

VI. TRANSPORTATION

A. INTRODUCTION

Transportation system planning for Southampton County is a joint effort between the State and County. During the development of this plan, input from County citizens and officials concerning transportation issues was substantial. Existing, formally adopted plans notwithstanding, many specific concerns about traffic hazards or system deficiencies have been noted and are described in the sections which follow.

The main elements of the transportation system -- roads and highways -- should be coordinated, located, and designed to carry the bulk of the County traffic so that other roads can be designed to serve local traffic. The major thoroughfare system connects all of the planned development areas and forms the transportation framework which supports the land use development pattern. Rail, air, and water transportation facilities also form part of the transportation system.

Since the main responsibility for maintenance and construction of roads and highways lies with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), it is not necessary that the transportation plan for a rural county be particularly detailed. Details of design and location depend on traffic volumes, topography, land use, and other factors which will be examined in specific studies by or for the Department. A summary analysis of the transportation system is a necessary and useful element of the Comprehensive Plan nevertheless. It will assist the County in its discussions with the Department relative to location of facilities and priorities of construction.

B. EXISTING HIGHWAY SYSTEM

The existing highway system includes two primary arterial routes (U.S. 58 and U.S. 460), one U.S. primary route (Route 258) south of Franklin, one State primary route (Route 35) north-south through Courtland in the central part of the County, and a system of secondary roads serving the remainder of the County. Certain secondary roads, such as State Route (SR) 671, SR 616, and SR 641, serve practically the same purposes as primary routes. State Route 186 serves as a major thoroughfare for the Boykin/Branchville area.

U.S. 58 and U.S. 460 connect the Franklin/Southampton County area with the greater Hampton Roads region to the east and Interstate 95 to the west. U.S. 258 connects the area with U.S. 17 to the north and the North Carolina line to the south. State Route 35 is a scenic road connecting U. S. 58 with I-95 south of Petersburg.

There are about 95 miles of primary roads in the County and about 670 miles of secondary roads. All of the primary roads are hard surfaced. About 573 miles of secondary roadways (85.5%) are hard surfaced, while about 97 miles of secondary roadways (14.5%) are all-weather surfaced.

Traffic volumes have increased significantly on most elements of the County thoroughfare system. Greatest increases have occurred on U.S. 58 between Courtland and Franklin and on SR 671 between SR 687 and SR 688. The most notable decreases have been along SR 641 between Hunterdale and Sedley and Route 35 between Sebrell and Courtland. EXHIBIT VI-A compares data from 1992 to 1997.

EXHIBIT VI-A SOUTHAMPTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC – 1992 TO 1997					
Route	From	To	ADT 1992	ADT 1997	% Change '92-'97
U.S. 58	Rt. 58 Bus.W.of Franklin	Rt. 58 Bus.E.of Courtland	15,000	18,000	+17%
	Rt. 58 Bus.W.of Courtland	Emporia City Limits	7,700	13,000	+41%
U.S. 460	Zuni	Ivor	9,700	9,300	-4%
U. S. 258	SR 189	State Line	4,400	5,200	+15%
VA 35	U.S. 58	SR 671	3,700	3,700	0%
	SR 616	SR 653	1,700	1,800	+6%
SR 671	SR 688	SR 687	4,629	4,700	+2%
	SR 680	SR 674	3,428	3,500	+2%
	SR 673	SR 665	2,802	2,700	-4%
SR 641	SR 649	SR 643	2,952	2,800*	-4%
	SR 646	SR 632	1,297	2,500	+48%
SR 616	SR 633	SR 641	1,076	940	-13%
SR 620	Ivor Corp Limits	SR 617	921	1,300	+29%

* ADT for 1997 counted SR 641 from SR 646 to SR 635.

Source: 1997 Virginia Department of Transportation AADT Traffic
Volume Estimates on Interstate, Arterial and Primary Routes.

C. RECENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

The most notable improvements in the County transportation system have been associated with the major thoroughfares, particularly U.S. 58. The widening of U.S. 58 to four lanes across the entire County became a reality in November 1993 with the completion of the four lane Courtland and Franklin bypasses. Continuing statewide improvements to U.S. 58 will also enhance its value to Southampton County's economic development program.

The removal of the bridge and straightening of a curve along Route 35 (at Sebrell where it once crossed the now abandoned Virginia Railroad) in 1990 has improved safety significantly in this area. Other bridges are continuously inspected and repaired as necessary. The Monroe Bridge, which carries Route 684 over the Nottoway River, has been replaced.

In 1990, the County established new signage control and increased setback requirements along U.S. and Virginia Primary highways in its zoning ordinance. This should greatly assist in preserving the attractive appearance of all County roads and highways.

The County has named its roads and has installed identification signage. The road-naming project, a prerequisite to Enhanced 9-1-1 (emergency telephone reporting system) service, greatly assisted in recognizing and identifying all County roads. The County, with assistance from the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission, prepared and published the first county "road name" map in 1991.

The U.S. 58 - Route 35 interchange overpass has been completed. This overpass eliminates the high speed intersection formerly located just east of the Southampton Middle/High School complex and provides a safer passage for the many students and citizens who travel this route.

D. SIX-YEAR IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

As in previous years, highway improvements in the County will continue to be the responsibility of the State. Highway improvement priorities are continually being reviewed, as the Southampton County Secondary System Six-Year Plan is updated on an annual basis. The Six-Year Plan should be referred to as the official local highway improvement and maintenance plan. As annual updates are adopted by the County, they will be available for public inspection in the Southampton County Planning Department office.

E. TRANSPORTATION RELATED ISSUES AND CONCERNS

During the development of this Comprehensive Plan Update, several transportation-related issues and concerns were voiced by those attending public meetings and by elected and appointed officials and staff members. Some themes, such as strip development along roads, are land use related but have a significant impact on the transportation system as well since increases in the number of ingress/egress points along roads affects traffic flow.

In the North County Planning Area public forum held in Ivor, traffic hazards or system deficiencies were identified by residents concerning:

- heavy truck traffic along SR 616 and SR 620;
- confusion related to the name of Proctor's Bridge Road (SR 618) at its junction with Old Blackwater Road;
- the need for speed warning signs at schools;
- the need for sidewalks in towns;
- the need for better ditch cleaning and maintenance; and,
- the crowding of development too close to U.S. 460.

In the East County Planning Area public forum held in Courtland, traffic hazards or system deficiencies were identified by residents concerning:

- the need for better drainage along secondary roads generally;
- SR 684's high incidence of accidents;
- congestion along U.S. 460;
- maintenance efforts by VDOT generally; and,
- the need for secondary roads built to accommodate heavy equipment.

In the West County Planning Area public forum held in Capron, traffic hazards or system deficiencies were identified by residents concerning:

- potholes on SR 655; and,
- potholes and patches on U.S. 58.

In the South County Planning Area public forum held in Boykins, traffic hazards or system deficiencies were identified by residents concerning ditches along SR 186 (Fullers Mill Road).

The County's zoning ordinance does not address the issue of "stacking" of entrances associated with "strip development". "Stacking," in this context, is defined as a number of entrances created to serve several developments rather than fewer entrances to serve the same level of development. Although the modest rate of development within the County has somewhat limited this, it should be continually monitored and the zoning and subdivision regulations amended as conditions warrant.

Emphasis should be placed on completing the four-laning for Route 671 from Route 58 to Route 650 at Hercules, Incorporated. Part of the road -- from U.S. 58 to just south of the International Paper Converting Plant -- has been improved. Already in the Six-Year Plan, this stretch of highway will play an increasingly important role in County economic development efforts.

Previous Thoroughfare Plans have called for five proposed grade separated interchanges along U.S. 58 at Route(s) 35, 58 Business to Courtland, 58 Business to Franklin, SR 687 and SR 714. To date, only two of these projects -- the interchanges at SR 714 and U.S. 58 and Route 35 -- have been completed.

Other future improvements to U.S. 58 should include improved turn lanes at SR 653 in Capron and SR 659 in Drewryville. Both projects are currently on the Virginia Department of Transportation's Six-Year Improvement Plan.

A concept for promoting tourism along U.S. 58 is the proposed "talking highway" project along entire 508 mile length of the highway stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Virginia/Kentucky border. A proposal to erect "traveler's information station units" which would provide interpretation of natural and historic resources along the entire 58 corridor has been discussed. This would provide an opportunity for the County to better promote its local natural and historic resources to the traveling public.

The East-West Transamerica Corridor is being studied. As envisioned, the corridor will commence on the Atlantic Coast in the Hampton Roads area going westward across Virginia through the Ivor area primarily along U.S. 460 continuing along U.S. 220 and Interstate 64 to a West Virginia corridor centered around Beckley to Welch as part of the Coalfields Expressway. The corridor will extend through Kentucky, into Illinois, and into Missouri and exiting western Missouri and moving westward across southern Kansas. The purpose of the TransAmerica Corridor Feasibility Study is to assess the need for transportation upgrades in Virginia and West Virginia.

This study will consider the benefits of improving transportation access between the cities of Beckley, West Virginia, and Roanoke, Lynchburg, Petersburg, and Hampton Roads, Virginia. If transportation improvements along the corridor are feasible, more detailed environmental studies will be conducted.

F. RURAL ADDITION PROGRAM AND REVENUE SHARING

The Code of Virginia authorizes counties to recommend to VDOT that a road be taken into the secondary system as a rural addition. Streets added to the State system shall be constructed to VDOT's standards for the traffic served. Part of a locality's secondary road allocation goes for this purpose. In addition, the State and County are allowed to provide 50% matching amounts for upgrade or construction of roads or streets that qualify. This program is referred to by many as revenue sharing. Southampton County has not participated in this program in the past.

G. INDUSTRIAL ACCESS ROADS

Southampton County can and has applied to VDOT for funds to be used to construct roads to serve industrial development. The program is a valuable economic and industrial development incentive tool, most recently used by the County in conjunction with the Agribusiness Industrial Park off U.S. 58.

H. AIR

Franklin's John Beverly Rose Field in Isle of Wight County provides general aviation service for the area. Recent improvements to the facility include 8 additional hangars, relocation of fuel storage aboveground, and road improvements to the facility entrance. Norfolk International Airport is 52 miles from the County and offers seven major airlines, eight commuter lines, and air freight service.

I. RAIL

Railroads continue to play an important role in the County's transportation network, particularly for local industry. Over 200,000 tons of coal are being shipped annually via rail to the 60 megawatt cogeneration facility constructed adjacent to Hercules, Incorporated on Route 671. The County should continue to seek rail access funds from the state for rail improvements associated with economic development efforts. Emphasis should be directed toward the railroads which serve the County to insure that grade crossings are adequately maintained in order to foster a smooth crossing for vehicular traffic. CSX and Norfolk Southern both offer freight and piggyback services.

J. MOTOR FREIGHT SERVICE AND PARCEL SERVICE

Motor freight service is provided by approximately 50 companies, providing interstate shipping service and/or intrastate service. Parcel service is provided in the County by United Parcel Service, Purolator, Airborne Express, and FedEx.

K. PUBLIC TRANSIT

Commercial bus services are provided by commercial carriers such as Greyhound. There is no public transportation system in the County.

L. WATERWAYS

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers maintains a barge channel from Franklin to the Albemarle Sound in North Carolina via the Blackwater and Chowan Rivers. This waterway, with a seven-foot channel at mean low water, is currently used for pulpwood shipments. The Port of Hampton Roads (45 miles away) is located on a 45-foot channel.

M. CONCLUSIONS

Southampton County has a combination of heavily used highways (U.S. 58, Route 35, and U.S. 460) and lightly traveled roads serving the rural communities. The four laning of U.S. 58 (Southampton Parkway) through the length of the County has produced a

very reliable highway and with this comes the need to upgrade or improve roads which will feed such a highway.

Though the Virginia Department of Transportation has primary responsibility for the highway system, Southampton County is a strong partner in transportation planning. This occurs because of its role in identifying highway improvement needs and its policies and regulations which guide land use and development in the County. Stripping the rural roads of the County with residential and nonresidential development will result in a loss of the rural character that the County wants to retain.