

COUNTY OF YORK

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 18, 2018

TO: York County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Neil A. Morgan, County Administrator



SUBJECT: Enhanced Highway Landscaping, Maintenance Issues, and Opportunities

Recently a citizen suggested that the County should assume from VDOT the responsibility for installing and maintaining the landscaping of Hampton Highway in a similar manner currently seen on George Washington Memorial Highway and Route 199. Subsequent to this suggestion, members of the Board requested additional information from County staff. This memo, in response to that request, provides the information resulting from staff's analysis should the Board wish to consider/revisit this suggestion in the future.

Current Situation

By Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with VDOT, the County maintains landscaping and performs litter control on the majority of George Washington Memorial Highway, Fort Eustis Boulevard, portions of Victory Boulevard, Route 199, as well as portions of Mooretown Road. These areas have been established with the purpose of creating a sense of place and enhancing the tourism experience. The vast majority of the County's public roads grass cutting and litter control is the responsibility of VDOT that provides four mowing and litter pick-ups annually. Most observers, including VDOT operations staff, acknowledge that the state's effort is insufficient to produce/maintain a high level of aesthetic appeal. However, there is no realistic prospect of the Commonwealth increasing its level of effort, given the many pressing transportation, infrastructure, and maintenance challenges facing Virginia.

The majority of the work performed under the MOA is carried out by the Grounds Maintenance Division of Public Works. This group is also responsible for school and County facilities, with special focus being given to locations such as Yorktown and the MAC. At its peak, Grounds Maintenance employed 45 permanent staff. As part of the cuts, which occurred during the Great Recession, staffing at one point was reduced to 37. However, some capacity was recovered when the Board approved the creation of the four-person "Hybrid Crew" as part of the FY 2017 budget. It should be noted that this group also deploys to assist Stormwater crews, Mosquito Control staff, YCSD school grounds maintenance, and targets litter removal in various hot spots. The commendable work of the permanent Grounds Maintenance staff is supplemented by part-time "work as required" personnel and contractors. The total FY 2019 operating costs for the activities described above is approximately \$3.2 million.

Analysis

Should the County decide to expand its responsibilities to include enhancement/maintenance of additional thoroughfares, Hampton Highway would definitely be an excellent choice given its high volume of traffic and function as a gateway. Its wide median also offers opportunities for landscaping, particularly at key intersections. Any plan to increase County resources for this purpose should also include consideration of other challenges that are not currently being addressed. Examples of other challenges and existing priorities include additional litter control along Mooretown Road, Old Williamsburg Road, Big Bethel Road, and Denbigh Boulevard. Additional important, unaddressed projects include improving the small remaining portion of Route 17 near the Coleman Bridge that the County does not currently maintain; enhancing the entrances to Williamsburg such as By-Pass Road; and maintaining the sidewalks which will be installed in the near future. (These projects which are funded by revenue sharing grants, proffers, and other initiatives will deteriorate if we solely rely on the VDOT approach to grass cutting).

Options

New Hybrid Crew

A second hybrid crew would be the most systematic way to absorb Hampton Highway into our VDOT MOA, as well as achieving most of the other road landscaping and litter control projects described above. To put this in perspective, this additional crew would bring our Grounds Maintenance staffing to within four full-time equivalents (FTE's) of the staffing level prior to the 2009 Great Recession. In addition to one-time investments in intersection landscaping, the ongoing operating cost of an additional hybrid crew would be approximately \$180,000. Selecting this option would have the advantage of strengthening our general Stormwater and Mosquito Control capability during extreme weather situations.

Supplemental Contract Services

Another option by which Hampton Highway may be upgraded is to contract out the initial landscape beautification effort, as well as the ongoing maintenance. An initial estimate for this option is \$100,000 annually. Of course, it would also be possible to contract out some of the other needs identified in the report. The cost of this approach is highly speculative and depends on the extent of new landscaping and the economic climate at the time of competitive bidding.

Discussion and Recommendation

A decision to invest additional resources in thoroughfare maintenance is a policy question that should be decided by the Board of Supervisors. It is certainly consistent with our Strategic Priorities of Customer Service and the Quality of Life aspect of Economic De-

velopment. My preference, if this is something the Board wishes to pursue, is to create a new Hybrid Crew. In many ways, this would reflect a restoration of the level of effort that the County once provided. This option would also maximize our flexibility because the additional personnel could be directed to critical needs like storm water, school grounds, emergency preparations, and special projects.

An incremental option might be to upgrade one or two intersections along Hampton Highway using a contractor at a lesser cost than a new Hybrid Crew. At some point in the future, the work could be absorbed when the County can afford to restore Grounds Maintenance staffing levels.

These options, of course, would need to be weighed during budget deliberations against our well established priorities of robust school funding, public safety enhancements, facilities investments through our CIP, and compensation increases in an increasingly challenging labor market. My suggestion is that we develop a more precise proposal during the next few months as the staff and I work on the recommended FY 20 operating budget. If we conclude that increasing thoroughfare landscaping and aesthetic maintenance is at all financially feasible, we can engage the Board in a budget-related work session on this topic. Please let me know if you require additional information at this time.

NAM:MLB

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Neil A. Morgan



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October 10, 2018

Mr. Rossie Carroll
Williamsburg Residency Engineer
Virginia Department of Transportation
4451 Ironbound Road
Williamsburg, Virginia 23188

RE: Water Country Parkway Relocation Project - UPC 107306

NOTE
Dear Mr. ~~Carroll~~:

Thank you for meeting with us to discuss the issues arising with the Water Country Parkway Relocation Project design comments. As you know, we were seeking to relocate Water Country Parkway along Route 199 so it will line up with the existing entrance to the Marquis Parkway. We were working with the property owners on the northern side of Route 199 and the Wyndham Gardens Hotel to include them as willing participants in the overall project.

As we discussed in our meeting, the property owners are no longer willing participants due to the changing nature of our design to meet VDOT concerns. The selling of the hotel and the potential loss of an entrance/exit from Route 199 into the hotel has that property owner considering his legal options, and the loss of the Limited Access break for the larger property owner has him deeply concerned with moving forward.

The County and VDOT are both in agreement that this project can no longer move forward, so I am submitting our 30-day notice of termination for this project, effective today. We will be finalizing any other paperwork between the County and VDOT over the upcoming months. Although we are saddened by the loss of what we saw as a truly beneficial project, we are looking forward to working with you and your staff on all of our other endeavors.

Sincerely,

Neil Morgan
York County Administrator