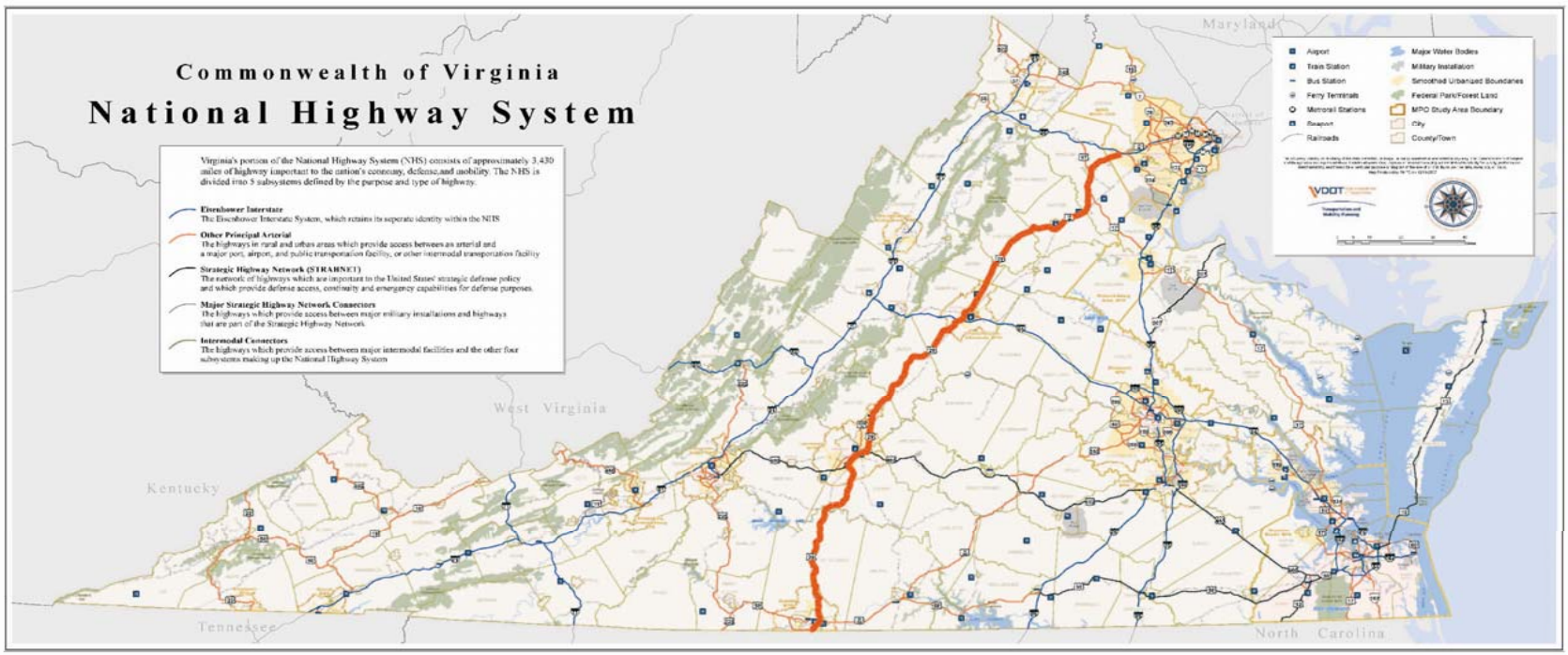
Route 29 Corridor Study: Background & Next Steps

CTB Subcommittee Meeting
February 17, 2010

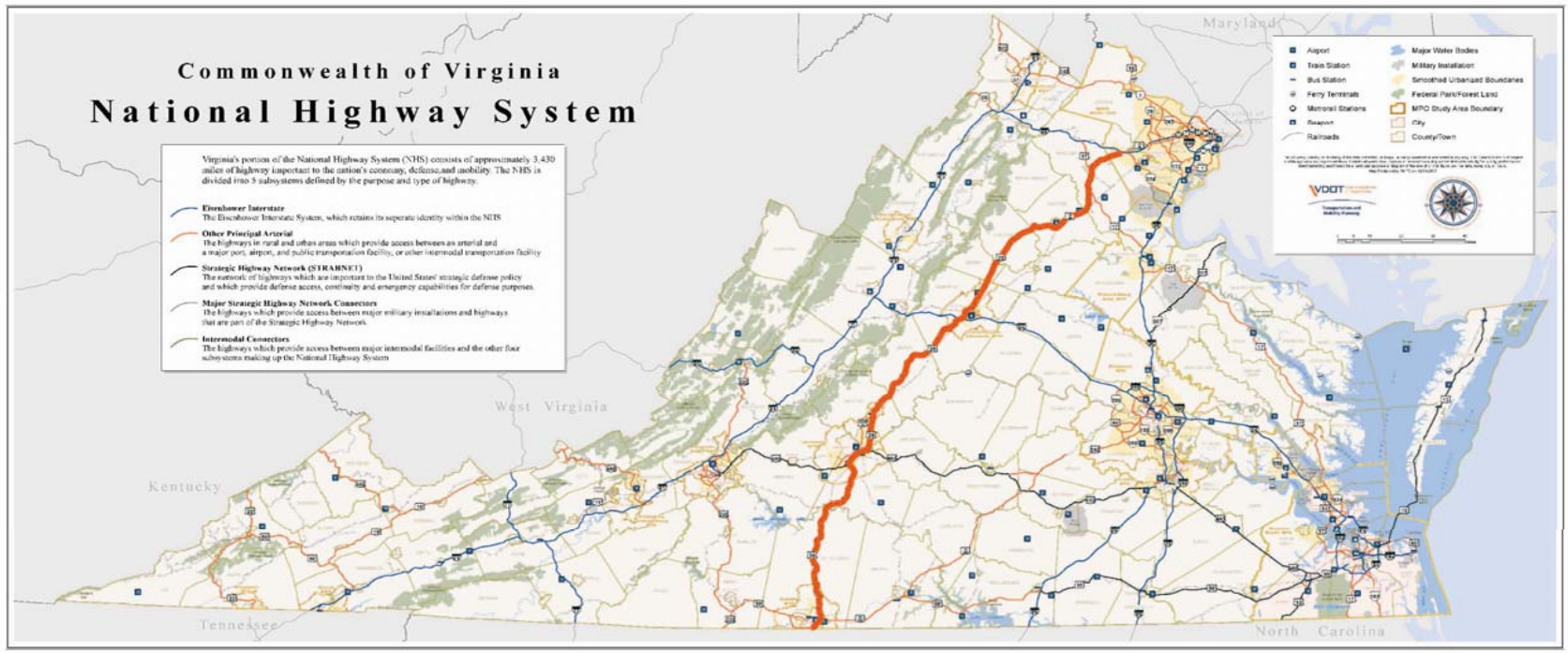
Route 29 Corridor Background

- Corridor extends 219 miles: North Carolina to I-66 at Gainesville
- Principal Arterial and designated NHS Route
- Interconnects 3 MPO areas; connects large rural areas to NOVA
- Serves long distance travel but also carries large volumes of local traffic
- Norfolk Southern provides rail service along the corridor



Background Topics

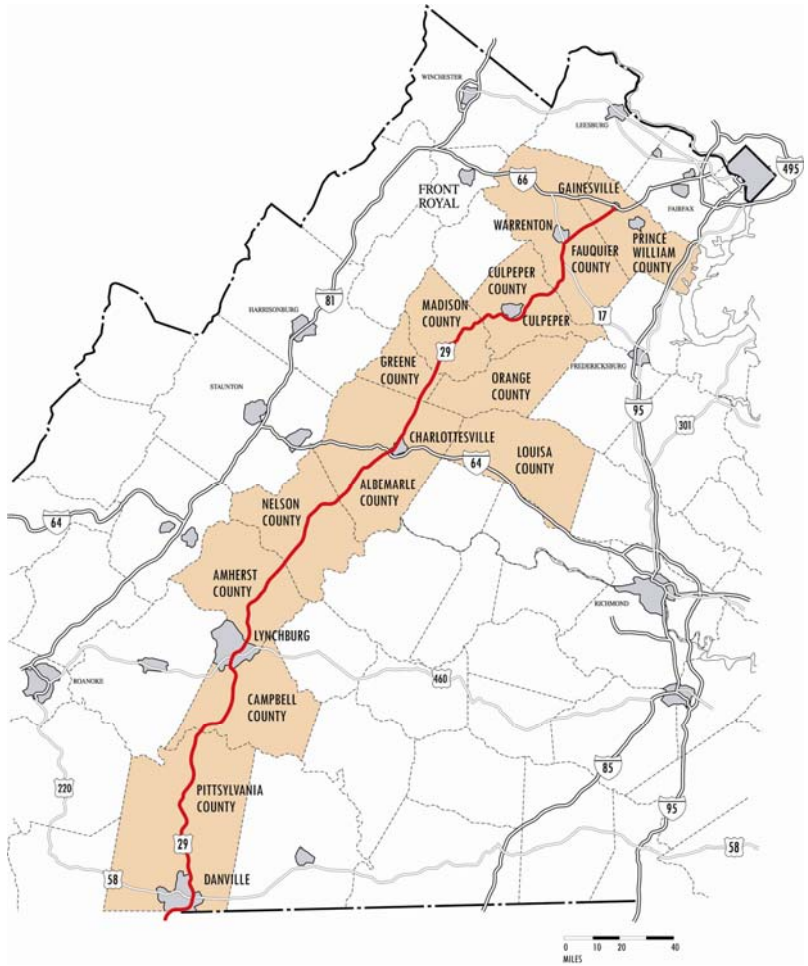
- Vision/Goals for the Corridor
- Corridor-Wide Consensus Themes
- Getting to the Vision
- Policy Recommendations



Vision/Goals for the Corridor

- Preserve the functionality of the corridor for through travel
- Enhance the economic vitality of the corridor
- Improve safety and reduce congestion
- Address local traffic and preserve corridor throughput
- Preserve the scenic and historic integrity of the corridor

This vision is achievable, while accommodating growth, by more fully integrating transportation and land use planning, including substantial enhancements to non-auto modes of travel



Developing Corridor-Wide Consensus Themes

- Themes developed through a series of meetings including:
  - Eight public meetings
  - Four regional workshops
  - Bi-weekly studio sessions open to the public
  - Monthly technical advisory meetings which included members from corridor PDCs and MPOs
- Reviewed with local governing bodies throughout the corridor
- Five regional meetings were held to obtain input on preliminary recommendations
- Weekly electronic bulletins





Corridor-Wide Consensus Themes

- There should be far fewer entrance and exit points on Route 29. Rather than center all development on the major route, more parallel roads should be used.
- Congestion must be addressed, for example, through increased use of technology, re-timing signals, and increased traveler information
- Travel by non-auto modes needs to be increased, especially transit. Land use patterns that support travel by transit, bicycle, and walk should be promoted.







Corridor-Wide Consensus Themes

- Planning for the corridor should address both land use and transportation.
- Planning must be coordinated across jurisdictional boundaries.
- VDOT needs to play a stronger role in preserving the transportation investment and securing it as an economic development resource for Central Virginia.
- The Corridor is a statewide scenic, historic, and environmental resource and must be preserved.



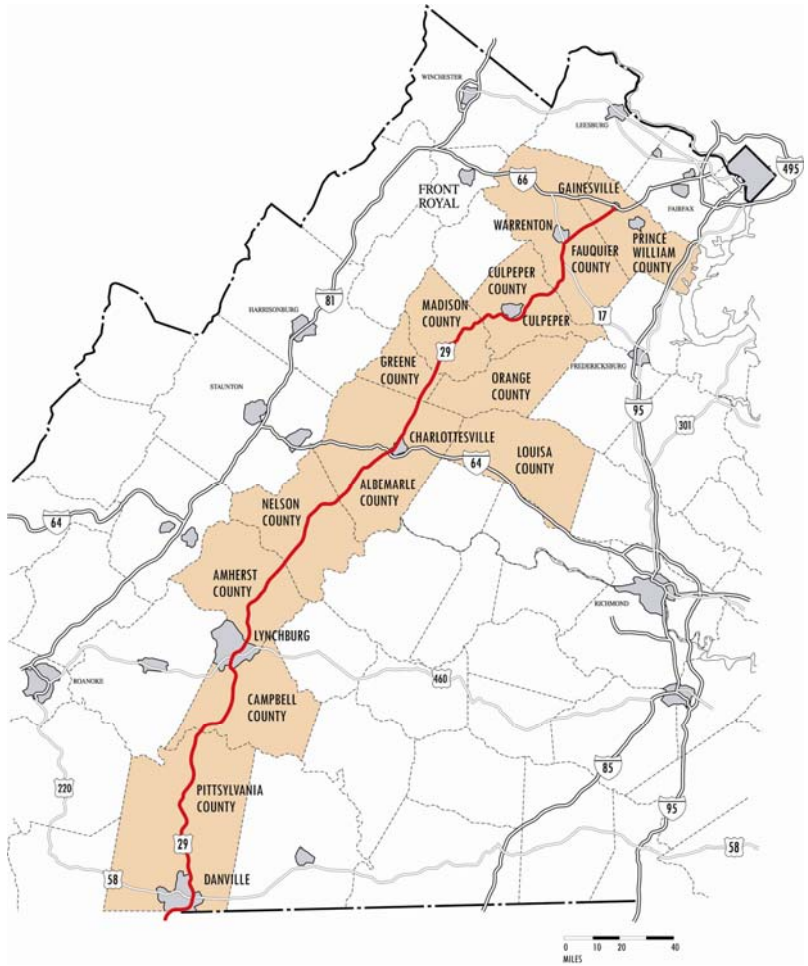


Getting to the Vision

- **Manage the number of access and egress points**
- **Create parallel networks (portions built as part of private development)**
- **Design roadway connections that are consistent with the rural/urban nature of the surroundings**
- **Rather than promoting strip development, focus development around major activity areas (nodes) and increase the density**
- **Promote compact, mixed-use development street networks that would provide the density needed for transit**
- **Implement rail and transit improvements to provide enhanced options for the movement of both people and goods; bus utilization for commuter travel is needed particularly in the northern part of the corridor**
- **Encourage bicycle and pedestrian travel to provide mobility and health benefits; support these improvements through more compact development patterns**
- **Protect the corridor's natural environment, as well as its scenic and historic resources**

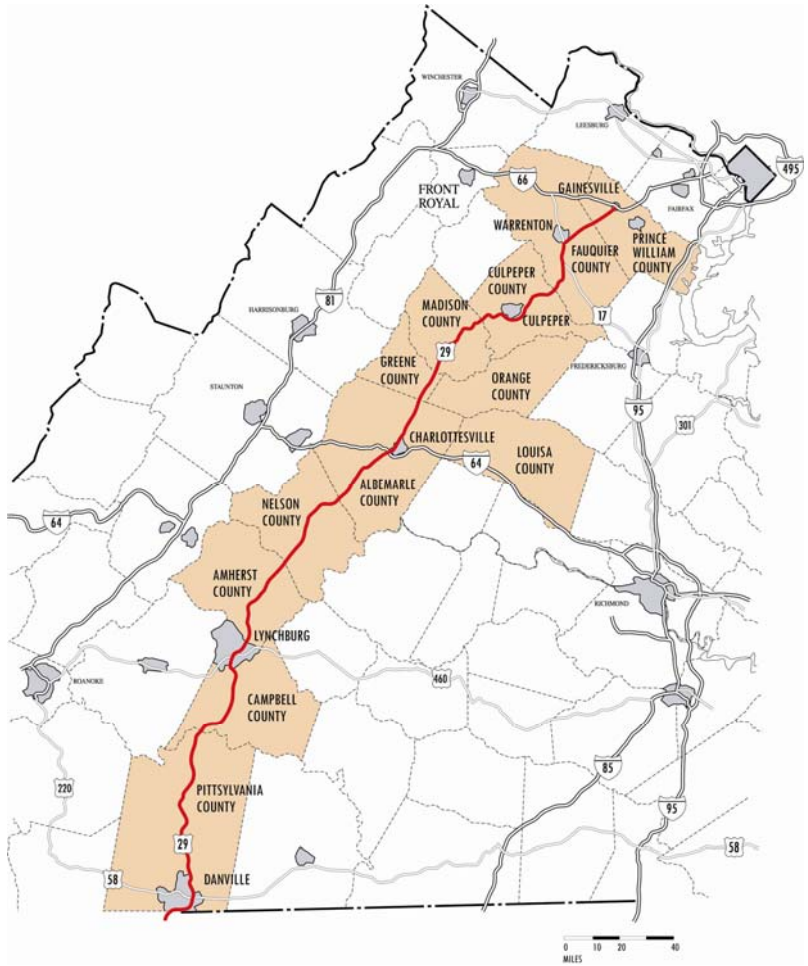
Policy Recommendations

- **Voluntary (Tier 1):** Localities apply the principles in the Route 29 Corridor Study through detailed access management plans, conceptual roadway networks, design standards, etc.
- **Incentive-Based (Tier 2):** Use of funding programs and grants to reward compliance with the Route 29 Corridor Study recommendations. This would include a policy of not allocating funding to projects where localities cannot guarantee, through land use planning, the long-term functionality of the improvement .



Policy Recommendations

- **Corridor-Wide Stewardship (Tier 3):** Legislation, plans, and requirements developed jointly by VDOT and localities as part of a Corridor-Wide Implementation Plan (Master Plan) that requires specific land use and transportation planning activities. These policies would not preclude the previous two tiers, but could enhance either approach by providing a regulatory underpinning to ensure more widespread implementation.



CTB Resolution

- Process for Corridors of Statewide Significance by April 1, 2010

- Additional work and study by July 1, 2010
  - Prioritized list of intersections to be replaced by grade separate intersections or interchanges
  - A plan to improve mobility and accessibility north of Charlottesville, evaluating various alternatives, and not limited to prior proposals
  - A plan to improve mobility and accessibility north in the Gainesville, Haymarket, and Buckland region, evaluating various alternatives, and not limited to prior proposals
  - A plan to minimize the number of traffic control signals in the Corridor

Corridor Studies: Purpose and Approach
Some Food for Thought

- Why do corridor planning?
  - Promote safe and efficient movement of people, goods, and services
  - Initiate/promote intergovernmental cooperative planning
  - Provide opportunities for public, local government, and agency participation
  - Save money by identifying long-range right-of-way needs (anticipate growth-related needs before solutions become too expensive)
  - Fill the gap between the statewide transportation modal plans and the project selection process
  - Link land-use planning and transportation planning
  - Identify social, economic, and environmental issues and analyze potential alternatives at an appropriate and economical level of detail
  - Facilitate resolution of major issues (i.e., public opinion, cost, environmental constraints) before specific project programming and development begin
  - Protect transportation investments by exploring alternate means to accommodate travel needs, with/without capital-intensive improvements
  - Provide an opportunity to direct future development, and minimize environmental, social, and economic impacts.

Source: http://itd.idaho.gov/planning/corridor/

Corridor Studies: Purpose and Approach
More Food for Thought

- Defining parameters for corridor studies
  - Geographic area (“narrow” vs. “wide” corridor)
  - Level of analysis detail (traffic analysis, environmental features, etc.)
  - Level of specificity for recommendations (project detail, regulation specifics, etc.)
  - Timeframe for recommendations
  - Policy vs. project emphasis
  - Desired uses for the study (general guidelines, define strategic direction, specify requirements for various agencies/stakeholders, program projects, catalog of potential solutions/best practices, defining roles of agencies/jurisdictions)
  - Corridor study role within the overall planning process
  - Level of ownership and buy-in by various entities

Corridor Studies: Purpose and Approach
Even More Food for Thought

- Defining roles for a corridor study
  - Defining the “community”: To whom/where do benefits accrue? To whom/where do impacts apply?
  - Engaging corridor leadership at the appropriate levels to define the level of study – what levels of outcome are supportable at the local, regional, corridor-wide, and statewide levels?
  - Identifying implementing bodies: agencies, state, regional, and local governments
  - Identifying implementing mechanisms: legislation, comprehensive plans, state-sponsored planning documents, agency strategic plans, funding plans, etc.

Process for Studying Corridors of Statewide Significance (Discussion)

- Define the “community” and its various stakeholders
- Establish steering committee (CTB subcommittee)
  - Define parameters
  - Define roles and engagement strategies
- Develop consensus on overall transportation needs for the corridor and an overall transportation and land use vision for the corridor
- Identify and map constraints and opportunities
- Develop preliminary multi-modal and land use recommendations; engage “community” throughout this process
- Engage “community” leadership in workshop discussions of preliminary recommendations
- Refine recommendations
- Public reviews
- Finalize recommendations and report

Next Steps for Route 29 Study

- Study generated agreement on the following:
  - Planning needs and overall framework
  - Need for corridor-wide Master Plan
  - Range of policy solutions
  - Catalog of best-practices for land use and transportation planning

- Next steps only need to focus on the following (per CTB resolution):
  - Develop plan to minimize traffic signals in the corridor
  - Develop priority listing of major intersection improvements (interchanges)
  - Develop plans to improve mobility and accessibility at two key congestion points in the corridor: North of Charlottesville the Gainesville/Haymarket/ Buckland region

Study Approach Options

- Policy approach:
  - 28 weeks
  - Focus on policy options that would provide the framework for achieving specific **corridor-wide** performance measures and goals
  - Requires discussion of incentives and repercussions
- Alternatives sketch level approach:
  - 34 weeks
  - Based on alternatives development and screening approach
  - Performed at sketch level (matrix screening and ranking process)
- Alternatives sketch detailed approach:
  - 46 weeks
  - Based on alternatives development and screening approach
  - Performed at detailed level (modeling, higher level of “engineering” and environmental reviews)
- All three approaches include similarities with:
  - Prioritization of intersection improvements throughout the corridor
  - Public and stakeholder involvement process

Participation Strategies

Strategy 1 –

VDOT in charge, MPO identifies staff representatives from each Jurisdiction (Albemarle, Charlottesville and Greene) to work with VDOT on issues that need to be addressed in this area of the Route 29 Corridor. The technical analysis done by VDOT needs to be acceptable to political leaders.

Pros: Traditional approach, assumes CTB will be able to fund any improvements

Cons: Business as usual risks repeating the previous outcome, no buy-in by localities or MPO

Life of the plan: Moderate (lack of ownership may limit life of the plan)

Time: + +

Cost: $ $

Strategy 2 –

MPO in charge, staff will work with VDOT, DRPT & Consultant on technical analysis. Deficiencies will be presented to MPO work group and a plan for addressing the deficiencies will be cooperatively developed.

Pros: The plan will most likely get buy-in from elected leaders thus ensuring a much greater longevity of the plan. The localities are party to the solution.

Cons: This process will take much longer to develop (possibly 1- 2 years). It's more costly and the outcome is not predictable. Politics are a greater factor in the outcome.

Life of the plan: Long (most durable based on high level of ownership by localities)

Time: + + +

Cost: $ $ $

* Staff recommendation

Strategy 3 –

Present all previous solutions adjacent to existing Route 29 and ask MPO and Localities to decide if they don't like any of these solutions then what do they want?

Pros: This may get a quick turn-around on their input.

Cons: With the mix of technical and political input, the outcome is unpredictable. The technical analysis may be based more on political direction than on transportation deficiencies.

Life of the plan: Relatively short-lived (least amount of local ownership of the plan)

Time: +

Cost: $

Route 29 Corridor Study: Background & Next Steps

CTB Subcommittee Meeting
February 17, 2010