



Town of Ashland

Center of the Universe

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August 30, 2017

Ashland Citizens, Friends, Neighbors and Community Members,

Much has happened in the last forty days since I last communicated to you about the DC2RVA High Speed Rail project. This letter will provide a brief update, as well as helpful advice on how you can participate in the process and help our Town.

JAMES R.
FOLEY,
MAYOR

STEVEN P.
TRIVETT
VICE MAYOR

GEORGE F.
SPAGNA, JR.
COUNCIL MEMBER

KATHLEEN K.
ABBOTT
COUNCIL MEMBER

JOHN H.
HODGES
COUNCIL MEMBER

JOSHUA S.
FARRAR
TOWN MANAGER

ANDREA E.
ERARD
TOWN ATTORNEY

JOSEPH A.
COLLINS
CLERK OF COUNCIL

First, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (VADRPT) staff presented the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) with a new alternative which is being called the 'Three Track Trench'. VADRPT developed this alternative in response to the concerns they heard from the greater Ashland community. These concerns include the Town's insistence that a third set of tracks not be added at-grade through Town, traffic safety issues associated with any option, long term planning considerations with regard to the 3-2-3 option, and untenable costs associated with some of the tunnel and bypass alternatives. VADRPT staff presented this option to individual CAC members on August 25 and August 28 before the public CAC meeting on August 28. The option would have horrible impacts to the Town during an extended construction period, but the end result may be worth taking the time for further consideration. The Town would ultimately have a green way with some air flow openings from the trench where the tracks now exist and all at-grade road crossings would no longer be affected by the trains. In other words, there will be no intersection of rail and road, or pedestrians.

With such late notice from VADRPT on this alternative Ashland CAC members have requested that DRPT come to Town and present the option to our citizens, businesses, and College partners. We would like to personally invite you as a resident, business, or property owner along the tracks to this very important meeting. The Ashland CAC members need your input on this alternative as we move into the final stages of the alternative selection process (more on this later).

The Town Council work-session on the Three Track Trench option will be held on Wednesday, September 6, 2017, at 6:00 p.m. in Birdsong Hall at Randolph-Macon College. We strongly encourage your attendance as an individual or entity directly affected by this option.

In addition to the presentation of this new option, the CAC had its regularly scheduled August meeting on Monday the 28th. At this meeting, VADRPT asked CAC members to go through an exercise to select the 'least objectionable' alternative in each of four groupings. The groupings consisted of Surface through Town, Tunnel, East Bypass and West Bypass alternatives. Town CAC members,

supported by the College, chose the '3-2-3' option as the least objectionable Surface through Town alternative and the 'Three Track Trench' as the least objectionable Tunnel alternative. County representatives removed a few of the East Bypass alternatives, but were unable to recommend taking any of the West alternatives off the table. We remain optimistic that the CAC will be able to select one 'least objectionable' alternative in both the east and the west. VADRPT has scheduled another CAC meeting on Monday, September 11, 2017, and the location is to be determined. It is at this meeting the CAC will have the very difficult task of providing some type of recommendation to the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) on the preferred alternative from the remaining four routes (once the east and west options are chosen).

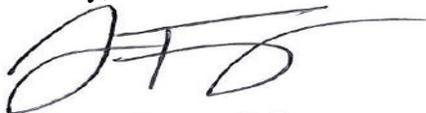
Finally, there is an additional critical process moving along simultaneously with the CAC process. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is scheduled to officially release on Friday, September 8, 2017. The release of the draft will begin the long awaited 60 day comment period. It will be vital that we send a strategically coordinated message as part of this comment period. Town staff and representatives are working to determine the types and details of comments that will carry the most weight in this period. We will heavily rely on you to provide the quantity of comments necessary to influence decision-makers. As soon as we have a clear message that will be the most beneficial to the Town; we will provide guidelines on how best to submit your comments in the near future.

Thank you for staying engaged and involved in this critical process, and thanks again for all you do to make Ashland, Ashland. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me at Jfoley@ashlandva.gov, Town Manager Joshua Farrar at Jfarrar@ashlandva.gov, or the Citizen Representative on the CAC Kristin Reihl at kjamkjam@comcast.net. In addition to the CAC representatives you can always reach out to any of your Town Councilmembers as well. Vice Mayor Steve Trivett (Strivett@ashlandva.gov), Dr. George Spagna (Gspagna@ashlandva.gov), Kathy Abbott (Kabbott@ashlandva.gov), and John Hodges (Jhodges@ashlandva.gov).

Reminder

1. Three Track Trench Work-session – Wednesday, September 6, 2017, at 6 p.m.
2. Special CAC Meeting to choose preferred alternatives – Monday, September 11, 2017, at 6 p.m.

Sincerely,



James R. Foley
Mayor
Town of Ashland, VA
The Center of the Universe