

**Thank you for taking a few minutes to read my point of view.**

**Dear White Hall residents and residents from other districts who wrote to me.  
February 7, 2015**

One of my Albemarle High School classmates asked the Board of Supervisors members on Wednesday 2-4-11 to **remember their duty to represent their citizens**. His Mom was my high school guidance counselor. I took my civics classes seriously with Ms. Beard; she gave me a good understanding about a citizen's and a public servant's responsibility.

Over the last several years Route 29 issues have been discussed at meetings large and small, with many public hearings. I am comfortable I understand the wishes of the majority of White Hall residents and that my decision to support the Route 29 Solutions Package is based on careful process and use of current facts and reality of what is possible.

**Is Albemarle out of compliance with the law? Are we required to do a small area plan first? No**

In Virginia, our County comp plan must be in compliance with the state long range transportation **plan** and has been approved by VDOT. The county long range transportation plan (LRTP) becomes the transportation chapter for the comprehensive plan. Thus both elements were amended last year after a series of public hearings and public debates on these issues.

**The small area plan idea in Places 29 grew from a scenario where funding for the intersection was years off, and the community wanted to protect areas for potential future road improvement from being built on until the road was really funded.** The small area plan was proposed to designate uses for land around a future grade separated intersection when funding was available. The small area plan will be completed over the spring and summer to support future development in the area around the Rio intersection.

**The funding issue:** The Secretary of Transportation and the CTB have accepted the 29Solutions package as a group of locally desired projects which work together to solve local and regional transportation issues. **Package** means that the funding is a package as well. Start to pull pieces of the package out and the funding for the entire package goes away. I verified this with members in the General Assembly and the DOT this week.

The package of projects is also required to qualify for use of federal highway funds. Route 29 is a federal highway and is classed as a highway of state significance and

an arterial, a road that connects different localities and regions. The arterial road's federal task is mobility.

The communities to the south were adamant that improvements to this primary intersection be included, or the funds for the parallel roads would never have been included in the package. An engineer calls the intersection improvements "a nod to mobility" while making a huge investment in parallel roads which will serve local traffic and normally would be built with secondary road funds. (The \$5M annual secondary road fund payment from the state has been reduced to \$300K annually since 2009.)

People who say the package can be split up are taking a HUGE risk that we will lose the funding this area has needed for decades for this series of projects; some are dissatisfied with an intersection improvement being done within the highway right of way, in an area which is asphalt now. The risk is out of proportion to the impact.

I am not willing to jeopardize that funding, well earned by the locality and fairly awarded by the CTB.

### **The sequence question**

Initially I did think that the parallel roads should be done first. About nine months ago I realized that I was wrong about that. The assumption I had was that the parallel roads would help people get around during construction of the intersection improvements.

But the parallel roads are on opposite sides of Route 29. Therefore users of the parallel roads must have the connection of Rio to allow the parallel roads to function. To wait until after the parallel road construction to close the deck at Rio, even for a short time, would exacerbate the construction challenges and extend the construction time. We should all remember that there will be a continuous maintenance of traffic on 29 throughout the construction period.

**Why have we not considered suggestions about the rio interchange?** We have. The question is...

### **Will we have Intersection improvements or traffic through neighborhoods?**

I attended the charrette on Monday, January 26, with Ian Lockwood and the forum on Thursday night, where about 20 percent of the slides from the charrette report were presented.

I am not an engineer, but I am a citizen who has been interested in land use and transportation, participating in study committees in Massachusetts starting in 1973 and Albemarle since the late 1980s after we moved back to the home farm in 1983. I

have no financial connection with a business or residence in the path of any alternative, but I do have a connection as a tax payer to the well being of the County and morally to the residents of the County, wherever they live.

That being said, I do not support stopping the intersection improvements and putting the traffic through the neighborhoods which is being pushed forward now. The status quo is not a good choice.

Make no mistake, that is the only choice. **If road improvements are not built in the highway right of way, the traffic from the parallel roads everyone supports will go through established neighborhoods, Berkeley, Northfields, Raintree, and Carrsbrook, according to the lines on Mr. Lockwood's maps. And it will still not be enough capacity.**

**Why not study alternatives, a speaker asked on 2-4-15?** At the same time Mr. Lockwood was working on road alternatives around the country, Albemarle County residents were also.

In the late 1980s and 1990s there was considerable planning in the community to find alternatives to Route 29 for local drivers. The goal was and is to increase the capacity of the rt 29 for through traffic.

Pressure for improvement has been mounting from downstate ever since the decision to build route 64 through Albemarle instead of by Lynchburg. Alternative route discussions are **not a new idea.**

To comply with Federal highway funding rules, a citizens advisory committee was formed in 2000, called CHART and now called CTAC, for citizens transportation advisory committee. **As stated in federal statute, the task of CHART was to create a local long range transportation plan.** The committee has met monthly for the last fifteen years.

During the creation of the long range transportation plan or LRTP, dozens of meetings were held to discuss all of the options, including the grade separation of traffic at Rio Road. Many were held in the community at schools, churches, and public spaces. In a true charette, citizens provided the ideas for solutions. When the LRTP has been renewed every five years since, another series of public meetings has been held. The grade separation at Rio Road was always part of this long range plan.

**The alternative now being suggested by Smart29 was considered and strongly opposed by the business community** during the development of the Places 29, the master plan for our northern growth area. They said that an interconnected street network would interfere with their businesses and likely require Right Of Way they would not want to give up.

**During the development of the LRTP, citizens were and still are concerned about heavy traffic in their neighborhoods, as would result from the Smart29 plans.** Safety of their children and seniors, lack of sidewalks, loss of property values, were all concerns about the idea of thousands of cars passing past their homes daily.

**The alternative of new parallel roads constructed for this purpose was adopted to protect the neighborhoods.** The Meadow Creek/ John Warner Parkway and County–built sections of Berkmar and Hillsdale were step one. The City section of Hillsdale, step two, will open in a year or so. Berkmar extended across the river to Airport Road is step three.

Without the Route 29 solutions VDOT project, funding for Berkmar over and north of the river would not be available until after 2025. With the solutions project, other regional improvements in the out years will be able to get funding decades sooner. There will finally begin to be better transportation throughout the region. A high priority intersection is exit 118 on Route 64, with daily accidents and long backups for westbound 64 traffic.

I stand with the community choices made in the transportation studies from 2000 to today. For the parallel roads to succeed, people must be able **to cross 29 in vehicles and on foot and to access and exit 29** north and south in that location.

**Even if** all the neighborhood street projects **could** be done and were agreed to by residents, they still would not be enough to carry the traffic load, which is projected by VDOT and two separate national research groups to increase thirty percent over the next twenty years. There are thousands of new residential units **already approved** but not constructed to the north in Albemarle. Greene County is growing fast with residential units, and many of those residents work and shop in Albemarle.

On one hand there is some period of traffic slow down with detours required for a while to reach certain businesses. On the other hand are a failed intersection at Rio Road and heavy traffic flows moving slowly through county neighborhoods **forever**.

These are the consequences which must be faced. Thank you for reading this and for being involved in your community.

For our Future,

Ann Mallek