

**Corridor Safety and Operational Study of  
Charles Town Pike (Route 9)**

**Focus Group Meeting 1  
February 13, 2020, 6:00 PM  
Meeting Notes**

**Attendees:**

Supervisor Caleb Kershner, Jonathan Bales (Office of Supervisor Kershner)  
Katie Patru (Office of Supervisor Buffington)  
Joe Kroboth, John Thomas, Kelly Griffin, Susan Glass, Marie Caraballo, Shawn Zelman, Heidi Kellum, Glen Barbour (DTCI)  
Michelle Cavucci, Craig Schneider, Kevin Keeley (VHB)

**Focus Group Members:**

Asli Baki, <i>Hillsborough Brewery and Vineyard</i>	Charles Bixler, <i>Beacon Hill HOA</i>	Bruce Gardner, <i>Loudoun Valley Church of the Nazarene</i>	John Lovegrove, <i>Cider Mill Road Area Resident</i>
Vice Mayor Amy Marasco, <i>Town of Hillsboro</i>	John McCarthy <i>Piedmont Environmental Council</i>	John Mulhall, <i>Saratoga HOA</i>	Graham Peake, <i>Birch Hollow HOA</i>
Ronda Powell, <i>Greater Hillsboro Business Alliance</i>	Cheri Shields, <i>Loudoun Bed &amp; Breakfast Guild</i>	Donnie Walker, <i>Paeonian Springs and Property/Business Owner</i>	

**Public Observers**

Maura Walsh-Copeland (Hillsboro Preservation)

**Purpose & Background**

The purpose of this meeting was to inform the Focus Group members of the project purpose and need, to discuss their role in the success of the project, and to receive input about travel conditions along the Charles Town Pike (Route 9) corridor. Joe Kroboth, Director of Loudoun County’s Department of Transportation and Capital Infrastructure (DTCI), welcomed and thanked the Focus Group members, and summarized the July 3, 2018 Board of Supervisors Business Meeting item (BMI #4), which identified Route 9 and Route 15 south as the first two rural primary road safety and operational studies to be initiated. Subsequent to the July 3, 2018 Board of Supervisors Business Meeting, a scope of work, schedule, and cost were developed. The consultant team received Notice to Proceed (NTP) to conduct data collection on April 26, 2019 and data collection was completed in May 2019. NTP for the formal Route 9 study, of which this Focus Group is a part, was provided on July 11, 2019.

Kelly Griffin (Route 9 Study DTCl Project Manager) and Michelle Cavucci (VHB consultant Project Manager) led a presentation that provided project background, existing conditions data summary, project resources and communication, draft charter, and near-term next steps. The study team requested Focus Group member feedback on the existing conditions along the study corridor through interactive group activities and discussion throughout the meeting.

Two supplemental documents support these Meeting Notes from Focus Group Meeting #1:

- 1) A formal Question and Answer summary, which includes a list of questions asked by Focus Group members during the meeting, followed by responses to the questions.
- 2) A summary table of corridor location-specific input, which was compiled from an interactive map-based activity during the meeting.

### **Agenda Discussion**

- 1) Introduction & Overview
  - a. Joe thanked the participants of the Focus Group for attending the meeting, welcomed and introduced the Board of Supervisors and their Aides as well as DTCl staff and the consultant team.
  - b. Supervisor Kershner welcomed attendees and expressed his appreciation for everyone's time and input for this corridor study.
  - c. Katie Patru offered appreciation on behalf of Supervisor Buffington and stated that stakeholder input will weigh heavily in Supervisor Buffington's decision-making on project recommendations. Additionally, Supervisor Buffington feels Route 9 should remain a two-lane rural road but will be supportive of improvements such as turn lanes and rural roundabouts.
  - d. Each focus group member introduced themselves, provided a brief statement on their affiliation with Route 9, and the relevance of the corridor to them. Following is a summary of concerns and issues raised during introductions:
    - i. Congestion is a big concern – traffic starts at 4:00 AM and Route 9 is backed up through 9:00 AM.
    - ii. Safety concerns, as evidenced by the sound of sirens almost every day. It is scary each time pulling out of a driveway onto Route 9.
    - iii. Would like to see the corridor become safer.
    - iv. Concern over the increased speed limit on a segment of Route 9 from Simpson Circle to the Route 7 Interchange, as it appears to have led to an increase in crashes. The opposite needs to happen, speed limit should be decreased.
    - v. There appear to be a lot of West Virginia license plates during weekday rush hours and tourists on the weekends.
    - vi. Crashes are a concern – there likely are low-cost, implementable solutions.
    - vii. Lot of residents in the area are also commuters on the Route 9 corridor.
    - viii. Route 9 itself has barely changed since the 1960s, but the traffic has changed and grown considerably. Safety improvements would be welcomed.
- 2) Project Background
  - a. Michelle presented information on the project background and study process.

- b. Michelle defined a safety and operational study for the group and provided typical recommendations from these study types.
- c. Michelle explained the community engagement process as well as the purpose and need of the Focus Group.
- d. An overview of the project scope tasks was presented as well as a current estimated schedule.

3) Group Activities & Discussion

- a. Activity 1: Describe the existing Route 9 corridor in a word or phrase.
  - i. These results will be shared with the group at the next Focus Group meeting.
- b. Activity 2: List your top three goals for improving Route 9.
  - i. Responses were categorized and summarized by theme (see below).
  - ii. Note that emailed responses from Focus Group members were added to the summarized table.

**Activity 1 Results Summary:** List your top three goals for improving Route 9.

Theme	Amount
1. Safety	7
2. Maintain Rural Character	7
3. Reduce Speed	7
4. Consider Alternative Routes	5
5. Reduce Congestion	4
6. Ease Access (to/from Route 9)	4
7. Reduce Cut-Through Traffic	3
8. Address Capacity Issues	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>

- c. Activity 3: Mapping corridor experiences
  - i. The corridor was broken into three sections on scroll plots for group discussion.
    - 1. West Virginia border to Cider Mill Road
    - 2. Cider Mill Road to Berlin Turnpike
    - 3. Berlin Turnpike to Route 7 interchange
  - ii. Participants used four different color dots to mark:
    - 1. Safety issues = yellow
    - 2. Traffic issues = blue
    - 3. Other issues = red
      - a. Defined as any issue that did not group into a safety- or traffic-related issue.
    - 4. Area to preserve = green
      - a. Defined as an area, feature, or characteristic that the group enjoyed and would like to be maintained or applied elsewhere on the corridor.
  - iii. Comments from the scroll plots are summarized in the attached table based on the dot types identified above (safety issues, traffic issues, other issues, area to preserve).

- d. Activity 4: Describe the Route 9 of the future in a word or phrase.
  - i. Responses were categorized and summarized by theme. These results will be shared with the group at the next Focus Group meeting.
  
- 4) Existing Conditions Data Summary
  - a. Michelle shared a summary of existing conditions data on the corridor and a summary package was distributed to Focus Group members.
  - b. Michelle walked the attendees through the distributed package of the existing conditions data summary and provided additional clarity, as needed.
  - c. Traffic Conditions
    - i. Information on this graphic was compiled from VDOT's most recent Daily Traffic Volume Estimates book.
  - d. Turning Movement Counts & Speed
    - i. This information was a summary of the data collection from May 2019.
    - ii. Speed data was collected continuously over a multi-day period.
  - e. Relative Crash Density
    - i. It was noted that crash data was provided by VDOT and the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office.
    - ii. Michelle provided additional clarification that crash density mapping shows densities relative to other locations on the subject corridor.
  
- 5) Project Resources & Communication
  - a. Heidi Kellum, a Communications Specialist with DTCL's Communications team, shared communications resources and information about the public outreach process going forward.
    - i. Project website: <https://www.loudoun.gov/route9>
    - ii. Project email: [Route9@loudoun.gov](mailto:Route9@loudoun.gov).
  
- 6) Draft Charter
  - a. Kelly outlined the roles and responsibilities of the Focus Group as documented in the draft charter and draft charters were distributed for members to sign.
    - i. Vice Mayor Amy Marasco took an extra copy for Mayor Roger Vance to sign.
  - b. Michelle stressed that the project team is looking for this group to be conduits to their community. This includes sharing information with neighbors/constituents, encouraging participation in public input meetings, and gathering input to inform project analysis and recommendations.
  
- 7) Near-Term Next Steps
  - a. The first round of public input meetings will be held in April 2020 (specific date is still pending final confirmation).
  - b. The study team is working towards finalizing the existing conditions and developing future traffic volumes for the corridor.
  - c. The next focus group meeting will be scheduled after the first round of public meetings.

**Activity 3: Mapping Corridor Experiences  
Scroll Plot Comment Summary**

Intersection: (White Boxes)/ Segment: (Gray Boxes)	Safety Issue	Traffic Issue	Other Issue	Area to Preserve
Intersection: Shady Ln	1. A safety issue was noted at this location			
Segment: Shady Ln to Appalachian Ln	1. Need turn lanes to the gas station 2. Guardrail issues (damaged) 3. Left turn causes abrupt stops	1. Gas station lots of stops 2. No other location to stop in the area 3. Lots of in/out traffic 4. Adding a turn lane would be helpful		
Segment: Appalachian Ln to Sagle Rd	1. "if the road just had shoulders" 2. Safety traffic alerts observed between Sagle and Shady			1. Maintain rural character 2. Maintain rural character
Intersection: Sagle Rd	1. Safety traffic alerts observed 2. No shoulder	1. "There are no other alternatives to leave Rte. 9 and get to Rte. 7"		
Segment: Sagle Rd to Creamer Ln	1. Guardrail issues (damaged) 2. Guardrail always destroyed (w/ line indicating EB direction) 3. Curve "fools you" 4. Turn increases radius as you proceed EB – don't expect and misjudge 5. Need flashing lights or special treatment for curve		1. Steep grades	1. A preservation issue was noted at this location
Intersection: Creamer Ln		1. Turn lane would be helpful 2. Buses turning while lots of traffic early AM 4-6 AM 3. Turning left onto Rte. 9 very difficult during peaks		
Segment: Creamer Ln to Harpers Ferry Rd	1. Severe accidents			
Intersection: Harpers Ferry Rd		1. EB left turn lane needed – slow to turn 2. Right turn lane needed (on Harpers Ferry Rd) 3. Create a roundabout – "single lane" 4. Backs up all the way to Shady Ln – EB AM 5. Busy weekends/ breweries		
Segment: Heskett Ln to Cider Mill Rd	1. Sight distance 2. Crashes on curve 3. Sight distance			1. Maintain rural character 2. Maintain rural character

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Scroll Plot Comment Summary**

Intersection: (White Boxes)/ Segment: (Gray Boxes)	Safety Issue	Traffic Issue	Other Issue	Area to Preserve
Intersection: Cider Mill Rd	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Slowing to turn = rear ends</li> <li>2. Need turn lanes</li> <li>3. Back up on Cider Mill can't get out</li> <li>4. Pothole</li> <li>5. Turn from Cider Mill extremely dangerous</li> <li>6. Crashes</li> <li>7. New bridge weight sign impeding sight distance</li> <li>8. Queuing/safety (on Cider Mill Rd)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Extremely hard left turn from C.M to Charles Town</li> <li>2. Turn lanes or roundabout</li> <li>3. Alder School Road increase [sic]</li> </ol>		
Segment: Cider Mill Rd to Manor View Ln	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Access to/from winery</li> <li>2. Slower speed limit (with three check marks)</li> <li>3. Better access for turning onto 9 east</li> <li>4. WB crashes into winery wall</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Right turn lane for westbound traffic</li> <li>2. Right turn lane option?</li> <li>3. Center left lane as turn lane options?</li> </ol>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 450-acre Century Farm need to preserve</li> <li>2. Open space view for businesses</li> </ol>
Intersection: Manor View Ln	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Crash</li> <li>2. Slow traffic by strips or some traffic calming measure to slow before they enter or leave Hillsboro</li> <li>3. Lots of crashes</li> </ol>			
Segment: Manor View Ln to Stony Point Rd	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Blind corner</li> <li>2. Speed transition</li> <li>3. Flashing light options?</li> </ol>			
Intersection: Stony Point Rd		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Roundabout coming</li> </ol>		
Segment: Stony Point Rd to Gaver Mill Rd			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Confirm town crosswalks part of Hillsboro project</li> <li>2. Yes 6 coming</li> </ol>	
Intersection: Gaver Mill Rd		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lots of cut thru</li> </ol>		
Intersection: Hillsboro Rd	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reduce 50 mph to 25 mph in town borders (pointing to Hillsboro Rd)</li> </ol>			
Intersection: Mountain Rd	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Confusing triangle unclear how to enter</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Roundabout?</li> </ol>		

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Intersection: (White Boxes)/ Segment: (Gray Boxes)	Safety Issue	Traffic Issue	Other Issue	Area to Preserve
Segment: Mountain Rd to Grubstake Farm Ln	1. LE, (law enforcement) [sic], pull off areas			1. Entrance to Hillsboro Grubb + Virts farm are beautiful open space – need to be in conservation easement
Intersection: Grubstake Farm Ln	2. A safety issue was noted at this location			
Intersection: Purcellville Rd	3. A safety issue was noted at this location		1. Farm stand (circled on map)	
Segment: Purcellville Rd to Berlin Tpke				1. Millers Reserve 2. Maintain rural character
Intersection: Berlin Tpke	1. Huge traffic jam due to timing of light	1. Intersection: queuing 2. Active roundabout project 3. AM (queuing indicated with arrow) 4. Right turn lane	1. Roundabout plan great! But in short term could you improve by improved turning lanes	
Segment: Berlin Tpk to Old Wheatland Rd	1. A safety issue was noted at this location 2. Speed limit consistent vs. varying	1. Traffic backs up	1. Add pull-off areas	
Intersection: Old Wheatland Rd	1. Left turn on Old Wheatland – blocks traffic at 45mph around blind curve – need Rte. 9 left turn lane	2. Improve right turn onto 9 from Old Wheatland (geometry fix)		
Segment: Old Wheatland Rd to Hampton Rd				1. Keep 2 lane but add turn/width
Intersection: Hampton Rd/Old Stage Pl				1. Like build out of turn lanes @ location – could use for law enforcement – no issues here
Segment: Hampton Rd to Hidden Meadow Ln	1. Shoulders for breakdown or accidents			1. Preserve rural character
Intersection: Hamilton Station Rd	1. Limited sight distance NB 2. Add turning lanes	3. Main line turn lanes		
Segment: Hamilton Station Rd to Golden Springs Ct	1. Rumble strips along centerline 2. LCSO turn offs for enforcement 3. Would like enforcement areas for Segments			

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Scroll Plot Comment Summary**

Intersection: (White Boxes)/ Segment: (Gray Boxes)	Safety Issue	Traffic Issue	Other Issue	Area to Preserve
Segment: Catocin Ridge St to Simpson Cir (North)			1. Blind drives	
Segment: Simpson Cir to Clarkes Gap Rd	1. Crash location	1. Need turn lane from west to east at Vino-9 2. Access road for businesses from Clarkes to Hill Haven		
Intersection: Clarkes Gap Rd	1. Crash location			
Segment: Clarkes Gap Rd to Beacon Hill Dr	1. Crash location	1. Cut thru (from Clarkes Gap to Beacon Hill indicated by arrows)		
Intersection: Beacon Hill Dr	1. A safety issue was noted at this location 2. A safety issue was noted on Beacon Hill Dr	3. Cut thru traffic 4. Close Rte. 7 access point at Fort Johnson 5. Ft Johnson Road close it down – would address cut thru	1. Beacon Hill does not need entrance from Route 7 2. Move Hillsboro Rte. 7 1 <sup>st</sup> sign	
Intersection: Route 7 Interchange Off Ramp towards Route 9	1. Two lane roundabout – motorists use area as a “drag lane” as they attempt to pass one another 2. Fast speed to enter from 7 3. Must we keep two lane roundabouts? Motorists pass on the roundabout		1. Signage on Route 7/9 sends traffic onto 9, but you can change to Charles Town W VA – “Continue on Route 7” 2. Signage (on WB Route 7 approaching 7/9 interchange)	
Corridor-wide	1. Signage Rural Road No Thru Trucks (West Segment) 2. A lot of truck comp. [sic] sending people down the road to I-81 (West Segment) 3. Phones – distracted – wander into oncoming traffic (West Segment) 4. Rumble strip down center and shoulder (West Segment) 5. Storms: gravel washes out over road (West Segment) 6. Limit all thru trucks on entire corridor (Central Segment)	1. “How do we direct traffic to other routes in order to preserve Rte. 9” (West Segment) 2. No shoulders (West Segment) 3. Not opposed to widening (West Segment) 4. Corridor wide left turn lanes needed (West Segment) 5. Center left lane as turn lane options? (Central Segment)	1. No shoulders (West Segment) 2. Develop design standards for entire corridor – sets image of rural roads (Central Segment)	1. Keep Beautiful (West Segment) 2. Set design standards for entire route (Central Segment) 3. MAINTAIN rural character of the road keep it 2 lanes (East Segment)