

VDOT officials get an earful about planned Route 3 road improvements at town hall meeting

BY CATHY DYSON/THE FREE LANCE-STAR | Posted: Saturday, February 20, 2016 12:30 am

If the purpose of a town hall meeting is to share information, then Thursday night's event in King George County certainly lived up to the billing.

Residents who attended the meeting at Shiloh Baptist Church gave as much information to officials making a presentation as the officials gave them.

A good portion of the crowd of about 50 people was interested in the Virginia Department of Transportation's proposal to add passing lanes on State Route 3 beyond its intersection with U.S. 301. VDOT has looked at the road from King George to Lancaster County, but focused its presentation Thursday on the King George portion.

It proposes three short-term projects that would cost \$12.55 million. One would add a set of passing lanes along a 1.6 mile stretch between Index and Rollins Fork. The other two would add a left-turn and right-turn lane in two different places.

As VDOT officials showed slides of the affected areas, those in the audience couldn't believe what they saw.

Dana Sevier and Jennifer Josselyn pointed out that the aerial map VDOT was using didn't show several houses in the area. It also lacked an existing road and had another one in the wrong place, the women said.

Josselyn also mentioned that the stretch of road VDOT has identified for passing lanes has some of the lowest volumes of vehicles along the road.

"Why would you need the passing lane where you don't have the volume?" she asked.

Stephen Haynes, a planning manager for VDOT, said the passing lanes provide a convenient way for



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Craig VanDussen (right) of the Virginia Department of Transportation addresses public concerns regarding proposed roadwork on State Route 3 in King George during a town hall meeting at Shiloh Baptist Church.

motorists to get beyond slow-going traffic. All the areas VDOT suggested for added lanes are passing zones with good sight distance, he said.

But, inevitably, another vehicle will be coming in the opposite direction when a motorist wants to pass. Additional lanes would make passing easier, Haynes said, because motorists stuck behind tractors or school buses would know they had the chance to pass in designated zones.

Josselyn's husband, Daniel, asked the VDOT speakers if he could plant a seed of an idea.

"Take the word 'convenience' out of it and focus on the safety of the road," he said.

Other residents stressed the rural nature of the area and that it doesn't need a four-lane highway.

Donny Grigsby mentioned a blind curve near State Route 627. He wondered if any of those who designed the proposals had actually driven the road.

"I would suggest anybody in this room go down to Route 627 and try to make a turn," he said.

VDOT officials weren't put off by the negative responses. Instead, they said they were glad for the feedback.

"It is wonderful that you all are here tonight," Haynes said. "If there is enough objection, that's gonna drive our decision."

Later, when he and other VDOT officials continued answering questions in the church foyer, he said, "We don't have any reason at all to put a road or a facility where people don't want it."

Haynes said his agency held public hearings in June and December, in Montross and Lancaster. More people attended the town hall meeting than in all four of those sessions combined, he added.

"That's why your feedback is so important," said Ruby Brabo, chairwoman of the King George Board of Supervisors. "You're the ones who live here, you're the ones who drive it every day."

Brabo held quarterly town hall meetings as the Dahlgren District supervisor. Starting in January, she became the at-large supervisor and pledged to hold town hall meetings throughout the county.

Thursday's was the first one and was hosted by Brabo and Cedell Brooks Jr., Shiloh District supervisor; Mike Rose, Shiloh District School Board member; and Tammy Indseth, At-large School Board member.

John Jenkins Jr. and Gayle Hock, the Dahlgren District's supervisor and School Board member, respectively, also attended.

School Superintendent Rob Benson gave a presentation on school accomplishments and the need to increase teacher salaries to stay competitive with the region. Sheriff Steve Dempsey reported on his department's need for six new positions because of the increase in calls.