



1-800-652-5600 or 302-760-2080
dot-public-relations@state.de.us
www.deldot.gov

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Contact: Darrel Cole, Director, Public Relations

U.S. 301 Final Environmental Document Available Dec. 10

Public Comment Period Ends Jan. 14, 2008

Dover – The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) recently completed the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for new U.S. 301, a proposed highway in southern New Castle County, including a new four-lane (two lanes in each direction) U.S. 301 from the Maryland/Delaware state line to Route 1, south of the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal, and a new two-lane (one lane in each direction) Spur Road from new U.S. 301, in the vicinity of Armstrong Corner Road, to Summit Bridge. The comprehensive document will be available on DelDOT's Web site for viewing and downloading at www.deldot.gov/information/projects/us301/ on Dec. 10, 2007, and a formal notice will appear in the Federal Register on Dec. 14, 2007. The public comment period ends Jan. 14, 2008.

The purpose of the project is to address existing and projected congestion, manage truck traffic, and deal with significant safety issues along existing U.S. 301. In the past decade, traffic on routes 301 and 896 has grown by as much as 50 percent south of the C & D Canal. As much as 30 percent of that traffic is generated by tractor-trailers.

"We have conducted an unprecedented amount of public outreach to reach this point, and it's clear the majority wants us to move forward and supports the roadway we have selected as our preferred alternative," said DelDOT Secretary Carolann Wicks. "A new U.S. 301 will enhance mobility, improve safety, manage through truck traffic, while minimizing impacts on environmental, cultural, and community resources."

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) is a federally required document that examines the natural, cultural, and socioeconomic impacts of proposed transportation projects built with federal funds. The FEIS is a key step in the project planning phase and includes state and federal resource and regulatory agency input, extensive public involvement, in-depth engineering studies, and detailed environmental analysis.

In November 2006, in conjunction with the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), the **Green North + Spur Road** (with Interchange **Option 2A** in the Armstrong Corner Road area and Spur Road **Option 3B**) was identified by DelDOT as the Recommended Preferred Alternative, after evaluating the public comments and input from five rounds of workshops held between June 2005 and April 2006, analysis and refinement of the alternatives by the Project Team, and consulting with FHWA and other resource and regulatory agencies.

After publication of the DEIS in November 2006, DelDOT, FHWA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers conducted a joint public hearing on Jan. 8 and 9, 2007. More than 450 people attended the sessions, and more than 200 pieces of correspondence (comments, letters, and e-mails) and testimonies from residents, elected officials, and state and federal agencies were received. As a result of the public comments and based on environmental resource agency input, the Recommended Preferred Alternative was refined in an effort to further reduce community, cultural, wetland, and stream impacts. DelDOT also responded to community requests for more intensive studies. Some highlights of changes and additional studies include:

- The alignment of new U.S. 301 was shifted in the Boyds Corner Road/Ratledge Road area to reduce direct impacts to a long-term family owned and operated farm.
- A suggestion to delete the Spur Road from the Green North + Spur Road Preferred Alternative, and replace it with improvements to existing U.S. 301 was evaluated. The results of the detailed evaluation indicated that the suggested alternative did not fully meet project purpose and need of managing truck traffic and improving safety. In addition, community impacts would be greatly increased by improving existing U.S. 301, including relocations of nine homes, three businesses, and the Ringold Chapel AME Church. An additional 14 businesses, three residential properties, and two subdivisions would be partially impacted.
- A connection from Strawberry Lane to existing U.S. 301 was added to the Preferred Alternative, as recommended by the local farming community, to provide direct safe passage for farm vehicles, west of new U.S. 301, to the farm equipment, processing, and storage facilities, east of new U.S. 301.

After consideration of the public hearing comments and additional consultation with the environmental resource and regulatory agencies, DelDOT announced the Preferred Alternative, Green North + Spur Road, on May 18, 2007.

DETAILS OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The Green North + Spur Road extends north from the Delaware/Maryland state line to north of Armstrong Corner Road then continues generally northeast and interchanging with Route 1 north of the Biddles Corner Toll Plaza and south of the C & D Canal. Interchanges would be provided at Levels Road, existing U.S. 301 north of Armstrong Corner Road, and Jamison Corner Road. The Spur is a two-lane, limited access roadway would extend from south of Armstrong Corner Road to just south of the Summit Bridge.

Interchange Option 2A would provide an interchange between New U.S. 301 and existing U.S. 301, approximately 1,000 feet north of the existing intersection of Armstrong Corner Road and existing U.S. 301.

Spur Road Option 3B would provide a directional “Y” interchange between the Spur Road and Route 896, south of Summit Bridge. Bethel Church Road would be extended east to a north-serving interchange with the Spur Road. The existing sharp curve on Route 896, south of Summit Bridge, would be improved to current design standards and the existing traffic signal on the sharp curve would be removed.

BENEFITS OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Green North + Spur Road has a number of significant advantages in comparison to the other three alternatives, including:

- The greatest public support from those who have expressed comments
- Can be constructed with the least impact on the traveling public and one of the lower cost alternatives
- Attracts the greatest volume of traffic to new U.S. 301 and provides greatest relief to local roadways, including, Cedar Lane Road, Boyds Corner Road, Route 299, and existing Route 301.
- Reduces daily traffic on Choptank Road, when compared to the No Build option in year 2030
- Low impacts on existing and planned communities, schools and businesses
- Natural environmental and cultural (historic) resource impacts similar to the other alternatives retained for detailed study

Earth berms would be provided, where feasible and prudent, to provide visual screening between adjacent communities and new roadways. In addition to providing visual benefits, the earth berms would also significantly reduce or eliminate noise impacts for the following communities: Southridge, Middletown Village, Springmill, Chesapeake Meadow, and Airmont.

Following the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) review period, DelDOT anticipates that FHWA will issue a “Record of Decision” that will be the final determination among the study alternatives: The Green North + Spur Road (preferred) and the Yellow, Brown North and South, Green South + Spur Road , Purple + Spur Road, and “No-Build.”

In the meantime, a number of impacted property owners have been in contact with DelDOT to discuss the property acquisition and relocation process. Once FHWA grants approval, anticipated by March 2008, DelDOT would be in a position to make offers to property owners whose total property would be required by the project, if requested.

Interested residents may request a free CD of the FEIS by calling DelDOT Public Relations at 302-760-2080 or by e-mail through the project Web site, at dotpr@state.de.us. Additionally, the FEIS document can be viewed online at www.deldot.gov/information/projects/us301/, and at the following locations:

Appoquinimink Public Library
651 N. Broad Street
Middletown, DE 19709

Town Hall in Middletown
19 West Green Street
Middletown, DE 19709

Delaware Department of Transportation
250 Bear-Christiana Road
Bear, DE 19701

Federal Highway Administration
300 South New Street
Room 2101
Dover, DE 19901

Delaware Department of Transportation
800 Bay Road
Dover, DE 19901

Comments must be submitted in writing or via the DelDOT Web site by Jan. 14, 2008. Written comments may be sent to the following addresses:

Mr. Mark Tudor
Project Director
Delaware Department of Transportation
800 Bay Road
Dover, Delaware 19901

Mr. Robert Kleinburd
Division Team Leader
Federal Highway Administration
300 South New Street, Room 2101
Dover, Delaware 19904