PUBLIC HEARING HOSTED BY THE COMMONWEALTH
TRANSPORTATION BOARD
-- SIX-YEAR IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM --

VIRGINIA:

May 22, 2007
7:00 a.m.
Salem Civic Center
1001 Boulevard
Salem, VA 24153-0886

TRANSPORTATION BOARD MEMBERS:

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(7:00 a.m.)

MR. HOMER: Good evening. My name is Pierce Homer. I'm Governor Kaine's secretary of transportation. I have the pleasure of sharing the Commonwealth Transportation Board. I would like to welcome everyone here tonight for our public hearing on the six-year program. And the purpose of tonight's session is to receive public comment on the draft six-year program that is principally about interstate and primary highways.

That does not prohibit you from talking about anything that you want tonight, as long as it's about transportation. And we do welcome those comments.

I would like to make a couple of notes. First, if you're interested in a local street, so an urban street or a secondary highway, those decisions are made by your local governing bodies, city council, a town council or your board of
county supervisors, and probably advocacy
for or against projects in the second urban
system are probably left to the local level.

Second point I'd like to make is a
little bit of note of history where this
last session of the general assembly after
many years has agreed upon an enhanced
funding package. That does allow the
Commonwealth of Transportation Board as well
as the General Assembly to undertake some
new projects.

Quite frankly -- and I have been
involved in transportation in the state
level for five years -- we have perfected
the art of reducing the program, eliminating
projects and cutting, and this is the first
year that we have actually had to turn
around and start adding projects. And
that's a little bit of a new thing for us.
We've not had that experience in many years.
So forgive us if we make some mistakes.

In anticipation of that, one of the
things we did was to not fully allocate all
the money that was made available to us by
the General Assembly. So in tonight's
interstate and primary program there's about
500 million dollars state-wide that has not
yet been allocated, and I will tell you
there are some projects in communities that
have shown up in the plan in previous years
as maybe, kind of going to happen, and there
is not -- for example, in some those
projects, that money is not shown. And the
reason for that is we're in a historical
moment where we really have to make sure
where we can actually -- that we're picking
the right projects at the right time. So
this is a pause to make sure that things
that have been in the plan for some time
are, in fact, the right projects. So that
may be one of the reasons, if you look for a
project to see if it's being advanced and
you don't see that, understand that there is
a fairly significant sum of money which is
not allocated. That's one of the principal
decisions that the Commonwealth
Transportation Board will have to make.

With that, by way of introduction, I
would just like to acknowledge a couple of folks at the dais with me. James Keen, At-Large Rural. To his right is Mr. James Bowie who represents the Bristol district. To my immediate left is David Ekern. Dave is the Commissioner of the Department of Transportation. And I believe this is your second now public session here in the Salem District, so welcome.

To my right is your district representative, Dana Martin, who has been on the Commonwealth Transportation Board five years now?

MR. MARTIN: Four.

MR. PIERCE: Four years. And really, when you have an issue or problem, there are two people you can come to. One is Dana. And the other here is Richard Caywood. Richard is your district administrator. And I'm amiss also for Bristol District, Mr. Bowie, if you're from the Bristol District, you have a problem, you call Mr. Bowie or Mr. Jim Givens who's the district administrator for the Bristol
District, both in the front row. Their phone number is very accessible. They love those citizens' calls.

And finally, to my right is Kevin Page. Kevin is the Deputy Director of the Department of Rail and Transportation. He's standing in for his boss, Mr. Matt Tucker who's unable to be with us tonight. But we do take comments about our rail and public transportation program as well as primary highways and interstate tonight.

Are there any other questions or comments? If not, what I would like to just say is we're going to limit commentary to three minutes, and I'll hold up a little yellow piece of paper if you start to run over. We won't be too strict about that, but we do ask that you respect other people's times.

I would also like to acknowledge the presence of a couple -- a special guest. I know he's going to be testifying, but Senator Roscoe Reynolds made the trip here. Thank you so much, Senator, for being here.
From the Town of Abingdon, Mayor Humphreys. Mayor, welcome. Former mayor, now council member, French Moore. We also have from Alleghany County, Mr. Rickey May. And from Henry County, Mr. H. G. Vaughn. Welcome all.

I'm going to jump right into the public testimony. We're going to start with Senator Reynolds. And thank you, Senator, for making this trip. He's going to be followed by Cheryl Daniels.

SENATOR REYNOLDS: Mr. Secretary, thank you very much. Commissioner, members of the transportation board, thank you for this opportunity. I'm going to do the best I can to convince you to spend all that money in the 20th Senatorial District. While it sounds unfair to some, it seems perfectly fair and appropriate to me.

I-73, you know, briefly I'll tell you that we continue to be devastated by the further loss of textile and furnished jobs in Southside, Southwest Virginia. It seems not a day goes by that there's not some
announcement of a layoff or closing and the
devastating affect it's having on job
opportunities in Southside and Southwest.
It gets overwhelming. I-73 will be a big
step in reversing that trend.

I'm here tonight, as I said to you
last year about this time, the people of
Henry County and Martinsville believe that
I-73 is a key to their future, and they're
here tonight to ask you to please go forward
with the construction on I-73 as soon as
possible. If there's anything I can do as a
member of the General Assembly to make sure
that dream becomes a reality, starting
there, just east of Martinsville, to go down
towards North Carolina line, I would be
grateful and appreciate it.

It's hard to believe that it was
1987, when I was a member of the General
Assembly, the Route 58 legislation passed.
I appreciate more than I can say to the
leadership that Governor Kaine and Governor
Warner provided by including funding for the
Route 58 Bypass. That's absolutely
necessary for Hillsville, Carroll County, and for the dream we have of connecting up to I-77. The traffic there at various times in the Town of Hillsville basically comes to a stop because the main drag through there is Route 58, and the bypass is absolutely essential. As you know, Mr. Secretary, Mr. Commissioner, some of the property was bought quite some time ago, homes were emptied, and people are looking forward to that construction taking place. It's still powerful and important to get 58 complete between Hillsville and Stuart. If there's anything I can do to help that in any way, please let me know.

Likewise, I-81, you know, without me saying very much about it, that complaints continue to come in from citizens. One of the great things about having a clear shot on Route 58 from 77 to the coast is it will take a lot of tractor trailer traffic off of 81 and 64.

Montgomery County, Patrick and Floyd County, one of the primary concerns, of
course, is Route 8. Every locality that I represent -- I know secondary routes might not be the real issue here tonight. But if there's anything that can be done to help the localities with the secondary routes, they are having just overwhelming problems dealing with that. I get constant complaints and requests from Wythe County, Grayson County, Carroll County, Floyd County, Patrick County, about the many, many remaining miles of unpaved roads that have high traffic count. Bridges, of course, same thing. Every locality is saying something has got to be done about the bridges.

Consolidation of services, I beg of you to keep in mind, when you're doing that, please do it in such a way, if you have to do it, that you maintain services to the citizens. And finally, it's never fair for me to talk about transportation means without singing the praises of your employees. Mr. Givens and Mr. Caywood are just always very, very responsive to
citizens' needs, as are all of your employees. You do a great job in providing leadership for them.

You heard me say it before, but I feel it very, very strongly, that when it comes to providing services to the citizens, the Department of Transportation goes out of the way to try to help citizens, and I appreciate more than I can say that willingness to provide services to the citizens.

If there are actions I can take as a member of the General Assembly that will be helpful to you and to them, I hope you will let me know. Thank you for letting me have this opportunity.

MR. PIERCE: Thank you so much, Senator. If I -- if I may diverge from the accepted order a little bit, I did want to acknowledge Delegate Morgan Griffith here, the host. If you want to come up and welcome us to your district and hometown and make any comments, we would love to hear from you, Mr. Griffith.
MR. GRIFFITH: Thank you, very much. As always, I'm very pleased to have you-all here. It is my hometown, my home area. With the exception of the time I count my years in exile while I was in college and law school, I have lived within a mile of this location, maybe a mile and a half, my entire life. It's a great pleasure to have you-all here. I hope you enjoy your stay, and, you know, it doesn't get too long. In effort to help that, let me make my comments quickly. And before I do, I will say I appreciate everything that you-all do.

With the additional funding that hopefully will be coming on here in a few months and years, we have needs as every other district does, in the 8th Legislative District, 11-460 west of Salem I think is critical. I think it's critical for two reasons. One because of the bottleneck there. It's got a three-mile stretch where it's two lanes. The rest of it is four lanes. And it parallels I-81. Any work that then needs to be done on I-81 in the
Salem to Montgomery County area, becomes traffic on 11-460. If there's an accident, it comes on the 11-460 west of Salem, and it is caught in this bottleneck. Fixing that bottleneck will be most helpful on 81, and for the regular traffic that goes through there on a daily basis. So I think that probably will be the number one priority that I would put down in the district.

Also in the district, 221, it's not an easy -- as folks can tell you, it's not an easy answer to 221, but particularly out in the Roanoke County area of 221, there's a lot of traffic. And that road also needs to be expanded. You've got -- I noticed in the audience, before I came up, there's some folks from that area. They may be better at helping you figure out what needs to be done, but we all know that something needs to be done on that particular corridor to help the traffic problem. A lot of subdivisions and others have been built. There's a lot of traffic that backs up. That area can be dangerous at times.
That being said, I also ask that you take a strong look at the other needs in the area, obviously I-81, all up and down the corridor. There's needs on 581, which is technically a sideline district. Probably 95 percent of the folks in the district will use that during a period, given six months, and so 581 is also important to the area.

And then we move to other things. I-73, I don't know that it's as vital in the short run as it would be for Senator Reynolds in the Martinsville area, but I believe long-term building that, and first it should be from Roanoke to Martinsville area, long-term building that through Virginia along the path that has been on the books for a long period of time is extremely important to the Roanoke Valley. I think it secures our position as -- as a transportation hub.

And along those lines, I would also say that the intermodal facility with Norfolk Southern, whether it be Salem or Elliston is extremely important to the
economic wellbeing of the Roanoke Valley,
and I stand here willing to take that
political risk and say that I support that
project at either location. And while
there's some concerns at the Salem location,
I support that.

I will tell you -- we haven't had a
chance to talk about this. There's some
concern about air quality and air pollution.
So as we're looking at it, we need to look
at ways to evade that, whether there's a
requirement that the trucks not sit idle
while they're waiting to reload, something
along those lines. That issue has come up.
I think it's a valid issue to be considered.

But as I've said on a number of
occasions in public speeches in the past,
one of the concerns that I have is that
while there are a lot of new tangled
businesses that come along, high tech, it's
great -- I'm very supportive of some of the
high-tech things, particularly -- I know
there's design-type research that goes on in
West Roanoke County. The efforts by
Carilion, I think those are all great.

But long-term, the meat and potatoes of the economy in Roanoke County is going to be transportation goods. It always has been, and it always will be. And so I feel very strongly this is something we need to be supportive of, because I have fear that if we don't do this, generations will look back and they'll say, what happened? They won't remember Morgan Griffith. They won't remember who was on the Transportation Board. They'll say, what happened to the political leaders 50 years ago that they couldn't see we were going to need to shore up our infrastructure, move them by rail and road? So those are the concerns that I have.

I appreciate your time here this evening. I hope I haven't talked too long. But I think these are important issues, and you-all have some important decisions to make in the next few months. And I don't envy you-all in making those decisions, but I support you in your efforts to make things
better for transportation in Western
Virginia. Thank you.

MR. FIERCE: Thank you. Our next
speaker is Delegate Danny Marshall to be
followed by Cheryl Daniels. Welcome,
delegate Marshall.

MR. MARSHAL: Good evening,
Secretary, honorable members of the
Commonwealth Transportation Board. I am
delegate Danny Marshall of the 14th House.
I represent the City of Danville, parts of
Pittsylvania County and the eastern part of
Henry County. I come before you tonight to
talk about how you can help change the
economy.

The area that I have the privilege to
serve has the highest unemployment in the
State of Virginia. One month the Virginia
Employment Commission will report that
Martinsville has the highest unemployment.
The next month it will be the
Danville area. The Danville and
Martinsville areas have a lot in common.

Through no fault of its own, we -- the folk
are passing out. As Ross Perot said, we
would have had this giant sucking sound of
jobs that were being diverted. And that has
proved true.

Though many groups have tried to help
that, in state and federal, we are moving
forward. We are on our way to prosperity.
But we have a long way to go when our area
has unemployment rates sometimes three times
what the state average is.

The New College of Martinsville and
the Institute of Advanced Learning in
Danville have showed a vision for our area
of education and support for our long-term
term success. The transportation program
can be a major part of Henry County and
Southside Virginia's economic turnaround.

I-73 will bring much needed jobs to
our area. And I ask you to consider
starting construction of I-73 at the North
Carolina and Virginia line.

I received a report from a magazine
called Area Development about economic
development. This survey is decision-makers
that ask them why you locate or extend your business in a certain area. The number four on that list in the next -- of the past several years is highway accessibility, with 89 percent of the survey rating this as supported.

Let's look at what's happening here in the State of Virginia. Well, reports are expanding, as you well know. Ameris in Newport News says they are going to take 3,000 trucks per day in and out of that project. It's just mind boggling, the amount of trucks that go in and out. If those trucks are going -- coming or either going to the west, how are they going to get there? They're going to use I-64 and I-81 to get to and from those ports.

The State of Virginia has a under-utilized asset in Route 58. I attended a meeting that was held in Martinsville back in the spring. And the -- with the North Carolina legislators. They told us that I-73 was a priority for them also, and they planned -- and they told us
that they planned to build I-73 to the North Carolina line. Well, if we built I-73 to the line first, then the traffic going from the ports of Virginia will have access to the west by using Route 58 to I-73, then they drop down to use I-40 West.

The citizens of Virginia will get a lot of bang for its buck. The citizens of Virginia have spent millions of dollars on Route 58, a four-lane divided highway that travels across the southern part of Virginia. This could take traffic off I-81 and I-64. Just think when America's ports starts receiving trucks later this year shipping 3,000 trucks per day extra on the highways. How much extra traffic will happen on 64 and 81?

By starting at 73 at the North Carolina line, we accomplish several things for Virginia. First of all, we help a high unemployment area bring jobs to a much needed area in Martinsville, all the way east to the coast. We will use 58 and I-73 to take traffic off of I-81 and I-64 with
traffic going to the east.
And I want to close with the thought
houses are not always about moving people or
products. Highways in Northern Virginia is
about getting to your job. Highways in
Southern Virginia is about getting a job.
Thank you for your time.

MR. PIERCE: Thank you, Delegate
Marshall. Now Cheryl Martin -- Cheryl
Daniels, to be followed by J.E. Ping.
Welcome, Ms. Daniels.

MS. DANIELS: Thank you. I thank you
for this opportunity to be here today. I am
a citizen of Roanoke County, and I have been
using public transportation for the last
seven years. I have lived in areas smaller
than Roanoke. I have lived in areas larger
than Roanoke. I am frankly disappointed
somewhat in the Roanoke transportation
system.

A large number of people in the area,
including myself, work retail jobs. We will
not get off work until 9:00, 9:30, sometimes
later at night. Bus service ends at 8:45.
This leaves us with problems getting home.
I have known people in my area who spend
anywhere from $100 to $200 a month on cab
service, if you can get a cab. I frequently
have to walk home from work. This is a mile
and a half through not very good territory.

But the service just isn't there. We
desperately need more funding for public
transportation in this area. The money
people are spending on cabs can definitely
be better utilized in the area. People will
be able to get better jobs. People have to
look at how close a job is to their home.
They may not be able to get those
high-paying jobs that they're qualified for
and need because they cannot get the
transportation.

If we can get bus service extended
even a few hours, into Sundays -- we have no
service on Sundays -- this would benefit a
great number of people.

All I have to look at, the pollution
problem in the area. Gas prices are rising.
A lot of people simply cannot afford to own
and operate a vehicle. Some people such as myself, I am concerned about the pollution. I have asthma. I know what the air in this area particularly during the summer does to me. I try and do everything I possibly can to cut emissions to help clear up the air in the family. Part of that is using public transportation. Even if I were capable of driving a vehicle right now, having the financial know-how and ability to do so, I would choose to use public transportation simply as a matter of being a good, conscientious citizen. But again, the problem is we do not have the service that we need.

The area has grown up. Valley View Mall in particular has grown tremendously. However, service has not changed in the last seven to eight years. The routes are still the same. Traffic has increased. Buses frequently are not able to meet their timed appointments. Passengers are stranded quite often. We need the money to expand the service, to improve the service so that
people who have been down and out such as
myself have a better chance to get ourselves
pulled up and not have to depend on the
government to help us with food and housing.
And we can actually become responsible
citizens who are taking care of ourselves.
Thank you for your time. I hope that you
will consider more funding.

MR. PIERCE: Thank you. The next
speaker is J.E. Ping, followed by Ira Doom.

MR. PING: Thank you. My name is
J.E. Ping. I'm from Martinsville, Henry
County. I'm a resident of Henry County, a
land owner. And I also am a heavy-duty
equipment dealer. I've been a John Deere
dealer for over 50 years. I have been here
since the bypass in Martinsville in Henry
County now. I'm on the opposite side of the
new proposal of I-73.

I would like to speak to the
committee to consider the new proposal that
we have just given you a handout for. And
we have prepared a statement that I would
like to read, to be able to get through to
my three minutes, if you would allow me to speak a little longer.

The roads need to connect people with jobs and recreational areas and places to lead them -- the current groups I feel could be better explained, for Henry County east to be the heart of Virginia for manufacturing.

We have seen the manufacturing dissipate over the last 12 years due to the global trade. We lost many companies that employed thousands of workers. With great effort and expenses we are slowly replacing them with smaller companies of 200 in size or less employees. Much of these roads have been in the Patriot Center, whose approximately 30 businesses with collective investment of approximately 400 million dollars are located, also many dollars invested by the State for roads and upgrading the Jones Creek intersection.

Henry County supervisors is investing in land and in shell buildings. The EDC is spending about $800,000 a year, trying to
promote the Patriot Center and the other
sites in Henry County. The Henry County
board of supervisors has an option to buy
1,200 acres of adjacent land through the
Patriot Center that could help the
acquisition of interstate right-of-way.
This would more than quadruple the size of
the initial Patriot Center. This is where
we need an intersection, in the heart of the
Patriot Center, in the heart of Henry
County, in the heart of Southside, Virginia.

To put an interchange in the Patriot
Center, and need that interstate,
approximately one to one half miles west
will again bring jobs and development
potential to this region. We feel it will
save them approximately 200 million dollars
to connect to the 58 bypass and save years
of acquisition and construction time.

Gentlemen, you have the power to help
more than ever by adopting this plan. Our
area needs the access to develop its
potential. Of course we all want the best
route for our area. The other route does
not have water or sewer at any of the
proposed interchanges. It has a road. And
I should say no access to the industrial
center, especially the Patriot Center. It
bypasses potential intermodal sites. It
bypasses the speedway. It bypasses the new
soccer complex. It bypasses multiple water
access ports. It bypasses Bassett, Fieldale
and Stanleytown which has existing rail
sides and buildings. It bypasses
restaurants, gas stations and shopping
centers. It puts interchanges where
restaurants and gas stations and shopping
centers would take years to reestablish,
rebuild. We need as soon as possible to
take advantage of our road -- lower than
North Carolina fuel tax and lower than North
Carolina retail tax. This is revenue for
the State that could be had very soon.

Do not let this opportunity slip
away. We suggest the proposal that you
would consider, and this proposal is a
proposal that -- we have it by Max Kendall,
and I have endorsed it, and also other
citizens of Henry County. Thank you very much.

MR. PIERCE: Thank you very much.
The next speaker is Ira Doom, to be followed by Skip Russell. Welcome, Mr. Doom.

MR. DOOM: Thank you, sir. I'm Howard Doom, TDX rail board. The chairman, French Moore, is here. So it would be more proper for him to address some of the issues. The only thing that I would like to say is that I hope that you can look at this positively in terms of getting funds released to service, help get started. That would be from Bristol to Roanoke to Richmond and so forth. Anything else I think it would be proper for the chairman to address. Thank you, sir.

MR. PIERCE: Thank you, Mr. Doom.
The next speaker is Skip Russell, to be followed by Benjamin Tripp.

MR. RUSSELL: My name is Skip Russell. I'm from Henry County. And to borrow a phrase from Mr. Homerman, the right project is I-73 starting in Henry County.
But I have an idea that it would help the State of Virginia more if we started in the Patriot Center and worked our way, way down to bypass 58 in Laurel Park. As Mr. Ping just said, there's so much investment we put into the Patriot Center and into Henry County, trying to lure jobs back there, that if we bypass the Patriot Center and don't put an interchange for those people that are investing in that industrial park, to be able to get to the interstate, and the way the route is now, it would be a treacherous on -- treacherous to get to the interstate, either up 108 to Franklin County line or else go down across Terries Mount Road (ph) to where the fire department is, where the interchange is playing out. We desperately need the jobs, the meat and potatoes Mr. Griffith was talking about is just not in Henry County right now.

We propose that using the five miles of the existing bypass could possibly save 200 million dollars. That's 16 million dollars a mile for five miles. Plus there's
five major bridges that are already in place, this land that's already acquired and also completed. So we hopefully save five years in time. We desperately feel like I-73 is needed, but we'd like to put it in the right spot. We need it going through Henry County. We're not like Northern Virginia. We don't want them to bypass us. We need them to stop in Henry County to give us some business. Thank you.

MR. PIERCE: Thank you, Mr. Russell. The next speaker is Benjamin Tripp, to be followed by Robert Grimsey. Welcome, Mr. Tripp.

MR. TRIPP: Thank you, sir. Short. I'll try to be brief. I seem to be here to speak about a somewhat different subject from most of the other speakers tonight. First I'd like to thank the members of legislator, Mr. Homer, Mr. Page, and the other members of the Commonwealth Transportation Board. I have two comments I'd like to make tonight.

The first is I'd like to thank you
for considering our application submitted
March 5 for funding on behalf of New
Millenium Steel. It's a multimillion dollar
project involving both Salem and Roanoke
County. And we believe it really will be a
great asset to our region. They're a good
company and a really nice bunch of folks to
work with.

My second comment has to do with the
Roanoke Valley Greenway, and I'd like to
thank you for your continued support of that
project both within Salem and the Valley as
a whole. The Greenway Commission, a panel
appointed by the member localities, I myself
am a member, has just completed updating the
Regional Greenway plan, funded in part by
VDOT. It is our goal to finish the Roanoke
River Greenway within the next five years.
Hopefully that can happen. It's a project
that has a lot of support in our community
and we all feel it is very important in the
overall quality of life in our area. With
that, I'll get out of your way and let
everyone else speak. I thank you for your
time, and I hope you guys have a productive
and enjoyable stay in Salem. Thank you very
much.

MR. PIERCE: Thank you, Mr. Tripp.
The next speaker is Robert Grimsey to be
follow by T.J. Childress. Welcome, Mr.
Grimsey.

MR. GRIMESEY: It's Grimesey.
Grimsey works. I appreciate the opportunity
to address you all this evening, members of
the board as well. I'm grateful for the
opportunity to speak to you, although we're
neighbors actually. We're in the New Market
District. We appreciate this opportunity to
stay on the record, because culturally, from
the economics standpoint, greater Roanoke
area is the area which we have our greatest
connection.

In a letter to a parent of a Clifton
middle school student dated January 30,
2006, Secretary Homer had explained
correctly at that time at the time
improvement project for I-64 in the Island
Ford Bridge to the Clifton Forge interchange
was scheduled for 2009. In a recent meeting with VDOT officials, he learned that the project had been pushed back to 2013, and by our presence here this evening, it's obvious that we're concerned about continued postponement of that particular project.

Meanwhile, traffic congestion continues to grow even around the local interchange at Exit 21. This congestion is most apparent during the early mornings and late afternoons with heavy traffic associated with Wachovia, Alleghany Regional Hospital, Clifton Middle School, Mountain View Elementary School, Alleghany High School, as well as the county and school board administrative offices.

Recently VDOT had commissioned a study of transportation analysis of that exit, which we're very grateful. Our most significant safety concern remains the proximity of interstate traffic including the tractor trailers to high volumes of local traffic along Winterberry Avenue, Urban Irvine Road and roads that run
parallel to the interstate. With the many
state-mandated safety drills that we're
required to conduct in public schools where
I serve as superintendent, by the way — I
should have added that. I know of no more
immediate threat to the safety of students
in -- than that unprotected bottleneck of
I-64, and the roads that run parallel to it
for a mile east and west of Exit 21.

I also noticed in the Salem area plan
the notation for the widening of 220
northern Botetourt County and Alleghany
County, I'm sure the City of Covington would
agree, are all for that as well. So we'd
like to thank you for the inclusion of that.
We appreciate the opportunity to address you
on these matters this evening and thank you
for your consideration.

MR. PIERCE: Thank you, Mr. Grimesey.
The next speaker is T.J. Childress, to be
followed by Stacy Bryant. Welcome,
Mr. Childress.

MR. CHILDRESS: Thank you, sir. I am
T.J. Childress, and I am from Henry County,
Martinsville. I have been a Virginian all my life, born and bred. I was kind enough to be here -- you know, I'm a pretty old man right now. Why haven't I been to these meetings before? And it came to me the reason I hadn't is because we have always had in Virginia, from the governor down, in my district we always had capable men who did a good job, that I didn't disagree with. They always came through. Even the state highway department read -- what was the -- anyway, anyway, he brought me in 1980 -- 1952 as a field grazer for the highway department. And I have always thought the highway department has very competent, very good people. And so that was the reason I never had to come here, because this job was taken care of, and I didn't have anything to say that was any different than what they had. The reason I'm over here today, though, is because when I was at VBI, I had a professor that said this nation was built and the foundation is industry. If you
create a product, you create wealth. And it supports the lawyer, doctor and Indian chief. And I never did forget that. So when the industry in Henry County started slipping away, I thought about that. What is that going do to us?

Well, we had very capable of people in Henry County who had diligently tried to turn that thing around. But, you know, as you get in the river and the water is flowing pretty fast, it's hard to stop it. And that's what happened with the industries. They started flowing pretty fast out of the country. And it's devastating. You know it is.

You say, well, what's your point? My point is this. When -- I don't know when Seth Weiss(ph) was on the committee, the highway department, and I thought -- I told him so. I thought they should put 80 -- 95 down the east and put 85 through Lynchburg out close to Martinsville, Danville and run it down and then go back. That devastated us. We didn't realize how much important it
was for the interstate.

Now, I come here because I have felt
like there's something that I need to
impress on you people now. And that is that
this interstate, I want you -- you all look
like young, intelligent people to me. So
I'm leaving it up to you --

MR. PIERCE: Ringing us over.

MR. CHILDRESS: But I want to make
sure that that interstate -- I'm a
conservative. Save all the money you can,
and I think -- I don't care whose property
it's at. I hope everybody gets rich off of
it. But -- but I think you need to get to
where we can service the Patriot Center, the
college, everything that's -- we're
depending on that stuff right now, that
industry, what we got there. I want you to
take it under consideration, and save all
the money you can. It looks like with the
assisting roads, you can save a lot of
money, because they're not being totally
used, that bypass in particular.

But I want you gentlemen to just take
time and think this over, because I know
you've got good heads, and you think things
through. We want to save our industry.
We've got to save what little we got. And
I'm telling you, the State of Virginia needs
it, too. I hate to have your job, because
the gasoline that's going to be sold is
going to -- the volume is going down, and
you are going to have a lot less money
before long.

MR. PIERCE: Thank you,
Mr. Childress. On that note, I did want to
acknowledge, and you indicated your prior
career with VDOT, I understand that Dan
Marston, a former VDOT administrator, is
with us. Danny, you still here? Did he
leave? Okay. And I did also want to
acknowledge Dale Grigg who's here as the
acting district administrator for the
Lynchburg District. Stacy Bryant, our next
speaker, to be followed by Lee-Ann Gray.

Welcome, Ms. Bryant.
MS. BRYANT: I'm Stacy Bryant. I'm
here from Alleghany County. We're here to
talk about the barrier to be placed on I-64 at Mountain View Elementary School and Clifton Middle School. Back on January 29 of this past year I attended a PTA lobby day in Richmond with two other members of Alleghany County, and I was able to meet with Delegate Jim Shuler, we addressed our problem to him, and he was very aware of our area. He knew exactly what the location was in which we were referencing.

Initially, it's been due to funding, there that there's no other reason, they can't put the barrier up to protect our children going to school every morning at the interstate. The original year was 2009. Now it's been pushed up to 2013. My six-year-old daughter in the year 2012 will be attending that school. And I would hope that before then that we can have a barrier to protect our children and protect the children that are there now. Thank you for your time.

MR. PIERCE: Thank you, Ms. Bryant.

Now, the next speaker is Lee-Ann Gray, to be
followed by Rickey May. Welcome, Ms. Gray.

MS. GRAY: Well, soccer month continues. Thank you. My name is Lee-Ann Gray. I traveled here tonight to speak to you on behalf of the approximately 1,300 students and their families plus faculty and staff and bus drivers who travel to and from school each day under conditions that we feel are currently very dangerous. I'm referring to the need for a concrete barrier to separate the access road leading to Mountain View Elementary and Clifton Middle School located at Exit 21 off of Interstate 64, between Covington and Clifton Forge.

In its present state, the access road to the interstate is separated by nothing more than a chicken wire fence. Flying truck tires, debris and out-of-control vehicles have virtually nothing standing in the way of collision with our school traffic.

It's our understanding that the construction of a concrete barrier at this exit has been considered by the Department
of Transportation and has been deemed warranted. However, the date of construction continues to be pushed back as far as 2013 as it stands currently. 

While we realize there are many transportation needs and more populated areas of the commonwealth, and that funding for transportation has become an important political issue in the past year, our strenuous concern is that there is too much of a direct threat to our school population to postpone this project. We feel strongly that the construction of a concrete barrier or at least a temporary barrier needs to commence immediately to avoid the threats of injuries or fatalities during the work and school commute.

I have photographs there of two accidents that have occurred during school hours on that access road in the past two years. We're fortunate that injuries were minimal on those occasions, but we may not be so fortunate the next time.

I want to thank you in advance for
your assistance in making our children's community to school a safer one. And we do look forward to a swift resolution to this safety threat. Also included in that is some -- another letter from the Clifton Middle School PTO president. Thank you very much.

MR. PIERCE: Thank you, Ms. Gray. The next speaker is Rickey May, to be followed by H. G. Vaughn. Welcome, Mr. May.

MR. MAY: Thank you, sir, board members. I am Rickey May, vice chairman, Alleghany County Board of Supervisors. I'm here representing the board of supervisors to respectfully request that you consider two items that I have on hand.

Alleghany County respectfully requests that the Virginia Department of Transportation continue its efforts to upgrade U.S. Route 220 from Botetourt County to I-64 in the Clifton Forge area. Any endeavors to continue the four main roads to Clifton Forge or to the town of Iron Gate with a bypass around the town to a location
on or near I-64 would be greatly appreciated.

The county feels that these improvement will giveAlleghany and Highland a much needed and safer access to the Roanoke Valley as well as to the southern part of I-81. The upgrade of Route 220 to this area would also give the Roanoke Valley a quicker and safer access to I-64 west and to recreational opportunities in Alleghany and Highland. Therefore, an approved economic development relationship could be gained between this area and the Roanoke Valley.

That is something that I come before you basically saying that the condition of what the county is in in that region right now with the loss of jobs and all, economic development is very important to what we're trying to get there. The upgrade to 220 is a vital part along with the I-64 west corridor.

The second part, you have heard the school board. I'll touch on that. The I-64
safety improvement project, this project
consists of a million -- on frontage road
barrier, construction along a
seven-and-a-half-mile section of I-64,
Winterberry Avenue and Gleason Farm Road(ph)
from Milepost 24-and-a-half to Milepost 17.
The project is currently projected in the
six-year improvement plan to be constructed
in 2013.

It is our recommendation, along with
the consultation from VDOT district and
residency staff, that the project be
accelerated and advertised for construction
in 2011. The current estimated cost of the
project is 31.4 million. This figure is
inflated to estimate construction costs in
2013.

If the project were to be constructed
at the accelerated date of 2011, a cost of
two and a half million could possibly be
achieved, resulting in a 2011 construction
of 28.88 million. The subject segment of
I-64 does not meet safety standards for the
interstate system.
East and westbound lanes are 
separated by grass medians that are less 
than 10 feet in width in places. The same 
holds true between Front End Road (ph), 
Winterberry Avenue and Gleason Farm Road and 
westbound side of I-64.

Once again, I would like to 
respectfully request that you consider 
those, and I thank you for your time.

MR. PIERCE: Thank you, Mr. May. The 
next speaker is H.G. Vaughn to be followed 
by David Foster. Welcome, Mr. Vaughn.

MR. VAUGHN: Thank you, sir. Many 
years ago, when I got involved in politics, 
I found it good to have your comments in 
writing. So I brought the copies for all of 
you. Either that or carry a tape-recorder 
around.

Mr. Secretary, Mr. Commissioner, 
members of the board, I thank you for this 
opportunity to be here. I am H. G. Vaughn, 
and I am chairman of the Henry County Board 
of Supervisors. On behalf of the board, 
thanks again for the time tonight.
I am here to talk to you about the impact on Interstate 73 will have on Henry County and Martinsville localities. The development of I-73 is among the most significant components of our economic development efforts in the area. I-73 will provide our employers with improved access to major markets. It will enhance stores and opportunities for improvement access to our area, and it will significantly improve corporate improvement efforts. Many industries and business prospects simply will not consider localities without interstate excess. We need to remove this barrier to business improvement in our area of Virginia.

As you know, the recent decision on I-73 was a long way, positive step in what already is more than a decade of work. We know there will be years of additional work to ultimately get cars actually driving on pavement. We in Henry County are willing to put in that work, and we hope that the Commonwealth of Transportation Board and the
Department of Transportation are as well. We look forward to continuing our partnership with you.

As we have in the past, we continue to ask that you start the construction of Interstate 73 in Henry County. We would like to see construction begun at the Virginia North Carolina line and move north.

Henry County recently purchased 600 acres of potential industrial parkland near the state line, and it would be beneficial to have I-73 in place near that land as soon as possible. Henry County also has previously asked that an interchange be located in Henry County, county's major business and industrial park, Patriot Center. More than 4,000 people currently work in the Patriot Center or an adjacent private business park as well as nearby Patrick Henry Community College. Henry County also purchased more than 1,200 acres of additional land adjacent to the Patriot Center for more industrial development. An interchange from I-73 to this area makes
sense, and we hope it will be incorporated into the final design.

Before I close, I want to bring up another issue with you. As you may be aware, a citizen initiated effort in Henry County is advocating a route for I-73 different from the route previously stated and endorsed.

It is my understanding that a map of this alternative route has been provided to the Department of Transportation. On behalf of the board of supervisors, I am asking that VDOT and the Commonwealth Transportation Board look at this proposed alternative route and determine the following information: One, would this new route save time and more money in the design and construction phase? Two, will investigating this new route delay the overall project and/or would it add expenses such as requiring a new environmental impact statement? Three, the new route incorporates a portion of what we call Route 220/Route 58 bypass. Will incorporation of this current
road be possible for I-73? Does any portion of this bypass meet interstate standards, and if not, what changes would be required? I ask that this information be gathered and assimilated to Henry County Board of Supervisors as soon as possible.

In closing, let me reiterate that we remain excited about Interstate '73, and we remain committed to doing whatever is asked of us to see it come to fruition. I thank you for your time, and I eagerly anticipate your response tonight, as I have mentioned.

MR. PIERCE: Thank you, Mr. Vaughn.

The next speaker is David Foster, to be followed by Gordon Saul. Welcome, Mr. Foster.

MR. FOSTER: Thank you, Secretary, Commissioner Ekern and members of the CTB. I am going to comment briefly on two things tonight, accepting your invitation to comment on things other than road projects in the Six-year Plan. I am executive director of Rail Solution which is a grassroots citizens advocacy group with
about 1,400 participants in the I-81 corridor of Virginia and Northeast Tennessee.

We are concerned about the process by which transportation decisions get made. I want to visit that point briefly tonight. In the draft environmental impact statement for I-81, there was a hearing process, and five public hearings, I believe, were held up and down the I-81 corridor. Thousands of people showed up at those hearings and many more sent in written comments. The widest comment to be made was 80 percent of the people who spoke opposed tolls. The next largest comment was 78 percent, and the 78 percent of the people who commented either at hearings or had written comments, was in favor -- the next highest group was in favor of rail, in some fashion to be considered as part of the I-81 planning process.

When the final environmental impact statement was issued just last month, we found out that what is now favored is a multilane toll road and no rail at all in
either tier one or tier two of the process.

I think this makes a mockery of the
planning process. There's no reason to have
people come out and tell people -- tell
their leaders, tell their government what
they prefer if the government is just then
going to ignore them totally and go and do
what it wants to anyway. I think we need
revisit how the decisions are made. And if
you tell people that there's going to be
hearings and their views need to be made
known, then they need to be taken into
account. The other point I'd like to visit
briefly with you about is oil. We don't
hear much about oil, but we all know oil is
becoming scarcer and scarcer.

I'm concerned with some of the
long-range road plans that are going to take
decades to complete. And of course, the
rebuilding of I-81 all across the 225 miles
of Western Virginia certainly falls in that
category. I think some of these projects
are going to be obsolete by the time they're
finished.
We had a speaker earlier telling you about the difficulties she faced in just commuting to work. When we start running out of oil, and before it actually runs out, it will become unbelievably expensive. We're going to have trouble just moving around the Commonwealth of Virginia because people won't be able to afford to drive.

Earlier, Morgan Griffith suggested that we won't be remembered by who we are or what role we held on the CTVO or as citizens, but rather on the infrastructure decisions we've made with regard to highway and rail. And I fully agree with that. It's time to start thinking about how we prepare, not only the Commonwealth of Virginia, but the nation as well, to survive and keep our economy from becoming totally unglued when oil first becomes prohibitively expensive and then runs out. We need to worry about that. Even though it's perhaps three or four decades ahead of us, we need to be thinking about it now and getting our transportation infrastructure attuned for
that condition. Thank you, gentlemen.

MR. PIERCE: Thank you, Mr. Foster.

The next speaker is Gordon Saul, to be
followed by Steve Jacum. Welcome, Mr. Saw.

MR. SAUL: Mr. Secretary, members of
the board, I'm Gordon Saul. I'm a member
of the Back Civic League, and there are a
number of our members that are present here
this evening. But in the interest of time,
I believe I am the only one that will speak.

I am here to express our sincere
appreciation for learning in the Roanoke
Times today that -- the widening of U.S. 221
in Southwest Roanoke County -- we have
learned that the mills of the gods grind
slowly, but ever so finely.

I remember it was some 20 years ago
that Mr. Sensabough from the Salem District
and Mr. Altizer came out and instructed we
members of the community on what we needed
to do to support construction and
improvement to 221, and they told us that
the time that it took to acquire
right-of-way and do the engineering and
design and build a road was a very long and
difficult process. And I don't think that
we truly appreciated it at that time, the
truth that they were speaking to us.

It has indeed been 20 years. And the
also hazardous conditions on 221 that were
our primary concern in petitioning to get
that roadwork done. The traffic continues
to increase.

We presently have a situation where
the accident rate on 221 is three times the
state average. The fatality rate is six
times the state-wide average. And with all
of the housing developments and increased
traffic that we're going to have on that
roadway, it's destined to become worse. So
our plea to you after all is, please, if
there is any way to accelerate that project
in the Six-year Plan, please do so. We're
very appreciative of the fact that it is
there. We know the priorities, competing
priorities, about that work needs to be
done. Thank you so much.

MR. PIERCE: Thank you, Mr. Saul. We
appreciate both your brevity and your
patience. The next speaker is Mr. Steve
Chapin to be followed by Carl Espy.
Welcome, Mr. Chapin.

MR. CHAPIN: Good evening, Secretary,
gentlemen of the panel. Thank you for being
here tonight. Thank you for the job you do
all year long. I'm Steve Chapin, Roanoke
County resident, and this evening I
represent the Roanoke Regional Chamber of
Commerce. We are over 1,400 members,
businesses in the Roanoke Valley area.

I would like to start off with
acknowledging the efforts of Governor Kaine
and the general assembly who crafted the
transportation bill to benefit all of the
Commonwealth. I would also like to
acknowledge the dedicated men and women of
VDOT who do an excellent job and the
leadership of Mr. Caywood and Givens.

A common theme in our request this
evening is the -- is requesting a more
efficient and effective transportation
system, which means a safer transportation
network, a better quality of life for all of our citizens, and a more positive impact on Virginia's economic health.

Our specific request starts with Interstate 81. It's our number one safety concern. You gentlemen know that it has been our number one concern for the last 10 to 15 years now. We ask for your efforts to move forward with improvements on Interstate 81 for the entire 325-mile segment.

Our next request is Interstate 73. Hopefully the recent record of decision will allow work to commence as soon as possible. It is much needed for Southwest and Southside Virginia. Also request improvements to Route 220. From Roanoke south to the North Carolina State line, we ask for local improvements in addition to Interstate 73, and from Roanoke north through Botetourt County, connecting to Interstate 64, we ask for improvements, upgrade from two lanes to four lanes, where appropriate.

We ask for your support for Route 58,
completion through Southside to Southwest Virginia. We ask for your support for Route 11 and 460. We ask for Roanoke County. As it was mentioned earlier, it was just a short three-mile segment, but when there's an incident on 81, it's a very critical segment to the regional transportation network.

And finally, we ask for your continued support of rail throughout the Commonwealth, and specifically for support of the Heartland Rail Corridor and intermodal facility here in Roanoke Valley.

In closing, I would just like to reiterate our number one safety concern for the last decade is Interstate 81. We ask for your support to move that project forward as soon as possible for the benefit of all the Commonwealth.

Again, on behalf Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce, I thank you for your time this evening. Thank you.

MR. PIERCE: Thank you, Mr. Chapin.

The next speaker is Carl Espy, to be
followed by George Lesters. Welcome,
Mr. Espy.

MR. ESPY: Good evening. Thank you,
Secretary Homer and Commissioner Ekern,
members of the Commonwealth Transportation
Board. I'm Carl Espy, town manager of
Halifax. I appreciate the opportunity to
travel cross the mountains, coming to this
district on what I thought were scenic and
relatively uncongested, safe transportation
network.

I'm here primarily to deliver a
resolution of support for the Banister
Bridge replacement project, and to also
include the transportation segment of the
Town Comprehensive Plan which we're in the
process of adopting.

The Town and the County of Halifax
are appreciative of the support that the
residents in the Lynchburg District have
shown for Virginia's 360 which is a state
scenic byway, and the need to replace the
aging iron truss bridge which is rapidly
deteriorating. I know that the
transportation board has accelerated that
schedule which was only a few years ago only
a candidate project.

    My understanding is it's going to be
a design/build on a temporary structure.
When the time comes to start a more
comprehensive design for the new bridge, we
ask that the -- the VDOT consider the
Federal Highway Administration guidelines
for contextual design, and there are a
number pedestrian amenities that we think
need to be incorporated into that project.

    We're looking at multimodal
transportation solutions in our 20/25 plan.
Even though we're a rural community of only
about 1,300, we think it's important to
begin to adapt to the changing economic
environment. We look for sustainable
development in finding solutions for South,
Southside and Southwest Virginia.

    The other component of this bridge
project we would ask to be considered,
especially if there's funding opportunities
in very close proximity to the intersection
of U.S. Highway 501 and Virginia 360 is in
need of improvement. I think the 501
coalition indicated that in the study
several years ago. And through our
comprehensive plan process, we have worked
with engineers who see that that is an
excellent candidate for a modern roundabout,
and there are other reasons for supporting
that project that are in the resolution and
the plan which I will distribute to the
board.

Also I want to take this opportunity
to thank the board for its continued
enhancement funding over the years,
receiving a plan grant for downtown
revitalization of 2002. We have got that
project completed, even though that was
housing community development dollars. It
had gone through that project area only
recently. We do think that the central
business district is an important place to
focus our economic development, pedestrian,
in friendly and sustainable manner.

We also look to the upcoming T21
funding for downtown Roanoke. Hopefully the
results of the County's submittal on the
courthouse square renovation project, again
enhancement project, I think that it's been
funded once and the request has come
through.

Mr. Secretary, I will leave you the
excerpts of our 20/25 comp plan that pertain
to transportation. It's interesting to see
that how many special projects that we
notice in the implementation plan are
transportation-oriented. It is our hope
that we can work together over the next
years to make this sustainable vision a
reality.

I will also have the copies of our
resolution the town council passed on May 8,
and ask finally that it be considered the
U.S. 501 corridor study. I think there are
some needed improvements in that corridor.
There's a lot of commercial carriers,
industry that depends a great deal on that
corridor. I think there can be some
long-term solutions sought there.
So thank you again for this opportunity.

MR. PIERCE: Thank you, Mr. Espy.

The next speaker is George Lester, to be followed by Barbara Derk.

MR. LESTER: Secretary, Commissioner.

MR. PIERCE: Welcome, Mr. Lester.

MR. LESTER: I am George Lester, chairman of JobLink, a community of leaders from Piedmont Region of Virginia and North Carolina who have advocated construction of Interstate 73 for the past 14 years. We are delighted the Federal Highway Administration has signed the record of decision for I-73. This is a giant step. The record of decision means the route environmental impact study are approved and that VDOT will proceed with the project. On behalf of JobLink, I extend our appreciation to VDOT for producing an outstanding location and design study.

They have spent many hearings, many thousands of people, a lot of hours in the field, analyzing five or six different
routes.

Some money has been allocated to the final engineering and land acquisition in both Henry and Roanoke counties. This federal mandates funds, earmarked funds. If I have calculated correctly, there is nearly 7 million dollars available for Henry County. If you received at the nearly 3 million proposed for fiscal year 2009, we would have funds to complete the first phase. We ask you to begin that design phase now.

However, there are not sufficient funds to complete the engineering and land acquisition for the entire I-73 project. I urge you to allocate more resources so these essential tasks can continue without interruption.

Finally, I request additional design of Interstate 73 to begin at the Virginia-North Carolina line. Henry County needs the benefits of I-73 for both safety and economic reasons. We recommend the first segment to begin at state line and
continue to what I believe is about five miles to the proposed interchange with U.S. 58 near Laurel Park. The benefit of having the first segment at that site will be reduced traffic on U.S. 220 in an area which has been the scene of many accidents and some fatalities.

The other benefit -- we need to get Martinsville-Henry County area in the interstate system. We are working hard and using our own resources to improve our economy, but we need your support to make I-73 a priority so our efforts will pay off. Our neighbors in North Carolina and South Carolina, as well as West Virginia are making significant progress in building I-73, and we need to demonstrate Virginia's commitment with more funds.

Compared to the rest of Virginia, the Martinsville-Henry County area is in a challenging position. Unemployment is 5.9 percent in Martinsville-Henry County. The state average is 3.1 percent. Per capita income is slightly more than $17,000 in
Martinsville-Henry County. The state average is nearly $24,000. The number of residents living below the poverty line in Martinsville is 19.2 percent and 11.7 percent in Henry County. The state average is 9.5. So you can see we are economically challenged.

These cities are numbers. The real story is the picture that I see locally in the faces of our people who are struggling to feed and clothe their children, who have lost their dignity and are just barely holding on until the next unemployment or state welfare check to keep their family together.

I-73 will give the Martinsville-Henry County area renewed hope for a brighter future. We need to begin the work as soon as possible. Thank you.

MR. PIERCE: Thank you, Mr. Lester.

The next speaker is Barbara Derk.

MS. DERK: Mr. Secretary,

Mr. Commissioner, Mr. Page and my district engineer, Mr. Haywood, I want to thank you
very much for allowing me to speak to you
and members of the Commonwealth of
Transportation Board tonight. The
Commonwealth of Virginia is very fortunate
to have two U.S. bicycle routes. In
Virginia, we have U.S. Bike Route 76 and
U.S. Bike Route 1.

I want to thank Mr. Bowie for making
possible the bicycle plan and Virginia map.
It came out, and I thank you very much for
this, Mr. Bowie. And what I ask is the next
time we publish this map, that you actually
put the routes for U.S. Bike Route 76 and
Route U.S. Bike Route 1 on the map, so
people can use this map to actually follow
the route in Virginia.

I just finished my eight-day 570-mile
trip on U.S. Bike Route 76 through Virginia.
The route goes from New York town to Oregon.
I stopped at breaks in the state park, that
at least eight people each day were seen
fully loaded with panniers, travelling
across the highways of Virginia. Most of
them were from the Netherlands, England,
Germany, Switzerland, Australia. So we're hosting these international guests on our road bikes.

The Trans-America trail that is currently mapped by the Cycling Association differs in places from the 76 Bike Centennial Route, that black and white sign that has a bicycle and a 76 on it. So I'm asking us to figure out a way to either remark the 76 Route or put up the signs differently or else differentiate between the Trans-America route that the cyclers are currently using to get through Virginia.

I know we have some fantastic crooked road signs up now, and we have birding signs. We have civil war signs. The Trans-America 76 Route is -- has been up there for 31 years, and it just needs to be updated. The Richmond Construction District has done something about that, and I'd like for other construction districts to address that also.

We have roadmaps and we have the scenic roadmap. And that -- on those maps,
we have the Appalachian Trail. We have the New River Trail. Well, they're not really roads, but at least by having conceptional there, you have an idea what they were doing. So I would like for the 76 Route, the new Route 1 to be conceptionally put on the U.S. bike -- U.S. roadmap and the U.S. scenic map, so people can have an idea that they come through their neighborhood.

Bicycle Magazine, May issue, big medallion, big medallion right on the front cover says, "The Best Road in America."

What do you think it is? The Blue Ridge Parkway.

So you turn to the heavenly blues, the ten pages of cover about the Blue Ridge Parkway, they don't mention Roanoke, the largest metropolitan area along the route. Not even Roanoke in print anywhere. And I think a lot of the reason for that is because if you try to access Roanoke from the Blue Ridge Parkway on 220, you pretty much are taking your life in your own hands.

Michael Gray, who is from the Salem
District, is working on this. And I -- I
decided well, I'm just going to see about
this for myself. So I rode the Blue Ridge
Parkway, and I came down 220. I got halfway
to Wal-Mart and got so scared, I pulled over
and called him on my cell phone. I said,
"Michael, I'm out here on 220." Well, I
couldn't turn back. I couldn't go back. So
I thought -- because it's two-lanes, it's
four-lane divided highway, tractor trailers
in both lanes, and I was on the paved
shoulder, and they were coming about a foot
and a half from me. And I was getting the
wind knocked over. And I thought, "What am
I going to do?"

So I took a deep breath, said a huge
prayer, and with my cycling vest that says,
"Bible Bicycles May Take the Full Lane," I
got out there in traffic again, and I made
it all the way to Wal-Mart where I could
rest.

But I want you to know that -- that
the people that are riding the Blue Ridge
Parkway are tourists that don't know better
not to get on 220, that they need -- that
the road is very, very dangerous. And you
may think that -- that paved shoulders are
an option, but for a bicyclist who is out
there trying to make their way to their
hotel for the night or for the restaurant
that they're planning to eat in, that it's
-- there's no way to get around it. There's
no other roads. So 220 definitely needs to
be made safe for bicyclists.

On-road bicycle accommodations are
for motorists' convenience. A motor vehicle
can continue in the direction of travel that
they're headed without having to slow down
or swerve for a bicycle. VDOT should not
discriminate planning against the young, the
old and lower income citizens who do not
drive motor vehicles.

Please use complete street planning
guidelines, include walking a bicycle and
accommodations and road projects, build safe
roads for the all the users of the highways
in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Thank you.

MR. PIERCE: Thank you. The next
speaker is Claire Collins, to be followed by Monty Vernon.

MS. COLLINS: Good evening. I'm Claire Collins. I'm the city manager of Covington, Virginia. With me this evening is Mayor Harrison Scott and Councilman Bill Zimmermann. On behalf of the City, we appreciate having the opportunity to address the Commonwealth of Transportation Board, to comment on specific interstate an primary transportation program improvements that need to be considered and addressed in the Six-Year Improvement Program.

We also extend our gratitude for the outstanding working relationship we have with the Department of Transportation and for the improvement program funding and projects completed over the years through partnership with VDOT and federal enhancement funding.

One of those projects that was just completed was the Hawthorne Street Bridge rehabilitation in partnership with VDOT, Virginia Tech and the University of
Virginia. We invite you to come and see that project that recently was awarded and recognized with the Model For Better Development by the Valley of Conservation Council.

With transportation, whether it be on roads or rail, we all are interconnected throughout Virginia. That interconnection comes by using modes of transportation to community for worker enjoyment. As such, we not only support all the speakers here this evening, we support our fellow -- fellow locality, Alleghany County and all their pleas for assistance along Interstate 64, and for the safety barriers and the interchange that they discussed as well as Route 220, through Botetourt, through Alleghany County and hopefully to interconnect sometime to the city. There has been discussion over the years for that and we are in fully support of it.

Also, the interchange at Interstate 64 and Durant Road needs evaluation for both safety and development concerns to be
considered for a possible reconfiguration
being that the mountain bluff on the
southwest side of Interstate 64 is situated
for potential business and commercial
development. And with development will come
more traffic, and we would like that to be
studied and to be considered.

We need that economic engine as all
Virginia needs economic engines, and we
understand that. We don't want the
Commonwealth of Transportation Board to put
one locality over another. We understand
that when it comes to transportation.

One of the things that we also would
like to discuss, because we feel it's
another safety concern is U.S. 60 and Route
220 through the city. That encompasses a
road segment of 1.91 miles to be -- to
actually be widened and reconstructed to an
urban four-lane standard highway to
accommodate the traffic volume, particularly
for truck traffic.

Back last summer we had a severe
accident on Interstate 64 that caused all
the three exits along the interstate that go into the city to be congested with predominantly truck traffic and tourism traffic. We then recognized what travels on Interstate 64, because every single road throughout the city was bumper-to-bumper traffic. So we can actually commiserate with those in Northern Virginia and Tidewater. It was quite an ordeal for our staff, but we handled it and we had the coordination and cooperation from the County.

The City continues to work with VDOT to address the new urban construction program projects that we had. And I would like to call those to your attention, because those are safety issues, too, because they involve CSX Railroad and also near the interchange and Interstate 64. One is the Chestnut Street Bridge underpass and underpasses of the CSX Railroad which goes over there. We recently had a train derailment not far from that underpass. We want to make sure that that is safe for all
concerned.

The other one is along Durant Road and West Jackson Street. We have a rock wall that is very unsafe. Rocks are always falling down. That's not too far from the mountain bluff near the interstate interchange. We would appreciate that being looked at.

In closing, we want to thank you for your time this evening and the opportunity to comment. And we are always willing to work in partnership with VDOT and your adjoining localities. Thank you.

MR. PIERCE: Thank you, Ms. Collins. The next speaker is Monty Vernon -- welcome, Mr. Vernon -- to be followed by Chris Craft.

MR. VERNON: Mr. Secretary, Commissioner, members of the panel. I'm Monty Vernon, public work director for the Town of Abingdon. I travelled here this evening with Mayor Humphries as you noted earlier, and council member Dr. French Moore. And I stand before you tonight to represent the mayor, the council, county
manager and citizens of the Town of Abingdon.

The sheet that I've handed out to you has to do with Exit 17 on Interstate 81 in Abingdon. That's what we're here to talk with you about this evening. And behind that sheet is a resolution that was adopted by our town council on January 17 of this year. After they had met with members of Mr. Givens and his staff.

The front sheet, the table is just a little bit of a history I went back and looked at on Exit 17 just for my own enlightenment and hopefully for yours.

I noticed that in 1992 it was when the conceptional study for the I-81 project was approved by the Commonwealth Transportation Board. Then in the middle years there, from about '97 to 2000, it seemed to have progressed. There was a citizens' information meeting held in February of '97 and several things happened after that. I-81 improvement study that was prepared for the VDOT by Michael Baker,
Incorporated was completed. And then there was a value engineering study done in April of 2000. And then after that, it seemed to be caught up in the whole huge I-81 project, and Exit 17 and the project in narrowing to the state, just seemed to be abandoned or forgotten. We noticed that it is still in the Six-year Plan, but one more thing is badly needed, and that's money.

And Mr. Givens and his staff have been very helpful with us and very forthright, letting us know that it's not moving anywhere because it just doesn't have money on it to move it. And we're here in 2007, and it looks like it's been 15 years since this started. And we'd like to think that in the Six-year Plan that there would be actually enough money to accomplish the project.

So I'm going to take a risk and make a suggestion, and I realize that you-all have 500 million dollars to work with. So 20 million dollars, if we keep that figure in mind, apply that to this project, that
leaves 480 million dollars for everything else. So keep this project in mind. And we'd appreciate it if we see some action on this, and get something purchased in 2009 the way it says in the Six-year Plan. Thank you.

MR. PIERCE: Thank you so much. And thank you, Mayor, Dr. Moore, for making the long trip here. Our next speaker is Chris Craft, to be followed by James Rozar. Welcome, Mr. Craft.

MR. CRAFT: Good evening. I'm going to make this short and sweet because an old friend of mine, Delegate Dick Thomas, told me when you tell it stories short and sweet you get things done.

I'm here to thank you, first of all, for your fully funding of the 13th Street Bridge here in the city, Norfolk Southern railroad tracks. I hope that that will become a reality soon.

I come to you to ask that you look into finishing the project that VDOT started years ago, and that's over 581 at Valley
View Mall. They start -- they had a one-way bridge over that over 581 which needs to be completed, because as one of the speakers said, Valley View Mall is growing, getting new stores, and it's getting harder and harder to get in and out of there putting more traffic on Hershberger, and it's really causing a major headache.

I also come and ask for more funding for Valley Metro. I know that gas is going up. Pricing is going up on everything. And they have tried to avoid it, but they're considering going up a quarter on their fare. That still won't help with the quality of their bus service, being able to run different routes, run on Sundays and run later at night which is needed greatly in this section of the State of Virginia.

I ask that you look and see what you can do about helping to support better public transportation, because most of you—all probably don't know our Valley Metro buses now have bike racks on the front so people can ride their bikes and catch the
city bus, too, to their destination.

But there's parts of the city and county the bus cannot get to because they don't have the funding to pay for the routes.

I ask you to look at improving Route 460, Orange Avenue. I live off 406 and Orange Avenue here in the city, and it's a total nightmare. There's one section at 11th Street in front of the raceway where there's three lanes of traffic on each side. One side grows to two lanes. There's plenty of traffic accidents over the years. We need to find a way to make 460 safer without widening it, because widening it would cause stretches in bridges, have to provide right-of-ways and put a lot of businesses out of business.

And I could ask you to consider speeding up your plans, whatever plans there are, for the Allen Avenue Exit off 581 at Elm Avenue and 581. That is really a major thoroughfare morning and night. People -- I don't know how many people get off there,
but traffic backs up under the interstate either way in the morning and evening. We need to find a way to make that a more faster running but safer intersection.

I want to thank you for your time, and let you know that you-all have a great staff at VDOT including one that you took back from the City of Roanoke, and that's Ken King. I appreciate your time.

MR. PIERCE: The next speaker is James Rozar, to be followed by David Harrison.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Mr. Rozar will be right back. David Harrison is going to submit his comments by e-mail. So Mr. Rozar does want to make comments.

MR. PIERCE: Okay. In that case, let's go to Mr. Bob Benston.

MR. BENSTON: Good evening, Mr. Secretary, members of the board, I am Bob Benston. I have the privilege of serving the City of Roanoke as its public works director. First let me thank you for the opportunity to provide these remarks,
and, more importantly, to let me share with you appreciative the City of Roanoke is to see the increased funding proposed in the draft plan.

We have stressed to you in the past years the importance to the City of addressing needs along the Interstate 581 and Route 20 corridor.

Two years ago VDOT in conjunction with the City initiated the Central Roanoke Mobility Study. This study was completed earlier this year, and we've already begun to discover some of the improvements recommended by this study such as the Elm Avenue interchange, well known as a congested traffic area not only for residents of the city, but for the entire region.

In fact, this interchange was identified in a state-wide study as the most congested location in this part of the state. The proposed Six-year Plan provides 10 million dollars from interstate funding toward this improvement, and this is a well
allocation for which we're most appreciative.

The City has committed also up to 4 million dollars of its urban allocation toward this project which is critical to improving the traffic flow and safety in our downtown. To get those funds will permit the implementation of short-term solution that will address some of the more critical and immediate needs at this interchange, and will set the stage for the ultimate solution, which will clearly be a far more complex and costly endeavor.

Additionally, the proposed Six-year Plan provides a significant amount of funding toward the completion of the Valley View Boulevard interchange. Again, the city in our main roadway network to the Valley View area are most pleased to learn of this proposed allocation. Originally built with local funds, this 581 interchange in Valley View provides access to the mall retail area, major contributor -- which is a major contributor in allowing the City of Roanoke
to boast the second highest per capita
retail sales in the state.

Access to and from that retail center
as well as Town Square Mall, Crossroads
Mall, Roanoke Regional Airport and other
business centers in that geographic area are
critical in maintaining our retail and sales
tax base. Completing the partial
interchange at this location will enhance
mobility and accessibility in this busy area
of the city and will help to ensure
continued viability to the retailers in the
area.

The passage of House Bill 3202 has
also resulted in a significant boost to
projected urban funding for the city. We
applaud the hard work that went into this
legislation and look forward to moving other
projects toward construction.

In summary, I want to thank the
department for its efforts. I urge you to
continue to dedicate funding for Interstate
581 as mobility for residents and visitors
alike. It's critical for the Roanoke
Valley's success in maintaining and
improving our economy and in further
enhancing our quality of life. Thank you
for your consideration.

MR. PIERCE: Thank you, Mr. Benston.

Our final signed-up speaker is Mr. James
Rozar. If there's anybody else who would
like to speak, please come up behind
Mr. Rozar. Welcome.

MR. ROZAR: Thank you very much. I
appreciate your patience and don't mean to
berate you with repeated references to
cycling, but seeing that it is an economical
and helpful and wholesome means of
transportation, it is certainly a means to a
healthier future for all the citizens around
Virginia, a good portion of the world.

I look forward to being able to see
more development and reconstruction done
with bicycles in mind. I understand that
that's already a portion of your program,
but certainly it is the upcoming perception
of the bicycling community that the wider
right lane is a better way of going where
the roadway that bicycles and the vehicles
share is constantly cleansed by the passage
of cars and that, you know, having a
right -- the right lane out of approximately
15 feet wide certainly makes sense,
especially for ascending section of the
roadways.

    I certainly agree that the -- the
advent of increased rail emphasis makes
better sense for our long-term future. I
would think that cycling works in that
direction as well. Our resources are
limited. We hope to be able to have
sustainable fuels in the future, but, you
know, not everyone is going to be able to
avail themselves of those.

    I also would like to advocate that
besides wider right lanes, that, you know,
not creating so much in the way of
separation for bicycles, you know,
separation is not necessarily an
accommodation. I'm hoping to see that it
makes more sense to -- you know, I want to
be predictable on a roadway.
I go out there, you know, with my passion for cycling, but realize I am putting my life on the line every time that I ride, and it is actually on that white line, that I position myself so that I am predictable because I know that that white line is the continuity, legal continuity of the roadway. If it is a wider lane there, is more room for the road to be shared.

That's about as much as I have to say and thank you very much.

MR. PIERCE: Thank you, Mr. Rozar. Anybody else who want to address the board this evening? On behalf of the Commonwealth of Transportation Board and the Governor, I want to thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedules to share your thoughts.

This is the second of five public comment sessions. We are looking to conclude those and make some very hard decisions. Thank you and good night.

(8:45 p.m.)
CERTIFICATE

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

COUNTY OF ROANOKE

I, Frank R. Austin, Notary Public in and for
the Commonwealth of Virginia, at Large, do hereby
that the hearing was by me reduced to machine
shorthand in the presence of the witness, afterwards
transcribed by me by means of computer, and that to
the best of my ability the foregoing is a true and
correct transcript of the public hearing so given.

I further certify that this hearing was
taken at the time and place specified in the
foregoing caption.

I further certify that I am not a relative,
counsel or attorney for any party or otherwise
interested in the outcome of this action.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my
hand at Roanoke, Virginia on the 13th day of June,
2007.

FRANK R. AUSTIN
NOTARY PUBLIC