



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Commonwealth Transportation Board

W. Sheppard Miller, III
Chairperson

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Richmond, Virginia 23219

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Agenda item # 6

RESOLUTION OF THE COMMONWEALTH TRANSPORTATION BOARD

June 21, 2022

MOTION

Made By: Ms. Hynes **Seconded By:** Mr. Johnsen

Action: Motion carried, unanimously

**Title: Highway Naming: Renaming State Route 7 to “Leesburg Pike” and
Commemoratively Naming State Route 7 the “Billy Pierce Memorial Pike” in the Town of
Purcellville**

WHEREAS, in response to a request submitted by Loudoun County to the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) on February 15, 2022, the CTB renamed the portion of Route 7 in Loudoun County from “Harry Byrd Highway” to “Leesburg Pike”; and

WHEREAS, in response to a request submitted by the Town of Purcellville to the CTB on March 15, 2022, the CTB renamed the portion of Route 7 in Purcellville from “Harry Byrd Highway” to the “Billy Pierce Memorial Pike”; and

WHEREAS, the Administrator of Loudoun County has notified Purcellville that the County is not in support of renaming Route 7 in Purcellville to “Billy Pierce Memorial Pike” as changing the primary name of the road would negatively affect the safe and efficient delivery of public safety services; and

WHEREAS, representatives from Loudoun County Fire and Rescue, in a presentation to the Purcellville Town Council, confirmed that Loudoun County’s GIS is unable to accommodate the number of characters in the name “Billy Pierce Memorial Pike”; and

Resolution of the Board

Highway Naming: Renaming Portion of State Route 7 to “Leesburg Pike” and Commemoratively Naming the Portion of State Route 7 to “Billy Pierce Memorial Pike” in the Town of Purcellville
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WHEREAS, Loudoun County staff recommended that the Town of Purcellville revise its request to the CTB regarding Route 7 such that the CTB approve the name “Billy Pierce Memorial Pike” as a memorial/commemorative name rather than the primary name of the road.

WHEREAS, in response to the concerns raised by Loudoun County and accordance with § 33.2-213 of the *Code of Virginia*, by resolution dated May 10, 2022, the Town Council of Purcellville has expressed its intent and requested that the CTB rename the portion of Route 7 located within the corporate limits of the Town of Purcellville, from “Billy Pierce Memorial Pike” to “Leesburg Pike”, as the highway’s primary name; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with § 33.2-213 of the *Code of Virginia*, by resolution dated May 10, 2022, the Town Council of Purcellville has also expressed its intent and requested that, if the CTB renames Route 7 within the corporate limits of the town to “Leesburg Pike”, the CTB then commemoratively name the portion of Route 7 located within the corporate limits of the Town of Purcellville to “Billy Pierce Memorial Pike”; and

WHEREAS, § 33.2-213 provides that the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) shall place and maintain appropriate signs indicating the names of highways, bridges, interchanges, and other transportation facilities named by the CTB and requires that the costs of producing, placing, and maintaining such signs shall be paid by the localities in which they are located or by the private entity whose name is attached to the transportation facility so named; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Purcellville, in its resolution of May 10, 2022, has acknowledged and agreed that pursuant to § 33.2-213, the locality in which the signs are located shall pay the costs of producing, placing, and maintaining the signs calling attention to namings requested by localities and approved by the CTB, and has noted that Loudoun County has agreed to pay the costs of signage for these namings requested by the town.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, pursuant to § 33.2-213 of the *Code of Virginia*, the CTB hereby renames the portion of State Route 7 that is within the corporate limits of the Town of Purcellville, from “Billy Pierce Memorial Pike” to “Leesburg Pike”, as the highway’s primary name.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, pursuant to § 33.2-213 of the *Code of Virginia*, the CTB hereby commemoratively names the portion of State Route 7 that is within the corporate limits of the Town of Purcellville the “Billy Pierce Memorial Pike”.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VDOT is directed to produce, place, and maintain the signs calling attention to these namings after VDOT has secured payment for the costs of the signage as required by law.

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CTB Decision Brief

Highway Naming: Renaming Portion of State Route 7 to “Leesburg Pike” and Commemoratively Naming the Portion of State Route 7, Leesburg Pike, the “Billy Pierce Memorial Pike” in the Town of Purcellville

Issue: Approval of the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) is sought for (i) the renaming of a portion of State Route 7, located within the corporate limits of the Town of Purcellville, from “Billy Pierce Memorial Pike” to “Leesburg Pike”, and also for (ii) the memorial/commemorative naming of the same portion of State Route 7 as the “Billy Pierce Memorial Pike” as requested by the Town of Purcellville, pursuant to § 33.2-213 of the *Code of Virginia*.

Facts: The Town Council of Purcellville enacted a resolution on January 11, 2022 requesting that the CTB *rename* the portion of Route 7 located within the Town of Purcellville from “Harry Byrd Highway” to “Billy Pierce Memorial Pike”. The Commonwealth Transportation Board approved that request at its meeting on March 15, 2022.

However, the Administrator of Loudoun County subsequently notified Purcellville that the County was not in support of renaming Route 7 in Purcellville to “Billy Pierce Memorial Pike” as this change in the primary name of the highway would negatively affect the safe and efficient delivery of public safety services.

- The portion of Route 7 in Loudoun County had been renamed by the CTB from “Harry Byrd Highway” to “Leesburg Pike” in February, 2022.
- Representatives from Loudoun County Fire and Rescue presented an update to the Purcellville Town Council and confirmed that Loudoun’s GIS cannot accommodate the number of characters proposed in naming the road “Billy Pierce Memorial Pike”. Accordingly, Loudoun County staff recommended that the Town of Purcellville revise its request to the CTB regarding Route 7 such that the CTB approve the name “Billy Pierce Memorial Pike” as a memorial/commemorative name rather than the primary name of the road.

The Town of Purcellville, in response to the concerns raised by Loudoun County, has revised its request to the CTB regarding the name of Route 7 within the boundaries of the Town as follows:

- That the CTB *rename* the Route from “Billy Pierce Memorial Pike” to “Leesburg Pike” so that the highway’s primary name would, in effect, be “Leesburg Pike” and would be consistent with the name of Route 7 in Loudoun County; and
- If the CTB renames the Route to “Leesburg Pike”, that the CTB then commemoratively name the Route within the boundaries of the Town, the “Billy Pierce Memorial Pike”.

Thus far, no measures to implement the CTB's March 15, 2022 renaming of Route 7 from Harry Byrd Highway to Billy Pierce Memorial Pike within the Town of Purcellville have been undertaken, nor have any costs been incurred.

According to Purcellville's May 10, 2022 resolution, William Joseph Pierce was an African American choreographer, dancer and dance studio owner who has been credited with the invention of the Black Bottom dance that became a national craze in the mid-1920's.

Billy Pierce was born in Purcellville, Virginia on June 14, 1890. He attended Storer College and Howard University. He served in World War I with the 8th Infantry Regiment of the Illinois National Guard.

He started out as a journalist eventually writing for the Chicago Defender, the premier African American newspaper of its time. He wrote about the arts but eventually left his typewriter for the theater. He began as a dancer and trombonist in vaudeville and performed as a banjoist in Dr. Diamond Dick's Kickapoo Medicine Show on the Theater Owners Booking Association circuit of black vaudeville theaters, which took him to New York City.

He opened a dance studio with Leonard Harper in one room on the top floor of the Navex building where he doubled as an elevator operator. By 1929 his studio was the largest of its kind. Oscar-winning actor Clifton Webb honed his dancing skills at Pierce's studio where Mr. Pierce developed the "Moaning Low" dance routine for Mr. Webb and Libby Holman for The Little Show in 1931.

Along with Benny Rubin he did the choreography for the 1927 musical Half a Widow. He also created "The Sugar Foot Strut" dance for the hit musical Rio Rita in 1927 and developed a show-stopping routine for Norma Terris in the 1927 production of Show Boat and its 1932 revival. He also choreographed the dances in the 1932 musical revue Walk a Little Faster.

Billy Pierce married Nona Stovall in 1927 and they had two children. His career was cut short when passed away from mastoiditis in 1933 at the age of 42.

Pursuant to § 33.2-213, the CTB has the power and duty to give suitable names to state highways, bridges, interchanges, and other transportation facilities and change the names of any highways, bridges, interchanges, or other transportation facilities forming a part of the systems of state highways, provided that, in a case such as this, the governing body within which the portion of the facility is located has passed a resolution requesting such naming. Pursuant to the statute, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) shall place and maintain appropriate signs indicating the names of highways, bridges, interchanges, and other transportation facilities named by the CTB, while the costs of producing, placing, and maintaining these signs shall be paid by the localities in which they are located.

Recommendations: VDOT recommends this request be approved.

Action Required by CTB: The *Code of Virginia*, § 33.2-213, requires a majority of the CTB members to approve a resolution naming a highway or bridge, as appropriate. A resolution will be provided for the CTB's consideration.

Result if Approved: The primary name for the portion of State Route 7 within the corporate limits of the Town of Purcellville will be renamed from "Billy Pierce Memorial Pike" to "Leesburg Pike" and the portion of State Route 7 within the corporate limits of the Town of Purcellville will also bear the commemorative name of "Billy Pierce Memorial Pike", as requested by the Town. The Town of Purcellville, in its May 10, 2022 resolution, has acknowledged and agreed that pursuant to § 33.2-213, the locality in which the signs are located (Purcellville) is required to pay the costs of producing, placing and maintaining the signs calling attention to this naming, but notes that Loudoun County has agreed to pay these costs. The requirement for payment of signage costs applies to both the signage relating to the renaming and the signage relating to the commemorative naming. VDOT will secure payment prior to fabricating and placing the signs for these namings.

Options: Approve, Deny, or Defer.

Public Comments/Reactions: VDOT is not aware of any opposition to this proposal.

Mayor
Kwasi A. Fraser

Town Manager
David A. Mekarski

Council
Christopher Bertaut
Joel D. Grewe
Stanley J. Milan, Sr.
Erin Rayner
Tip Stinnette
Mary Jane Williams



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**TOWN OF PURCELLVILLE
IN
LOUDOUN COUNTY, VIRGINIA**

RESOLUTION NO. 22-04-03

**PRESENTED: MAY 10, 2022
ADOPTED: MAY 10, 2022**

A RESOLUTION: TO REQUEST RENAMING ROUTE 7 IN THE TOWN OF PURCELLVILLE FROM, BILLY PIERCE MEMORIAL PIKE, TO ‘LEESBURG PIKE’ AND TO COMMEMORATIVELY NAME THE SAME HIGHWAY ‘BILLY PIERCE MEMORIAL PIKE’

WHEREAS, William Joseph Pierce (aka Billy Pierce) was an African American choreographer, dancer and dance studio owner who has been credited with the invention of the Black Bottom dance that became a national craze in the mid-1920s; and

WHEREAS, Billy Pierce was born on June 14, 1890 to Dennis and Nellie Pierce in Purcellville, Virginia; and

WHEREAS, Billy Pierce matriculated first at Storer College, a historically black college in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, that operated from 1867 to 1955. Storer College was a national icon for Black Americans, in the town where the end of American slavery began, as Frederick Douglass famously put it. Billy Pierce later attended Howard University; and

WHEREAS, Billy Pierce served in World War I with the 8th Infantry Regiment of the Illinois National Guard, an all-black unit commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Otis B. Duncan, the highest ranking black officer in the United States Army during the War to End All Wars; and

WHEREAS, Billy Pierce started out as a journalist, eventually moving to Chicago to write for the Chicago Defender, the premier African American newspaper of its time; and

WHEREAS, as a journalist, Billy Pierce wrote about the arts, but eventually left his typewriter for a life in the theater. Starting in Chicago, he made his bones as a dancer and trombonist in [vaudeville](#) and performed as a banjoist in Dr. Diamond Dick's Kickapoo Medicine Show on the [Theater Owners Booking Association](#) circuit of black vaudeville theaters, which took him to New York City; and

WHEREAS, Billy Pierce conceived the idea of a dance studio along with Leonard Harper, and Pierce brought their idea to fruition when he opened a dance studio in one room on the top floor of the Navex building on 46th Street west of Broadway where he doubled as an elevator operator; and

A RESOLUTION: TO REQUEST RENAMING ROUTE 7 IN THE TOWN OF PURCELLVILLE FROM, BILLY PIERCE MEMORIAL PIKE, TO ‘LEESBURG PIKE’ AND TO COMMEMORATIVELY NAME THE SAME HIGHWAY ‘BILLY PIERCE MEMORIAL PIKE’

WHEREAS, as choreographer and originator of dances broadly popular during the Jazz Age, Billy Pierce bridged America’s racial divide decades before the Civil Rights Movement; and

WHEREAS, the Billy Pierce Dance Studio at 223 West 46th Street in New York flourished and became one of the incubators for the cultural flowering known to posterity as the [Harlem Renaissance](#). By 1929, Pierce's studio—the "largest of its kind" according to the [Afro American](#) newspaper—occupied five rooms in the bottom two floors of the building; and

WHEREAS, before he became an Oscar-winning character actor, Clifton Webb honed his dancing skills at Pierce's studio. Billy Pierce developed the "Moaning Low" dance routine for "Cliff" Webb, as he was then known, and Libby Holman for The Little Show in 1931; and

WHEREAS, Billy Pierce, along with Benny Rubin, did the choreography for the 1927 musical Half a Widow, one of the few Broadway shows for which he received credit. Billy Pierce also created "The Sugar Foot Strut" dance for the smash hit musical Rio Rita (1927) and developed a show-stopping routine for Norma Terris, who played Magnolia in the original 1927 production of Show Boat and its 1932 revival. Billy Pierce also received credit for choreographing the dances in the 1932 musical revue Walk a Little Faster; and

WHEREAS, Billy Pierce married Nona Stovall in 1927, and they had two children, Billy Jr. (1928) and Denise (1930). His career was cut short when he died from [mastoiditis](#) in 1933 at age 42; and

WHEREAS, on January 11, 2022, the Purcellville Town Council adopted Resolution 22-01-01 to rename Harry Byrd Highway (Route 7) within the Town of Purcellville corporate limits to Billy Pierce Memorial Pike; and

WHEREAS, on February 9, 2022 the adopted resolution was submitted to Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to present to the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) for review and approval; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) unanimously approved the resolution at their meeting on March 15, 2022, renaming Route 7 in the Town of Purcellville from Harry Byrd Highway to Billy Pierce Memorial Pike and the Town of Purcellville was notified of such approval and renaming on March 18, 2022 by way of a copy of the resolution adopted by the CTB; and

WHEREAS, at the request of Loudoun County, the CTB had previously approved a resolution at their meeting on February 15, 2022 to rename the portion of Route 7 that is within the boundaries of Loudoun County, from “Harry Byrd Highway” to “Leesburg Pike”; and

WHEREAS, on March 17, 2022 Town Manager David Mekarski received a letter from Loudoun County Administrator Tim Hemstreet stating the County is not in support of the renaming of Route 7 in Purcellville to Billy Pierce Memorial Pike, as it would negatively affect the safe and efficient delivery of public safety services; and

A RESOLUTION: TO REQUEST RENAMING ROUTE 7 IN THE TOWN OF PURCELLVILLE FROM, BILLY PIERCE MEMORIAL PIKE, TO 'LEESBURG PIKE' AND TO COMMEMORATIVELY NAME THE SAME HIGHWAY 'BILLY PIERCE MEMORIAL PIKE'

WHEREAS, at the Purcellville Town Council Meeting on March 24, 2022, representatives from Loudoun County presented their concerns with public safety in regards to the Route 7 name change in Purcellville, which opened a discussion on the possibility of using "Billy Pierce Memorial Pike" as a memorial/commemorative name as opposed to the primary name; and

WHEREAS, representatives from Loudoun County Fire and Rescue presented an update to the Purcellville Town Council on April 12, 2022 and confirmed Loudoun's GIS cannot accommodate the number of characters proposed in "Billy Pierce Memorial Pike", however the CAD system, Google Maps, OMAGI and Waze may accommodate multiple aliases; and

WHEREAS, Loudoun County staff recommended the Purcellville Town Council revise the request to the CTB regarding Route 7 in Purcellville, such that the name "Billy Pierce Memorial Pike" be approved as a memorial/commemorative name rather than the primary name.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Purcellville Town Council requests that the CTB rename Route 7 from "Billy Pierce Memorial Pike" to "Leesburg Pike" within the Town of Purcellville, to be consistent with the name of Route 7 in Loudoun County.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, if the CTB approves the request to rename Route 7 in Purcellville to Leesburg Pike, Purcellville Town Council, in accordance with Section 33.2-213 of the *Code of Virginia* and for the reasons expressed in the Town Council Resolution 22-01-01 dated January 11, 2022, does hereby request that the CTB commemoratively name Route 7, within the boundaries of the Town of Purcellville, the "Billy Pierce Memorial Pike".

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Purcellville Town Council acknowledges and agrees that pursuant to §33.2-213, the locality in which the signs are located is required to pay the costs of producing, placing and maintaining the signs calling attention to this naming, Loudoun County has agreed to pay these costs.

PASSED THIS 10th DAY OF MAY, 2022.



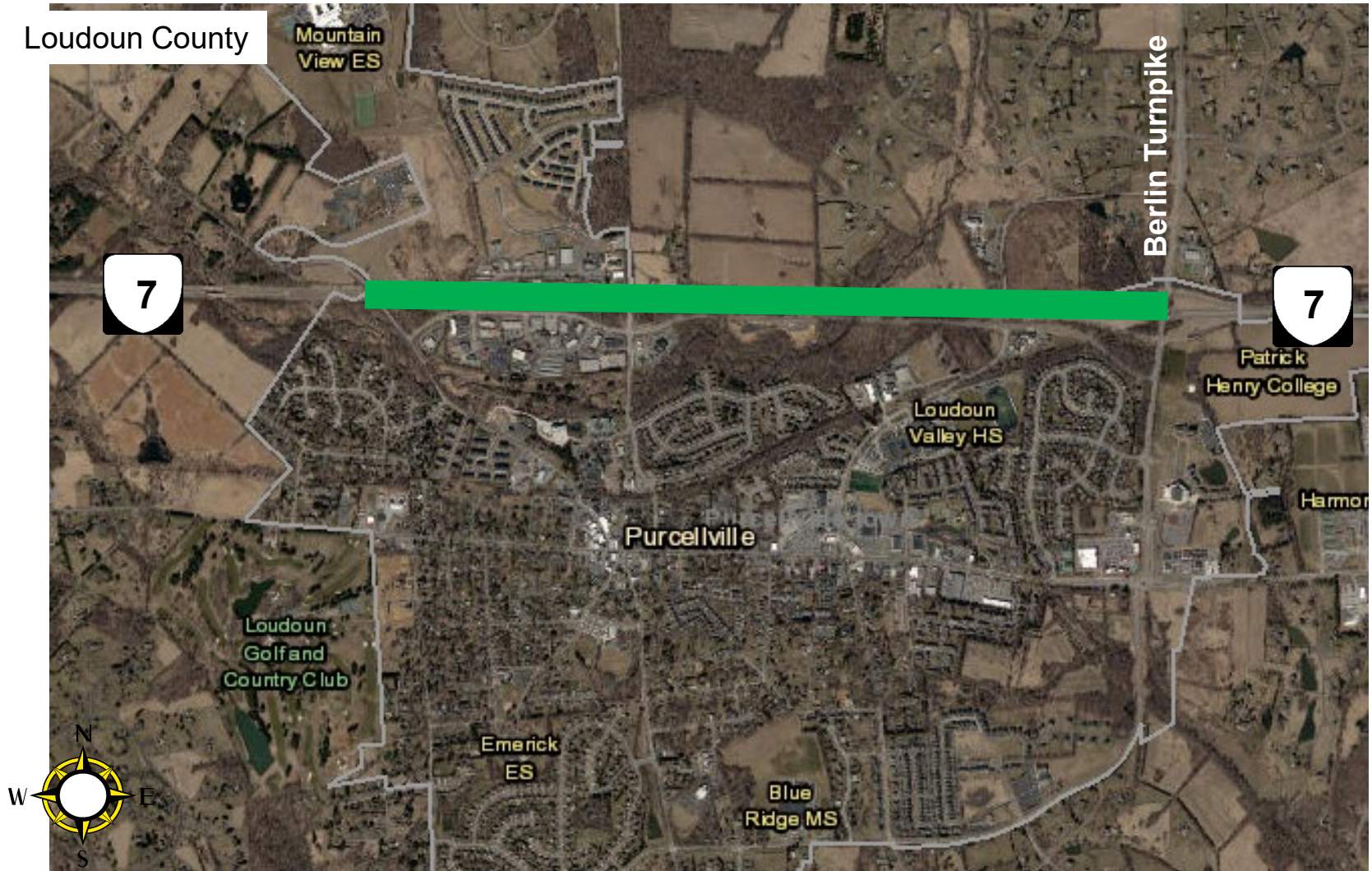
Kwasi A. Fraser, Mayor
Town of Purcellville

ATTEST:



Diana Hays, Town Clerk


Loudoun County



Virginia Department of Transportation
Maintenance Division CTB
MEETING: June 21, 2022

Town of Purcellville

Proposed Highway Segment Naming:
“Billy Pierce Memorial Pike”

 Proposed Highway Naming