

VDOT Plans Next Six Years

Allocates \$18.6 Billion To More Than 3,600 Projects

By **NOLAN STOUT**

Daily News-Record

June 24, 2017

HARRISONBURG — The Virginia Department of Transportation has a blueprint for road work over the next six years.

The Commonwealth Transportation Board approved the agency's Six-Year Road Improvement Plan on Tuesday, according to a press release.

The plan allocates \$18.6 billion to more than 3,600 transportation projects across the state that VDOT, sometimes with help from localities, plans to tackle over the next six fiscal years beginning July 1. The plan only includes the state's portion of the cost of any project.

Some of the projects are large undertakings that won't break ground anytime soon. Others are underway, such as replacing the bridge over Dry River on Ottobine Road in Montezuma and the county's Reservoir Street improvement project.

Two projects in Harrisonburg and two in Rockingham County improve access to or travel over Interstate 81.

In the city, VDOT plans to realign the northbound Exit 245 off-ramp with Forest Hill Road and move the ramp to merge onto I-81 northbound from eastbound U.S. 33 at Exit 247 to the other side of the road and install a traffic light.

U.S. 11, U.S. 33

Several projects in the county are on U.S. 11, including a replacement of the U.S. 11 bridge over the North River near Bridgewater; expanding the road near the Harrisonburg city limits; adding a right-turn lane and an extended left-turn lane at Oakwood Drive

VDOT Plan Includes Several Bridge Replacements to accommodate traffic at the new Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative headquarters; and realigning Cecil Wampler Drive and Oakwood Drive at U.S. 11.

Another focus point is along U.S. 33, also known as Rawley Pike west of Harrisonburg, Spotswood Trail east of the city and Market Street in the city. Included is a plan to widen Rawley Pike near the West Virginia border and replacing the bridge over a Norfolk Southern Railroad track in Harrisonburg near Carlton Street.

Other City Projects

One of the city projects will improve the intersection of South Main Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Way. A right- turn lane will be added from northbound Main Street onto MLK, signals will be reconstructed, left- turn lanes will be built from MLK onto Mason Street in both directions and signals will be replaced at that intersection.

A new water line will be installed from Main past Mason and a shared use path will be built between MLK and Mason.

The plan also includes the project to widen Erickson Avenue to four lanes with a center-turn lane, bike lanes and sidewalks from just west of South High Street to the city limits near Garbers Church Road.

Several small-scale projects are included as well, including a citywide pedestrian signal program to install audible signals on crosswalks.

Assistant Public Works Director Tom Hartman said a signal timing study is included, allowing crews to examine the lights on Main, High and East Market streets and Port Republic Road. The study will ensure the lights are timed to ease flow during peak traffic hours.

Hartman said the plan includes a flashing yellow turn signal program. The city would replace the traffic lights at several intersections to install a flashing yellow arrow, allowing cars to turn left after yielding to oncoming traffic.

Bridges, Other County Projects

The plan includes several bridge replacements.

In the county, VDOT will replace the bridges over Pleasant Run on Friedens Church and North

River roads near Mount Crawford, the bridge over the North Fork of the Shenandoah River on Yankeetown Road north of Fulks Run, the Smithland Road bridge over I- 81 near Harrisonburg and the U. S. 11 bridge over I- 81 at Exit 257 in Rockingham County.

In the city, the Pleasant Valley Road bridge over Blacks Run will be replaced.

VDOT also plans to widen shoulders and install rumble strips on Va. 259, which is Brocks Gap Road, from Hopkins Gap Road in Fulks Run to the West Virginia border. The final Rockingham project in the plan will extend a curve on Friedens Church Road away from a retaining wall and connect Oak Ridge Road with the new alignment.

The plan includes the first phase of Bridgewater's Riverwalk project. The town plans to construct a 1,000- foot path through Edgebriar Park, under the Main Street bridge, through Seven Bridges Park and end in Bridgeview Park.

Contact Nolan Stout at 574-6278 or nstout@dnronline.com