



March 22, 2006

To: Rockingham County Board of Supervisors
Re: VDOT widening proposal for I-81

VDOT has released its draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) for widening I-81. The Harrisonburg/Rockingham area is unique in that it is one of only two locations in the entire 325-mile corridor where VDOT has proposed a bypass for the widening project. On page 6-8 the DEIS states, "The geographic extent of the general location of a potential corridor on new location in the Harrisonburg section of I-81 extends approximately two miles east and west of I-81 from approximately Milepost 243 to approximately Milepost 251." A bypass would have a minimum of four new lanes (2 in each direction), at least doubling the size of I-81 in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County. I've attached a graphic showing possible footprint widths for the widening proposal in areas outside of the bypass

While final design and costs have not been determined, VDOT's DEIS shows the widening project is estimated to cost up to \$16 billion. The proposal is to pay for this project with **tolls**. While currently only trucks can be tolled in Virginia, Fred Altizer, VDOT I-81 project manager, has said "It's going to be very hard to balance the funding on the backs of trucks" in order to pay for this project. **The tolls studies in VDOT's DEIS show a range from \$26 to \$45.50 for a car to travel the entire Virginia segment of I-81 and \$65 to \$113.75 for tractor-trailers. Every option listed in the DEIS requires tolls.** The tolling rates can be found on page 3-3 of the DEIS.

I also wanted to update you on the current list of governments and organizations that have signed on to Reasonable Solutions. As you may recall, Reasonable Solutions calls for a common sense, affordable approach to the safety and congestion concerns on I-81 and is a combination of ideas gleaned from discussions with local legislators. Reasonable Solutions has been endorsed by Rockingham County, Augusta County, Shenandoah County, Albemarle County, Clarke County, Roanoke City Council, Town of Front Royal, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Shenandoah Valley Travel Association, Civil War Preservation Trust, Virginia Hospitality and Travel Association, Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation, Valley Conservation Council, Community Alliance for Preservation and others. In the most recent General Assembly session Delegates Todd Gilbert, Matt Lohr, Steve Landes, and Chris Saxman patroned legislation very similar to Reasonable Solutions.

VDOT will be holding a series of public meetings on the DEIS. The one most convenient for Rockingham citizens will be held April 19, 2006, at Turner Ashby High School from 5 to 8 PM. Additional information about the public hearings as well as the entire DEIS can be found at www.i-81.org. More information can be found on these websites as well: www.shenandoahvalleynetwork.org and www.preserverockingham.org.

If you d'like to discuss this issue with me further I can be reached at ksandum1@verizon.net or 433-4718.

Sincerely,

Kim Sandum, President
Community Alliance for Preservation