

PRESS BRIEFING MATERIAL US 301 PROJECT DEVELOPMENT ANNOUNCEMENT OF PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

MAY 17, 2007

PURPOSE OF US 301 PROJECT DEVELOPMENT EFFORT

The purpose of the US 301 Project Development effort is to identify and evaluate alternatives that address transportation needs in the US 301 area, including the following goals and objectives:

- Reduce existing and projected roadway congestion in the project area
- Improve safety in the project area, where over 400 traffic accidents have resulted in injuries and over 20 fatalities (half on US 301 south of the C & D Canal) over the past several years
- Manage traffic by separating US 301 through traffic, particularly through truck traffic from local traffic

NOTE:

- In the 7.5 years between January 1999 and May 2006, there have been 776 crashes on US 301, SR 896, SR 299, and SR 15, in the project area south of the canal.
- Approximately 36% of these crashes have resulted in injuries, including fourteen fatalities.
- Thirteen of the fourteen fatalities occurred in the SR 896/US 301 corridor.
- More recently, in March 2007, four people were killed in two separate collisions on US 301 near the state line. Both of these fatal crashes involved 18-wheelers.
- Crashes have been occurring on several segments of US 301, SR 299, and SR 15 at rates that are higher than the statewide average.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

DelDOT has conducted an extensive public outreach program on the US 301 project, which started in the spring of 2004, with interviews with elected officials and community and business leaders in the area, in an effort to identify needs, issues, and potential solutions. This effort was followed by numerous meetings with communities, five rounds of public workshops, and a Combined Location-Design Public Hearing.

Project Purpose and Need and the Potential Range of Alternatives were initially presented at workshops in June and September 2005. In addition to the No-Build Alternative, four Build Alternatives, Yellow, Purple, Brown, and Green, along with Alignment Options, were retained for detailed evaluation and presented at public workshops in December 2005 and February and April 2006.

Over 3,300 people attended at least one of the five rounds of public workshops.

Over 2,000 people provided written comments on the alternatives and over 7,000 people signed petitions in support or opposition to various alternatives.

The Project Team has held approximately 65 community meetings. Each community meeting attracted between 30 and 200 people. The communities that the Project Team has met with, sometimes more than once, included:

Airmont	Fox Hunter Crossing	Midland Farms	Summit Bridge Farms
Augustine Creek	Galena	Middletown Village	Summit Farms
Back Creek	Grande View Farms	Mount Hope	Summit Pond
Cecilton	Jamison Corner Road	Post and Rail Farms	The Legends
Chesapeake Meadow	Lea Earra Farms	Ratledge Road	Westside Hunt
Dickerson Farms	Matapeake	Springmill	

A comprehensive user friendly project website was created as another means to communicate with the public. The site’s value is demonstrated by its use. By the end of April 2007, the site has had nearly 2.6 million hits.

Public involvement will continue as momentum is maintained in moving the project forward toward final design, preserving right-of-way, and ultimately building the selected Preferred Alternative.

COMBINED LOCATION-DESIGN HEARINGS

The Federal Highway Administration, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Philadelphia District, and the Delaware Department of Transportation conducted Combined Location-Design Public Hearings on Monday January 8th and Tuesday January 9th, 2007 at the Middletown Fire Hall. The purpose of the Location-Design Public Hearings was to afford all interested persons the opportunity to present their views, regarding the proposed locations and general design of the alternatives. This included the social, economic, and environmental effects for all of the Build Alternatives and the No-Build Alternative, as summarized in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

RESULTS OF THE COMBINED LOCATION-DESIGN PUBLIC HEARINGS

Attendance and Comments:

Persons signed in on January 8:	238
Persons signed in on January 9:	<u>216</u>
Total attendance:	454

- Total number of written comments: 55
- Number of people providing testimony directly to stenographer: 25
- Number of persons providing traditional oral public testimony: 20
- On-line and other comments received: 65

Support or Opposition to Alternatives:

The following table summarizes the support or opposition to the detailed alternatives expressed at the January 2007 hearings.

Alternative	Support	Oppose
Yellow		
Purple + Spur		
Brown	1	
Green South + Spur	3	
Blue	1	
Red	4	
Green North + Spur	44	1

Forty-four (44) people supported the Recommended Preferred Alternative, i.e., Green North with Armstrong Corner Road Interchange Option 2A and Spur Road Option 3B:

Petitions Received:

- 158 signatures from Middletown Baptist Church supporting DelDOT’s choice of Green North with Armstrong Corner Road Interchange Option 2A and Spur Road Option 3B
- 285 signatures from Ratledge Road residents and friends supporting Ratledge Road area Options 4A or 4B for Green North and opposing Option 1, in order to protect productive farms in the area (*Note: These options were developed following publication of the DEIS.*)
- 58 signatures on a map showing all of the Ratledge Road Options, supporting Options 4A or 4B.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Green North + Spur Road (see attached graphic)

After evaluating the public comments and input from prior workshops and the January 2007 Combined Location-Design Public Hearings and Environmental Resource and Regulatory Agency comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), and after additional detailed analysis and refinement of alternatives by the Project Team, and further consultation with the federal and state Environmental Resource and Regulatory Agencies and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), DelDOT has identified the Green North + Spur Road as the Preferred Alternative, and has secured approval and adoption of that alternative from the Council on Transportation.

The Green North + Spur Alternative would provide a four-lane, limited access tolled highway constructed on a new location, extending north from the Delaware/Maryland state line to north of Armstrong Corner Road, west of Middletown, then continuing generally northeast and interchanging with SR1 north of the Biddles Corner Toll Plaza and south of the C&D Canal. Interchanges would be provided at Levels Road, existing US 301 north of Armstrong Corner Road, and Jamison Corner Road. A two-lane, limited access spur roadway would extend from south of Armstrong Corner Road to just south of the Summit Bridge.

The Preferred Alternative also includes Interchange Option 2A in the Armstrong Corner Road area, Spur Road Option 3B Alignment (referred to in the DEIS as Summit Interchange Option), and Option 4B Modified in the Ratledge Road area.

Interchange Option 2A – Armstrong Corner Road Area (see attached graphic)

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

Spur Road Option 3B (Summit Interchange)/North serving interchange, Bethel Church Road Extended (see attached graphic)

Option 3B would provide a directional “Y” interchange between the Spur Road and SR 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 SR 896, south of Summit Bridge, would be improved to current design standards and the existing traffic signal on the sharp curve would be removed.

Alignment Option 4B Modified – Boyds Corner Road/Ratledge Road Area (see attached graphic)

Alignment Option 4B Modified would shift the new US 301 to the east, in the vicinity of Boyds Corner Road and Ratledge Road, in response to comments received from local residents and property owners in the area, to reduce community and farm impacts.

COMMUNITY ISSUES

With a project of this size and complexity, there is no perfect solution. All alternatives have impacts. However, DelDOT believes the Preferred Alternative results in minimum overall impact. Three communities that provided a significant number of comments at the public hearing are discussed below:

Airmont Community Comments

Airmont residents providing comments prefer Green South, but if Green North is selected, they requested that a visual earth berm be constructed along the full length of the community, the new US 301 roadway be below existing ground where possible, traffic calming be provided for the intersection of relocated Jamison Corner Road and Lorewood Grove Road, i.e. Hyetts Corner Road would no longer tie into Jamison Corner Road, and that the earth berm be constructed as the initial item.

Project Team Comments

- The Green South + Spur Road was not identified as the Preferred Alternative, in part, due to a number of disadvantages when compared to the Green North + Spur Road Alternative. For example, Green South:
 - has two crossings of Scott Run versus one crossing
 - has increased wetland impacts
 - is located closer to Cedar Lane Schools
 - impacts Emerson Dairy Farm
- The Project Team will work with the Airmont Community, during the final design phase of the project, on the following identified issues:
 - Length, height, and potential early construction of the visual earth berm
 - US 301 profile (lowering to the extent feasible)
 - Relocated Jamison Corner Road / Lorewood Grove Road Intersection/ Traffic Calming

Chesapeake Meadow Community/Middletown Corridor Coalition Comments

Chesapeake Meadow residents providing comments at the public hearing and the Middletown Corridor Coalition support Green North, but without the Spur Road or the Churchtown Road overpass.

Project Team Comments:

- DelDOT believes providing the Spur Road as part of the Preferred Alternative meets project Purpose and Need in a cost effective manner (majority of the costs to be borne by the tolls paid by the users of the facility).
- To provide a similar limited access facility along existing US 301 would be more costly, with considerably greater property impacts.
- Providing less than a limited access facility, as suggested by the community, would result in reduced costs, but would also result in significant property impacts along existing US 301, and would not fully meet the project goals and objectives, with respect to addressing traffic congestion, safety, and management of truck traffic.
- In view of the above, the Department considers the Spur Road an integral part of the Green and Purple Alternatives.
- The Project Team has met with Chesapeake Meadow/Middletown Corridor Coalition (MCC) representatives and has provided written responses to twelve questions raised by the MCC.
- The Project Team will continue to work with the Middletown Corridor Coalition and the Chesapeake Meadow Community, during the final design phase, in an effort to minimize impacts from the Spur Road.

Boyd's Corner Road/Ratledge Road Area Community Comments

Residents and supporters of the Ratledge Road community accept Green North but asked to save their farmland (Wooleyhan Farm) and homes by shifting the road slightly to the east, which results in greater wetland impacts.

Project Team Comments

The Project Team, working closely with the federal and state Environmental Resource and Regulatory Agencies, has developed an alignment for US 301 in the Boyds Corner Road/Ratledge Road area that attempts to address the community concerns. It is referred to as Option 4B Modified. (see **attached graphic**)

The Project Team will continue to work with the community during the design of this alignment.

As a result of the coordination effort with the Environmental Resource and Regulatory Agencies, Option 4B Modified requires a Compensatory Mitigation Package to offset the loss in additional lesser value wetlands in exchange for the preservation of active farming operations. The Project Team will work with the Resource and Regulatory agencies in developing this mitigation package.

Connection from existing US 301 to Strawberry Lane

During the public hearing, the Project Team received a request from the local farming community to provide a connection between Strawberry Lane and existing US 301 to accommodate the movement of large farm equipment.

Project Team Comments:

A connection between Strawberry Lane and existing US 301 has been included in the Preferred Alternative. The details of this connection are still being developed.

RESOURCE AGENCY COORDINATION

DelDOT has conducted thirty meetings with the state and federal Environmental Resource and Regulatory Agencies including:

- The US Army Corps of Engineers
- The Environmental Protection Agency
- The US Fish and Wildlife Service
- The Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control
- The State Historic Preservation Office
- The Delaware Department of Agriculture
- The Office of State Planning Coordination

The Environmental Resource and Regulatory Agencies concur with the Preferred Alternative, subject to DelDOT's application and receipt of all relevant permits, including a Compensatory Mitigation Package. DelDOT is working with the Resource and Regulatory Agencies and believes it will successfully develop a Compensatory Mitigation Package that is acceptable to the Resource and Regulatory Agencies, and will ultimately secure all relevant permits.

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (DEIS)

DelDOT and FHWA have circulated a DEIS for the US 301 project for public comment. The document presents the social, economic, and environmental effects for all of the Build Alternatives, as well as for the No Build Alternative. Copies of the document have been provided to all federal, state, and local resource agencies, local elected officials, community organizations that have been involved throughout the process, and a number of directly affected parties. The document has been available at several public locations and is also available on the project web site.

Comments on the DEIS were received at the public hearing and until February 3, 2007. The DEIS included the Green North + Spur Road Alternative as the Recommended Preferred Alternative.

PATH FORWARD/SCHEDULE - 2007

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|------------------|--|
| May – July 2007: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prepare Design Study Report addressing all substantive comments• Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) developed including DEIS comment responses |
| August 2007: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• FEIS submission to FHWA• Public notification of FEIS availability |
| Fall 2007: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• FHWA Approval / Record of Decision (ROD)• Corps of Engineers issuance of provisional permit |

2007: GOVERNOR'S EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 95

The following activities will occur during 2007, regarding the development and evaluation of funding options for the US 301 improvements, as noted below:

- The Director of the Office of Management and Budget and the Secretary of the Department of Transportation shall meet and confer to consider the costs, benefits, and policy implications of the use of dedicated state toll facility revenue bonds to finance a project authorized by the General Assembly for the expansion and realignment of U.S. Route 301, from its entry point into Delaware from Maryland to its eventual interchange with State Route 1.
- In completing this task, the Director and the Secretary may work in conjunction with members of the General Assembly, as well as the Controller General or his designee, and may also obtain a study of the proposed toll facility project by one or more qualified independent consultants.
- The analysis to be performed pursuant to this Order shall also include assessment of the need for legislation to accomplish this objective. The results of this analysis shall be submitted to the Office of the Governor not later than December 1, 2007

WHY GREEN NORTH + SPUR ROAD?

While Green North + Spur has a direct impact on the Midland Farms community, it has a number of significant advantages in comparison to the other three retained alternatives, namely:

- Low impacts on existing and planned communities, schools, and businesses
- Natural environmental and cultural (historic) resources impacts that are generally similar to the other alternatives, except for Yellow, which has greater impacts on wetlands, waters of the US, and historic resources
- The greatest public support from those who have expressed comments
- Attracts the greatest volume of traffic to new US 301 and provides greatest relief to local roadways, including Cedar Lane Road, Boyds Corner Road, SR 299, and existing US 301.
- Results in the greatest reduction in daily traffic on Choptank Road, when compared to the No Build Alternative in year 2030 (15,200 to 5,100).
- Can be constructed with the least impact on the traveling public and at a lower cost

Note: The Green North + Spur:

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 (west side)	Chesapeake Meadow (west side)
Middletown Village (west side)	Airmont (south side)
Springmill (west side)	Middletown Veterinary Hospital

Why Option 2A – Armstrong Corner Road Area?

Option 2A is recommended because it provides an interchange between new US 301 and an arterial roadway (existing US 301), as opposed to a local roadway (Armstrong Corner Road – Options 1 and 3). Option 2A avoids the high property and relocation impacts and costs resulting from the relocation of existing US 301, under Option 2. Option 2A also avoids direct impacts to the Middletown Baptist Church, although moving new US 301 closer to the Springmill community. A visual earth berm is proposed between new US 301 and the Springmill community.

Why Spur Road Option 3B?

Spur Road Option 3B provides a limited access Spur Road, where all other options resulted in one or more intersections on the Spur Road. Option 3B improves the sharp curve on SR 896, south of Summit Bridge and removes the traffic signal on the sharp curve. Finally, the north-serving interchange between Bethel Church Road extended and the Spur Road reduces potential noise associated with the proposed intersection(s) under all other alternatives, and by not providing intersections on the Spur Road would not accelerate or encourage development in the area as a result of additional access.

Why NOT Green South + Spur (As suggested by the Airmont Community)? (see attached graphic)

While Green South + Spur is located at a greater distance from the Airmont community and St. Georges Vocational Technical School and has less habitat impacts, Green North has the following advantages over Green South + Spur, particularly regarding impacts to the natural environment:

- Lower impacts to wetlands, forestland, streams, and historic resources
- Provides a more perpendicular crossing of the sensitive Scott Run environmental complex
- Provides a single crossing of Scott Run, as compared to Green South's two crossings
- Green North + Spur passes under Jamison Corner Road (easier to mitigate visual and noise effects), as opposed to over (Green South)

Yellow Alternative

Description (see attached graphic)

The Yellow Alternative would provide a four-lane, limited access tolled highway constructed along existing US 301 from the Delaware/Maryland state line to the Mt. Pleasant area, where the roadway would turn east and extend parallel to existing Boyds Corner Road, and interchange with SR1 just north of the SR1/Boyds Corner Road Interchange. Slip ramps to and from US 301 would be provided north of Armstrong Corner Road and service roads would be provided from Bunker Hill Road to Churchtown Road and would allow access for properties along existing US 301 and for the circulation of local traffic in the north-south corridor, while existing Boyds Corner Road would provide local access in the east-west corridor.

Why NOT Yellow?

While Yellow has lower stream, forest land, and habitat area impacts than Green North + Spur, and would locate new US 301 along two existing roadways, it has the following disadvantages when compared to Green North + Spur:

- Only alternative with unavoidable, direct impacts to historic structures [fatal flaw for federal funding under Section 4(f)]
- Greater wetlands impacts (50 acres vs. 26 acres)
- Greater number of communities within 600 feet of new US 301 (along existing US 301 and Boyds Corner Road) - 7 existing/3 proposed vs. 5 existing/1 proposed
- Close proximity to Cedar Lane Schools, New Covenant Church, and Grande View Farms community, and direct impacts to the Odessa Volunteer Fire Co. substation, and proposed Livable Delaware Community of Bayberry
- Difficult to minimize impacts on adjacent existing and proposed communities since much of Yellow Alternative is elevated to cross over local roadways intersecting existing US 301 and Boyds Corner Road, while Green North + Spur passes under most local roadways
- Higher number of noise impacts on residences (74 vs. 32)
- Higher cost alternative (\$686-758 million vs. \$534-590 million)

- Highest Number of properties directly impacted and highest number of required relocations (377/161 vs. 132/13)
- Greatest traffic impacts during construction (in existing US 301 and Boyds Corner Road corridors)
- Does not significantly reduce traffic on Choptank Road (other three alternatives do)

Purple Alternative

Description (see attached graphic)

The Purple + Spur Alternative would provide a four-lane, limited access tolled highway constructed on new location, from the Delaware/Maryland state line to south of Armstrong Corner Road, west of Middletown, then curve northeast to SR 896, and extend parallel to existing Boyds Corner Road and interchange with SR1 just north of the SR1/Boyds Corner Road interchange. Interchanges would be provided at Levels Road and existing US 301/Armstrong Corner Road. A two-lane, limited access spur roadway would extend from north of Armstrong Corner Road to just south of the Summit Bridge.

Why NOT Purple?

While the Purple + Spur Alternative has less impacts on wetlands, the Purple Alternative has the following disadvantages when compared to Green North + Spur:

- Greater number of existing and proposed communities within 600 feet of new roadway (6 and 4 vs. 5 and 1)
- Greater impacts to streams, agricultural preservation easements, forestland, historic resources, and properties
- Significantly greater noise impacts on residential properties (77 vs. 32)
- Close proximity to Cedar Lane Schools, New Covenant Church, and Grande View Farms community, and direct impacts to the Odessa Volunteer Fire Co. substation, and proposed Livable Delaware Community of Bayberry
- Extremely difficult to mitigate impacts on adjacent communities because Purple Alternative is elevated along Boyds Corner Road and cannot be lowered due to need to pass over Boyds Corner Road twice, Jamison Corner Road, realigned Shallcross Lake Road, US 13, and SR1
- Higher cost (\$616-680 million vs. \$534 vs. \$590 million)
- However, second most public support by those expressing an opinion (after Green + Spur)

Brown Alternative

Description (see attached graphic)

The Brown Alternative would provide a four-lane, limited access tolled highway constructed on new location, west of Middletown, on a north/south alignment from the Delaware/Maryland state line to south of Summit Bridge and then extend easterly, south of the C&D Canal, and interchange with SR1, between the Biddles Corner Toll Plaza and the SR1 bridge over the C&D Canal. Interchanges would be provided at Levels Road, SR 896/SR 15, and at Jamison Corner Road.

Why NOT Brown?

While the Brown Alternative has less impacts on wetlands and historic resources, lower properties directly impacted, less noise impacts on residential properties, and a cost estimate similar to Green North + Spur, the Brown Alternative has the following disadvantages in comparison with the Green North + Spur Alternative:

- Greater impacts on high quality wetlands, agricultural preservation easements, forestland, and species habitat
- Brown South has a direct impact on existing Summit Airport runway and support buildings and on the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) approved expansion plans (fatal flaw – FAA would object to Brown South)
- Brown North impacts the clear zone and the FAA approved expansion plans (potential fatal flaw - FAA would likely object to Brown North)
- Difficult to minimize impacts on four communities near US 301/SR 896/ SR 15 because of complex 3-level interchange and elevated roadways
- Does not provide local access to new US 301 between Levels Road and SR 896/SR 15, south of Summit Bridge (other three alternatives provide local access in existing US 301/Armstrong Corner Road area)
- Greatest public opposition by those expressing an opinion

Note:

- *Summit Airport is a FAA designated reliever airport, 85 employees, 100 based aircraft, State Police helicopter operations*
- *Cost estimates for the Brown Alternative do not include relocation of or modifications to Summit Airport.*















