



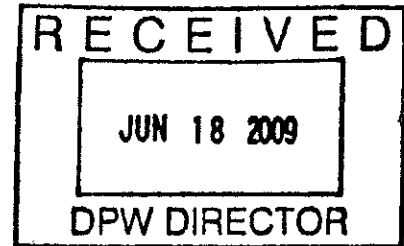
## COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
1401 EAST BROAD STREET  
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 23219-2000

David S. Ekern, P.E.  
COMMISSIONER

June 18, 2009

Mr. Dexter White  
Director of Department of Public Works  
900 E. Broad Street, Suite 704  
Richmond, VA 23219



Subject: Highway Safety Improvement Program  
Proposed Roundabout at Hermitage (State Rte 161) and Laburnum (State Rte 197);  
UPC Project Number 77151

Dear Mr. White:

Thank you for your interest in Virginia's Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP). Over the past 15 years, we have formed a valued partnership with the City of Richmond through a cooperation and mutual trust that has resulted in nearly \$20 million dollars worth of safety improvements throughout the City of Richmond. The results are astounding; through your engineers' expertise, there are approximately 1,500 fewer deaths and injuries on the streets of the City of Richmond.

In response to your inquiry, related to the use of HSIP funds to construct a modern roundabout at the intersection of Hermitage (State Rte 161) and Laburnum (State Rte 197), please find the following comments to guide your upcoming decisions related to this important project:

1. Per the HSIP agreement dated 6/9/2008 between the Department and the City of Richmond, the only safety improvement which has been granted is to construct a roundabout. This project was selected because of the tremendous crash reduction factor associated with converting signalized intersections into a roundabout configuration. If another solution is selected, any expenses to date would not be covered by the FHWA and the agreement would be void.
2. In 2003, House Joint Resolution 594 was adopted to encourage the use of roundabouts in Virginia. Since July 2008, when VDOT revised the Road Design Manual for Virginia, roundabouts are Virginia's preferred intersection design. The Department refined its policy regarding Roundabouts at that time to contain the following language: *VDOT recognizes that Roundabouts are frequently able to address the above safety and operational objectives better than other types of intersections in both urban and rural environments and on high-speed and low-speed highways. Therefore, it is VDOT policy that Roundabouts be considered when a project includes reconstructing or constructing*

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*new intersection(s), signalized or unsignalized. The Engineer shall provide an analysis of each intersection to determine if a Roundabout is a feasible alternative based on site constraints, including right of way, environmental factors and other design constraints. The advantages and disadvantages of constructing a Roundabout shall be documented for each intersection. When the analysis shows that a Roundabout is a feasible alternative, it should be considered the Department's preferred alternative due to the proven substantial safety and operational benefits.*

3. This particular safety project is behind schedule. As one of the top five worst intersections in the City, we rely on your staff to complete this safety improvement such that the citizens can experience the project's benefits of reduced injury and potential for death from motor vehicle crashes. As you consider your options, every day of delay causes more harm to the motoring public traveling in this area of Richmond. We strongly urge your timely construction of this project as it is in the citizens' best interests from a safety and mobility perspective.
4. It is hoped that the leadership's advocacy to advance and complete highway safety projects in the City of Richmond will continue to match the engineering expertise found there to deliver these important projects. One of the factors that we consider in selecting and funding grant applications is the evaluating the leadership advocacy of a jurisdiction to support the safety countermeasure. The current project delay mention in #3 speaks to this issue. By terminating this agreement, future HSIP funded projects may be in jeopardy as the City would not be as in strong standing as previous years with this blemish on the City's HSIP performance record.

I trust that this is the information will satisfy your questions. If you need additional information or questions, do not hesitate to contact me directly. We value your progress in the field of highway safety and would encourage your continued work to reduce deaths and injuries from motor vehicle crashes in Virginia.

Sincerely,



Michael B. Sawyer, P.E.  
State Highway Safety Engineer