

Coalition for Smarter Growth

Summary of Low-Impact Alternative Transportation Proposal for the Environs of Manassas National Battlefield

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Every effort should be made to preserve Manassas National Battlefield for future generations and the very important role it played in American history. Therefore, any transportation proposals must avoid the impact on Manassas National Battlefield to the maximum extent possible. Our coalition of smart growth, conservation and historic preservation groups has offered a composite set of alternatives that would have low-impact on the battlefield while providing both transportation solutions and closure of the roads through the battlefield (what we are calling our "low-impact alternative").

We offered these solutions in our comments on the 2005 Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Tri-County Parkway and for the 2005 DEIS for the Manassas Battlefield Bypass. We also commissioned a technical analysis of the official studies by a nationally recognized transportation consultant and traffic modeler, Norm Marshall of Smart Mobility, Inc., who demonstrated that the proposed highways failed to address the primary transportation needs in the area and failed consider a composite alternative approach. Since then, we have provided a series of comments during the Section 106 historic preservation consulting process, but have not won consideration of our "low-impact" alternative which would meet the preferred goal of Section 106, the avoidance of harm to the historic resource.

What is that alternative? It requires a comprehensive set of investments, some of which are in planning by VDOT today. These investments address the primary transportation needs in the study area for both the Tri-County Parkway and the Manassas Battlefield Bypass and meet the shared goal of the National Park Service and our groups to remove traffic from the park. They involve:

- Addressing east-west traffic (which accounts for the vast majority of traffic in this area) by improving east-west commuter corridors I-66 and Route 50 through:
 - Extension of dedicated express bus and high-occupancy vehicle lanes on both highways
 - Extension of Virginia Railway Express to Gainesville and Haymarket
 - Completion of the Gainesville Interchange at Route 29 and I-66
 - Co-locating the portion of Route 29 that runs through the Battlefield onto I-66, and closing that section of Route 29 to through traffic
 - Completing parallel roads for Route 50 to connect local residents with retail areas; along with new interchanges at major bottleneck points on Route 50

- Investments in the Route 28 corridor:
 - Ensuring good access to Dulles Airport and the concentrations of jobs in the Dulles Corridor by completing the installation of interchanges along Route 28 between I-66 and the airport and conversion of one lane to dedicated express bus and HOV service.
 - Improving access to I-66 and to the Dulles Corridor for Manassas area residents by continued upgrades to Route 28 south of I-66.
- Addressing local transportation near the battlefield:
 - Ensure local traffic flow by using roundabouts at key intersections including Pageland Lane/Route 29, Pageland Lane/Sudley Road (Rt 234), Sudley Road (Rt 234)/Gum Springs Road (659) and other local roads. Most of the delay on local roads can be attributed to traffic lights. The nearby roundabouts at Route 50 and Route 15, which replaced a traffic light which had led to severe backups, have demonstrated their effectiveness in eliminating all delays and in moving higher traffic volumes than are currently found near the battlefield
 - For additional local east-west movement, reevaluate Alternative G from the Manassas Battlefield bypass study, using the existing road between the park headquarters and Groveton Road which runs adjacent to I-66. Traffic could be directed over the Groveton overpass to roads on the south side of I-66 or the road could be extended to the shopping center at the northwest quadrant of I-66 and Route 234. Similarly, to the north of the battlefield, Cedar Ridge Boulevard could be used to provide an east-west connection to Bull Run Post Office Road and a future connection to Pleasant Valley Road and Braddock Road.
 - For access to retail services, local residents north of the Battlefield now have access to alternate shopping outlets, that do not require driving due south through the battlefield to Manassas. New locations for retail and other services include Loudoun's Route 50 Corridor, Gainesville, and Haymarket
- Other general improvements:
 - Protecting Prince William County's Rural Crescent and the Loudoun Transition Zone from the overdevelopment that would add more traffic to major east-west commuting routes -- using zoning protection, conservation easements, and other tools -- while shifting development to locations with enhanced access to transit.
 - Targeting local road and safety improvements to cost-effectively reduce incidents in the high accident sections of major highways and arterials.

This comprehensive approach avoids or minimizes the harm to the Battlefield and the Historic District that the MBB and TCP would inflict while also providing alternatives for the traffic that currently uses Route 29 or Route 234 through the Battlefield. It also focuses scarce resources on the dominant movement of east-west commuter traffic and allows for local traffic movement and accessibility.