

UNPAVED ROAD POLICIES AND REVIEW PROCESS

September 2026

Background

Since The 1980s, the County Boards of Supervisors have considered road paving as a low-priority initiative. The Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan recommends that funding for infrastructure improvements should be directed to the Development Areas to support growth management policies. Most unpaved roads are in the Rural Area (RA) and there is concern that the paving of roads can change the character of the RA and may lead to new traffic management issues, primarily concerning speeding.

Based on those factors, County staff does not proactively inventory, evaluate, or prioritize unpaved roads for paving. The Board and staff have typically relied on public requests to identify potential needs and, most importantly, community support for road paving projects. The County has typically applied only the minimum funding available/required for unpaved roads.

State funding allocated to a locality for paving unpaved roads previously could only be used for hard surfacing of unpaved public roads. Following a change to the State Code in 2024, localities may now utilize Unpaved Road funds to make improvements to unpaved roads without hard surfacing the road.

Unpaved Road Project Review, Prioritization, and Construction

Initial Review of Request

A request to pave a public road can be made by any owner of an occupied parcel on the unpaved road, or lives on a road that gets its primary access from the unpaved road. The request can be made by letter, email, or phone call to County staff. After the request is received by staff the following steps are taken:

1. **County staff performs an initial review of the request to determine the specific concern and its eligibility for paving.**
 - a. Staff verifies that the road is a public road eligible for paving (minimum of 50 vehicles per day). If not, the issue will be addressed through other means.
 - b. Staff checks to see if the road is currently on the “Maintained Gravel Roads” list.
 - i. Roads on the list are eligible for the Unpaved Road Improvement Program (URIP). Staff will notify the requester of that option to ensure they wish to proceed as a URIP, and the road will be prioritized as such. **(PROCEED TO STEP 5).**
 - ii. If the road was previously on the Maintalist, it will be eligible for paving six years after it was placed on it. If the road was placed there in 2025, it will be eligible to be reconsidered for improvements in 2031.
 - iii. Roads NOT on the list are eligible for the Rural Rustic (RR) process. **(PROCEED TO STEP 3)**
2. **If paving is desired, staff verify that there is significant interest/support from residents on the road.**
 - a. Staff provides the requester with the Rural Rustic Paving Resident Toolkit including a list of residences that require feedback. At least two-thirds of the owners of occupied parcels abutting the segment requesting to be paved, and any adjacent

segments with primary access from the segment requesting to be paved, must support paving. When determining the percentage of owners in agreement, an owner owning more than one parcel abutting the road in question is equivalent to an owner owning one parcel.

- b. Paving requests must be made before November 1 to be eligible to be included in the upcoming SSYP, with a deadline to demonstrate resident support by February 1. If not submitted, it disqualifies the road to be included in that year's SSYP. If more than 1/3 of residents oppose paving, staff asks the resident if they would like to move the road to the "Maintained Gravel Roads" list. It will be eligible to be requested for paving six years from then. Staff will also present the option of addressing issues on the road through the URIP program. If the resident agrees to URIP the road, it is moved to the Priority Roads list as a URIP road.
 - c. If only a portion of the road is requested to be paved, the determining factor for being an affected property is if the driveway touches the unpaved portion of the road.
- 3. Once the 2/3 support is demonstrated, the road section is evaluated by VDOT staff to determine eligibility for paving based on geometric criteria.**
- a. If NOT eligible, it is automatically moved to the "Maintained Gravel Roads" list and qualifies for future URIP funding. The road will be prioritized by the ADT.
 - b. If eligible for paving according to VDOT RR standards, it will be added to the "Paving Projects" list.

Prioritizing Projects

- 4. Each Spring, the Board reviews and approves the Albemarle County Priority List for Secondary Road Improvements - Unpaved Roads, which contains the "Paving List" and the Draft SSYP.**
- 5. Roads that were appropriately requested to be paved and received 2/3 support from residents, but the Board of Supervisors has determined to remove it from the "Paving Priority" list during the annual Spring update will be moved to the "Maintained Gravel Roads" list.**
 - a. A new request for paving must be submitted, as described in Section 2 above, to have the Board reconsider a road segment for paving. Roads on this list are eligible to be reconsidered for paving six years from when they were put on.
- 6. All projects, including those newly added to the paving list, should be prioritized by this same standard. This will entail reprioritizing all projects each year and may result in new projects moving above older ones.**
 - a. The schedule for prioritizing, funding, and implementation of paving projects is such that projects funded in the first year of the SSYP will have already been determined and property owner notification will have been completed to allow engineering and environmental work to begin immediately after the SSYP is approved. Therefore, projects funded in the first year of the SSYP will not be included in any reprioritization to ensure VDOT can move forward with project scheduling as necessary.
- 7. The Final SSYP is approved in late Spring following a public hearing.**
 - a. The SSYP is presented at a public hearing to the Board of Supervisors, where final comments and edits can be made. This public hearing concludes with the adoption of the SSYP. Staff return in June with resolutions for each of the roads added to the SSYP that year so that VDOT can move forward with paving.

