

December 23, 2016

Dear Harrisonburg-Rockingham Metropolitan Planning Organization:

I am writing to comment on your Draft Constrained Long Term Plan and Draft Vision Projects.

I am very disappointed to see that these proposals still contain segments of the Loop Road, specifically the widening of Switchboard Road in the Constrained Long Term Plan and the Northwest and Northeast Connectors in the Vision plan. These are very costly projects—over \$50 million for each connector and \$2.5 million for widening switchboard. These projects are completely unnecessary and it is hard for me to believe that the Commonwealth of Virginia, or indeed VDOT, does not have a better use for these funds. Please remove these projects from your plans.

The Loop Road project has been proposed for years. It has consistently and vigorously been opposed by those who live in the area that would be affected by it. It is completely unnecessary. Traffic that would use the Northwest Connector now uses highways 42 or 11 and Mount Clinton Pike or 33. It takes only minutes longer to get from exit 251 to highway 33 using existing roadways than would be true using the Connector. Moreover, there is simply not that much traffic involved. I live on Lincolnshire Drive. At peak traffic times I may have to wait 2 or 3 minutes to turn onto Mount Clinton Pike. At most times of day the wait is seconds.

Widening Switchboard is also completely unnecessary. I drive Switchboard often and have never had to slow down because of traffic. There used to be some safety issues because of the turns and hills on Switchboard. Painting a white line on Switchboard has solved these problems.

Widening Switchboard and adding a Northwest Connector would destroy valuable farmland and open up west Rockingham County to development. West Rockingham has some of the most valuable and productive farmland in the Commonwealth. It includes many Old Order Mennonite farms which contribute significantly to the local economy and will not be served by, indeed will be hemmed in by, limited access four-lane roads. This area is not slated for development in the Rockingham County comprehensive plan and does not need increased highway access. Even if these roads could be built for free, they would do more harm than good.

If the HRMPO has extra money it needs to spend, what is most needed in this area is a widening of Mount Clinton Pike between Park Road in the City and Lincolnshire Drive to add bicycle and pedestrian paths. I frequently encounter people walking between town and Gemeinschaft or bicyclists heading out of Harrisonburg into the County. The road is very narrow with deep ditches on either side. Cars come in from the County at high speed and speed up leaving the City. It is a miracle that no one has been killed yet walking or riding over the hill.

Please spend our taxpayer money on projects that are needed, not on boondoggles that will cause, not solve, problems,

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