

Spotsy pitches bypass proposal

BY SCOTT SHENK / THE FREE LANCE-STAR | Posted: Thursday, August 15, 2013 2:14 pm

The “Fredericksburg By-pass” tour has started.

Spotsylvania County officials this week gave their first presentation of an alternative to a tolled parkway in the county that area transportation officials have battled over for nearly two years.

Michele Trampe, a Spotsylvania representative on the Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization advisory group and wife of county supervisor Paul Trampe, gave the presentation during Stafford’s Board of Supervisors meeting Tuesday.

After the presentation, she and Republican Del. Mark Cole, also Spotsylvania’s deputy county administrator, answered questions from the board.

Spotsylvania Supervisor David Ross, one of the county’s FAMPO representatives, developed the alternative, along with Orange County supervisor Jim White and state Sen. Bryce Reeves, R-Spotsylvania.

Ross was unavailable Tuesday because Spotsylvania had its own supervisors meeting.

The alternative plan’s first phase would create a bypass that completely avoids Spotsylvania.

It would start at the Centreport Parkway interchange in Stafford County. It would incorporate the proposed Berea Parkway, which would extend from the airport to U.S. 17.

Ross’ bypass would then run west through Stafford into Culpeper and Orange counties, where it would connect to State Route 3 near Wilderness. The route would cross both the Rappahannock and Rapidan rivers.

A second phase would take the bypass back to I-95, south of Fredericksburg, though there is no route drawn up at this point.

During Tuesday’s PowerPoint presentation, Trampe said the bypass is Spotsylvania’s attempt to “get ahead of growth,” adding that officials need to look at least 40 years out for transportation planning.

She said Ross’s bypass would help alleviate congestion on Interstate 95 as well as U.S. 17 and State



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Proposed alternative route for Spotsylvania bypass

Route 3, which is the focus of the \$300 million Rappahannock River Crossing project.

That current project calls for improvements to the U.S. 17 and Route 3 interchanges and the addition of collector-distributor roads running parallel to I-95 between the interchanges. That would include new northbound and southbound bridges next to the current I-95 bridge over the Rappahannock.

Those portions of the project are still in the planning and review phase, with \$55 million in funding.

The Rappahannock River Crossing—which was approved by the Virginia Department of Transportation and federal officials—also included the tolled parkway that would run from the new interchange at the Virginia Welcome Center on I-95 and connect to Route 3 near Gordon Road.

Shortly after becoming a Spotsylvania FAMPO representative in late 2011, Ross made it clear that his county wouldn't support the parkway. Other FAMPO members told him to come up with an alternative.

FAMPO officials from Stafford and Fredericksburg have criticized Ross's plan, saying it goes too far west and doesn't seem to be geared to help I-95 or Route 3 traffic. They also have pointed out that Ross's bypass completely avoids Spotsylvania and instead runs through other jurisdictions.

Ross doesn't think his proposed bypass goes too far west, and he believes there would be a better route to connect back to I-95 from the State Route 20 area than from Gordon Road.

Trampe told the Stafford board that their counterparts in Spotsylvania voted to support studying Ross's plan.

Several Stafford supervisors, who serve on FAMPO and have been critical of Ross's plan, raised concerns again Tuesday.

Supervisor Gary Snellings asked why someone headed from U.S. 17 to the Virginia Beach area would use the bypass.

Cole said that is beyond the scope of Ross's plan and added that the toll road wouldn't address that issue either.

The Spotsylvania officials said Ross's bypass could divert U.S. 17 tractor-trailer traffic heading to Charlottesville from I-95. The PowerPoint presentation also notes that the bypass could be a "relief valve" when there are crashes on the interstate.

Stafford supervisor Cord Sterling, also a member of FAMPO and the Commonwealth Transportation Board, didn't see how the bypass would attract tractor-trailer traffic.

He also wanted to know where the money would come from for Ross's proposal, which he guessed could cost \$400 million to \$500 million.

Cole said that issue hasn't been addressed yet.

Supervisor Robert Thomas wondered what incentive there would be for Spotsylvania residents who live east of where the proposed bypass would tap back into the highway. He also asked if the group had any data on traffic that might use the bypass.

They don't have data yet, Trampe said, adding that further studies would include that kind of information.

Stafford supervisor and FAMPO member Paul Milde has opposed the plan from the get-to, and he stuck to his guns Tuesday.

"It doesn't do what needs to be done," he said, adding that he hopes somehow this plan will move things forward, at least perhaps with the Berea Parkway.

Sterling added that there need to be alternatives to the plan and that the other jurisdictions—Orange and Culpeper counties—need to be on board, not only with the plan but with paying for needed studies.

Cole said Spotsylvania officials believe the other localities would be willing to help pay for the studies.

He added that they plan to give similar presentations to Orange and Culpeper supervisors.

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