



News Alert: VDOT Seeking Major New Construction Project on Route 50, Citizen Action Needed

Last week, VDOT issued a recommendation to embark on a new, disruptive construction project on Route 50 in Loudoun County that will provide virtually no benefit to residents, while putting us through years of more pain. They did so despite a different alternative studied that would provide better regional access and provide a critical new east-west link for commuters.

Delegate David Ramadan and I have been working together on this issue for some time, and we have both reached the same conclusion.

The good news is that it is now time for the public to weigh in, and no final decision has been made. But if you want a voice in this process, you must email the Board of Supervisors and VDOT, and you should consider attending an upcoming Public Information Session on April 22 at Liberty Elementary School in South Riding.

Here are all the details on what is being considered, and why it matters:

As you are probably aware, VDOT has been considering a new north-south corridor between Loudoun and Prince William County, commonly referred to as the Bi-County Parkway.

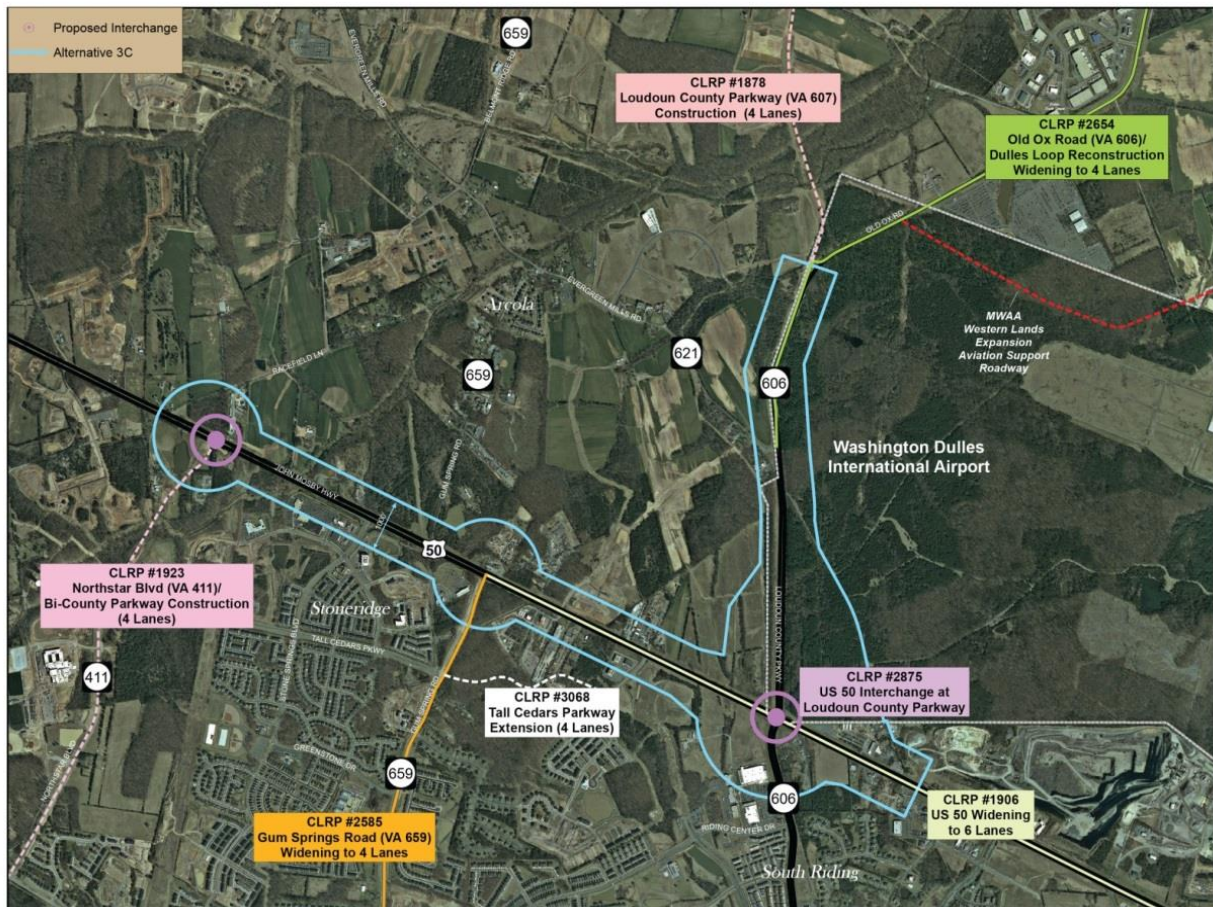
Current plans call for the Bi-County Parkway to travel between Route 50 and 234 via the current alignment of Northstar Boulevard. The next question, however, is how the Bi-County Parkway will get vehicles to Dulles Airport, our planned employment centers on Route 606, and our future Metro stations. Without some connection, traffic from the Bi-County Parkway would be

merged with existing traffic on Route 50—creating congestion for residents. No connection would be the worst case scenario.

As a result, VDOT initiated a new study process to identify [potential routes](#) for the Dulles Access road. While several routes were identified, two main alternatives have emerged, and VDOT has selected one as its recommended option. It is important to note that VDOT's recommendation is based solely on an Environmental Assessment. VDOT's analysis did not consider the impact of construction on residents, the maximum overall benefit of the area, or even which route would actually move traffic better. **The VDOT recommendation will have major implications for the Route 50 corridor in Loudoun County, and it is now time for Dulles South residents to become active participants in this process.**

VDOT's Recommendation: Alternative 3C

The VDOT recommended alternative, known as 3C, would expand Route 50 between Northstar Boulevard and Loudoun County Parkway (606) by creating two lanes in the median of 50 that would become “express lanes” for Dulles-Airport bound traffic. There would be one lane for eastbound traffic and one lane for westbound traffic. Route 50 would become limited access, with interchanges built at Northstar Boulevard, Gum Spring Road, and 606. In order to accommodate the median lanes, Route 50 would need to be expanded on each side. VDOT has identified ten existing properties—businesses-- that would be significantly impacted or relocated completely. Here's a visual of the Alternative 3C scenario, from VDOT:



In our view, Alternative 3C has some major limitations.

-Impact on Existing Commuters: Route 50 commuters have been dealing with one of the worst commutes in the entire nation for the past 3+ years, with about another year to go. Alternative 3C is another major, intensive construction project that will take years to complete. Unlike the current project, however, this construction will be of limited benefit to residents in the Route 50 corridor, since it is primarily designed to move traffic through our area.

-Impact on the Existing Local Road Network: We are still awaiting the comprehensive set of data from VDOT's Environmental Impact Study, but we believe that Alternative 3C will create a great deal of congestion on local roads, particularly Tall Cedars Parkway, which runs parallel to Route 50. With much of the existing local access eliminated, Tall Cedars would become the primary route to access homes and businesses in South Riding and Stone Ridge.

-Effectiveness in Supporting Dulles Airport and Future Loudoun Employment

Centers: The goal of this project is to make it easier to get to Dulles Airport, to Metro stations, and to future employment centers in Loudoun County. Yet Alternative 3C provides just one lane in each direction for traffic traveling north/south—with no opportunities to ever expand. It is hard to believe that spending hundreds of millions on this project and the Bi-County Parkway will pay dividends with just one new lane in each direction provided.

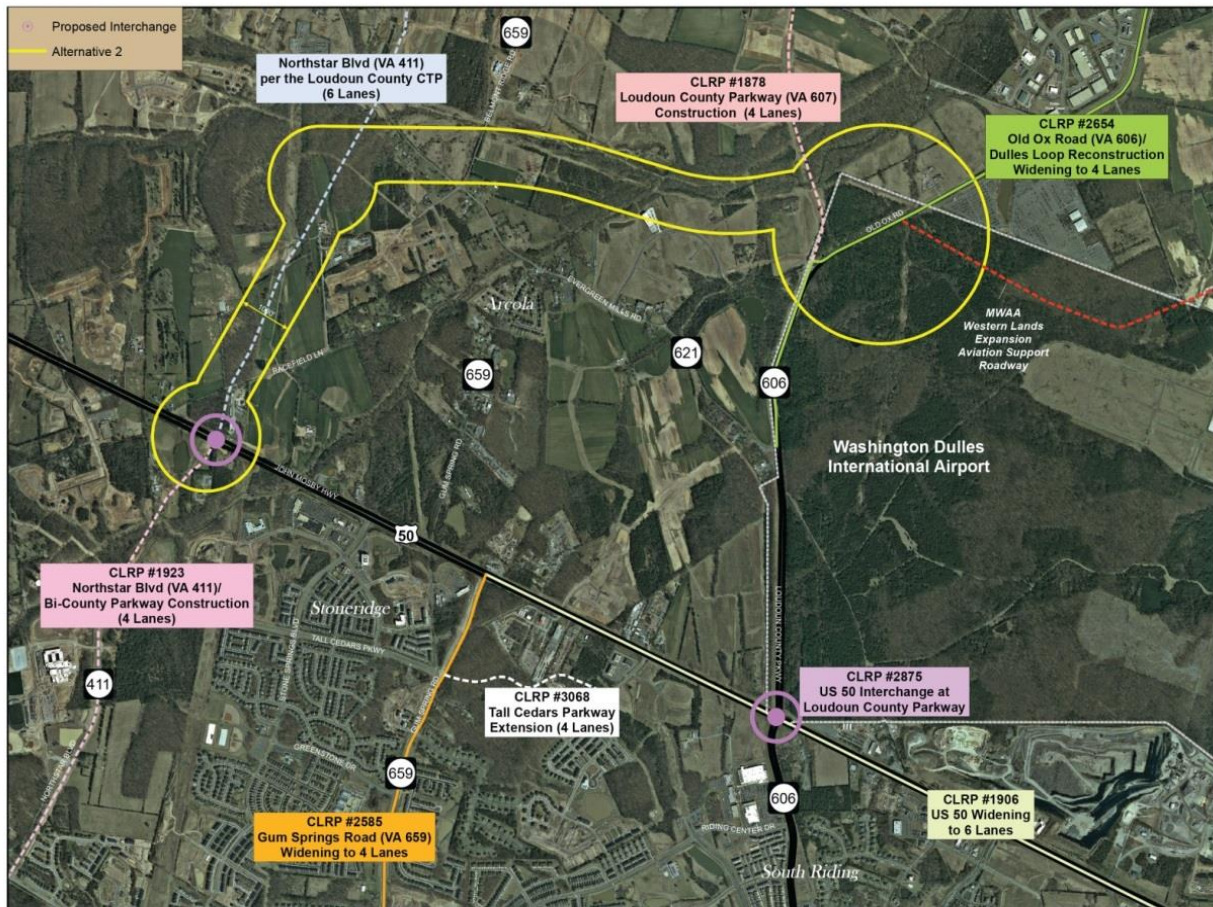
-Disruption to Route 50 businesses and our new hospital: Alternative 3C will impact existing properties and projects on Route 50, and could potentially discourage development of new ones. VDOT has identified 10 properties which will be significantly impacted by losing land and potentially even existing buildings. In addition, making 50 limited access will make it difficult to access new amenities and services in our area. For instance, Alternative 3C provides no intersection at StoneSprings Boulevard, the primary access point for Stone Ridge and for the future StoneSprings Hospital Center.

Our Preferred Alternative: Alternative 2

There is another alternative VDOT is considering which could avoid these concerns, provide better access for airport traffic, and provide a much-needed new East-West route for existing commuters.

Alternative 2 would provide a connection between the planned, though unbuilt section of Northstar Boulevard on the north side of Route 50, across to Route 606, with an entrance to the Airport near the existing Evergreen Mills Road/606 intersection.

Alternative 2 would be a new, 4 lane road similar to Loudoun County Parkway. It would run on a route roughly parallel to existing Evergreen Mills Road, but would provide better travel conditions and more room. The location of the road would be well south of Brambleton, on the southern side of the Broad Run, which runs between the Belmont Ridge/Evergreen Mills Road intersection and the new Arcola Fire Station that was recently built on Belmont Ridge.



-Better for Brambleton Residents (Not Developers): Some residents of the Brambleton community have expressed concerns about the route, and their questions are understandable. They've been told that Alternative 2 is a cargo highway that would go through their neighborhood. But the reality is much different.

In fact, Alternative 2 is a road no different in scope than Loudoun County Parkway that would be situated ¼ mile south of any currently approved residential development in Brambleton—and even further than that from any existing Brambleton homes. Current plans call for Evergreen Mills Road to eventually be turned into a cul de sac, with access provided instead at Shreveport Drive. However, Shreveport Drive will connect with the new, yet unbuilt section of Loudoun County Parkway—not Route 606. Alternative 2 would essentially replace Evergreen Mills Road with a newer, expanded road that would help alleviate the congestion we currently experience.

So why is Brambleton's developer opposed to Alternative 2? More houses. One of Brambleton's rezoning applications with Loudoun County would relocate existing parcels of

land north of the Broad Run that are currently zoned for commercial projects to the south—parcels that could potentially be in the same area as Alternative 2. Instead, Brambleton is seeking to rezone existing commercial parcels to residential parcels in order to build more houses. The County will consider the rezoning request, but it is important to note that the developer's interests are not always the same as residents.

-A Helpful New East-West Connection: Alternative 2 would provide access from the unbuilt section of Northstar Boulevard directly to Route 606. It would help alleviate existing logjams. As mentioned above, existing plans for the new Shreveport Drive would connect it to the unbuilt, missing link of Loudoun County Parkway. However, Alternative 2 would provide access to Route 606 from Northstar, linking Dulles South residents with Route 50, the 606 Metro Station, Dulles Airport and Sterling. Residents from the Route 50 corridor—particularly Stone Ridge and points west-- would have another option to get over to 606 and points north. Brambleton residents would have another way to get east-west.

-Minimal Disruption of Existing Routes: Because Alternative 2 would be built on undeveloped land, the multi-year construction would have minimal impact on commuters. We wouldn't need to suffer through another project like Route 50, and like the Route 606 widening project that is about to get underway.

-More Space for Traffic: Traffic would not be squeezed into one lane in each direction. Alternative 2 is planned for 2 lanes in each direction.

-Less Expensive for Taxpayers: Preliminary estimates from VDOT show that Alternative 2 is cheaper than Alternative 3C—and that's not including an intersection at StoneSprings Boulevard which we believe would be needed if 3C is built.

So What Can You Do?

The first step is for VDOT to receive comments on their recommendation. After that, the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors will make a recommendation. One Supervisor has already indicated a preference for Alternative 3C, so it could be a close vote on the Board. Finally, the Commonwealth Transportation Board will consider all input and options and select a route.

VDOT will be holding a public information meeting on Tuesday, April 22 at 6:30 pm at Liberty Elementary School, 25491 Riding Center Drive, South Riding. Citizens can provide input to VDOT on the alternatives considered by attending the meeting. If you are unable to attend please

review the project on [VDOT's website](#) and email your comments to meeting_comments@vdot.virginia.gov. Please reference “Improving Access to Dulles Airport” in the subject line. We would strongly recommend that citizens attend this meeting and see these plans for themselves.

In addition to VDOT’s recommendation, the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors will be asked to provide its own recommendation. Therefore, residents should also inform the Board of Supervisors of their preference and views at bos@loudoun.gov

Delegate Ramadan and I are committed to doing the right thing for the constituents that we represent and for Loudoun County as a whole. We’ll provide more information as we get it about this project and opportunities for public input.

Sincerely,

Supervisor Matt Letourneau
Loudoun County Board of Supervisors
Dulles District

Delegate David Ramadan
Virginia House of Delegates
87th District