/7246-ncbc_us29/)

December 30, 2008: MPO considers US 29 study; prioritizes Rio interchange over Hydraulic interchange

[http://www.cvilletomorrow.org/news/article/7000-mpo\\_december\\_2008/](http://www.cvilletomorrow.org/news/article/7000-mpo_december_2008/)

## **2009 – Route 29 Corridor Study**

The Route 29 Corridor Study takes a comprehensive look at the transportation needs for the entire Route 29 Corridor as it travels through Virginia, from the North Carolina state line to Interstate 66 in Prince William County. For the Charlottesville-Albemarle area, the plan recommends grade-separated interchanges at the intersections with

Hydraulic and Rio Roads. The plan also recommends construction of Berkmar Drive and a parallel road network, a widening of US-29 and improvements to the Best Buy ramp.

Click [here](#) for the Route 29 Corridor Study

### **2009 – UnJAM 2035**

The TJPDC updated the UnJAM 2025 plan, with a 5-year update. In the update, there continued to be several projects for the US-29 corridor. Many projects carried over from the UnJAM 2025 Plan or came from the Places29 effort. Projects on US-29 included:

- Widening of US 29 from Rivanna to airport (I-5)
- Intersection improvements at the Rio Road intersection, with a grade-separated interchange (I-6)
- Best Buy ramp improvements (I-10)
- Berkmar Drive extended (N-1)
- Hillsdale Drive extended (N-2)

Click [here](#) for the UnJam 2035 Plan

### **2009 – Other Notable Events**

April 29, 2009: City Planning Commission asks Council to prioritize Hydraulic Road grade-separation over Rio Road

[http://www.cvilletomorrow.org/news/article/6896-commissions\\_discuss\\_unjam/](http://www.cvilletomorrow.org/news/article/6896-commissions_discuss_unjam/)

May 20, 2009: City Council endorses UNJAM 2035; Hydraulic grade-separation jettisoned off 20-year plan

[http://www.cvilletomorrow.org/news/article/6857-hydraulic\\_unjam/](http://www.cvilletomorrow.org/news/article/6857-hydraulic_unjam/)

June 10, 2009: County responds to business community's concerns and 'false statements' about the future of US 29

[http://www.cvilletomorrow.org/news/article/6831-us29\\_concerns/](http://www.cvilletomorrow.org/news/article/6831-us29_concerns/)

July 15, 2009: Groups say Places29 Master Plan is compatible with VDOT corridor study, federal funding priorities

[http://www.cvilletomorrow.org/news/article/6791-pec\\_places29/](http://www.cvilletomorrow.org/news/article/6791-pec_places29/)

### **2010 – Other Notable Events**

May 7, 2010: Business leaders seek removal of grade-separated interchanges from Places29

<http://www.cvilletomorrow.org/news/article/6534-places29/>

### **2011 – Places29: A Master Plan for the Northern Development Areas**

The County developed the Places29 Mast Plan, to establish land use and transportation goals for the US-29 corridor, north of Charlottesville. This plan is a guiding document for the County and fundamental to the Comprehensive Plan. The Places29 vision includes transportation improvements, including:

- Intersection improvements to Hydraulic Road/US-29, "subject to City/County input and public hearing processes,"
- Intersection Improvements to Rio Road/US-29, with design details worked out through a small area plan of the intersection,
- Construction of Berkmar Drive North,
- Development of a parallel road network.

Click [here](#) for the Places29 Mast Plan

### **2012 – FY12-18 Transportation Improvement Program**

The FY12-18 TIP includes:

- A widening of US-29 (from Polo Grounds Road to Airport Road),
- Improvements to the Best Buy Ramp,
- A grade-separated interchange at US-29/Hydraulic Road, and
- Construction of Berkmar Drive Extended.

### **2014 (May) – Albemarle Supervisors approve grade-separated interchange at Rio Road**

In May of 2014, the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors voted to support the Route 29 Solutions package, including the Rio Road interchange.

Click [here](#) for the media report

### **2014 (May) – Long Range Transportation Plan**

The TJPDC/CA-MPO updated the LRTP (formally known as UnJAM), to meet the 5-year update requirement. The 2040 plan continued to include the US-29 projects, found in UnJAM 2035. These projects include.

Click [here](#) for the LRTP 2040 Plan

### **2014 (June) – CTB Approval of Route 29 Package**

The CTB approved the Route 29 Solutions Package at its June meeting.

### **2014 – FY15 Six Year Improvement Program**

In 2014, VDOT added the two US-29 projects to the Six Year Improvement Program (SYIP):

- Berkmar Drive Extension,
- Rio Road grade-separated interchange.