



Supervisor Tony Buffington
Blue Ridge District
NewsFlash



Intersection Safety Improvement Efforts at Route 7 and Blue Ridge Mountain Road

Sent: August 2, 2021

My office is aware of the ongoing safety concerns at the Rt 7/Blue Ridge Mountain Road (BRMR) intersection and has been proactively working to improve the situation for nearly a year now. In late 2020, I pushed to initiate a collaborative working group between Loudoun County, Clarke County, and their respective VDOT offices to consider actionable short and long-term safety improvements.

Members of this work group consist of my staff, staff from Loudoun County's Department of Transportation and Capital Infrastructure, Loudoun County Sheriff's Office, Virginia State Police, VDOT's Northern Virginia and Staunton District offices, Clarke County officials, National Parks Service, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, and Bear's Den representatives. The group has met monthly since December of 2020 to discuss a variety of opportunities for improved vehicular and pedestrian safety for the intersection.

As a result, the following short-term improvements are being or have already been completed:

- **Westbound left [turn lane extension](#) from Rt 7 onto BRMR** is expected to ease queueing and improve intersection safety. This \$80,000 project was funded by VDOT.
- **Flashing beacons** installed on northbound BRMR approaching the Rt 7 intersection to increase driver awareness of the intersection. This project was funded by VDOT.
- **"No Parking" signage on Rt 7 and BRMR** installed to encourage parking only in designated areas and to discourage unsafe pedestrian traffic on travel lanes. This project was funded by VDOT.
- **Pedestrian crossing warning signs** installed on Rt 7 and BRMR as advance warning to motorists. This project was funded by VDOT.
- **Increased enforcement** by Loudoun County Sheriffs Office throughout this area has been requested by my office and has been occurring.

In addition to the above listed improvements, the following long-term actions have or are occurring:

- At my request, and with support from my colleagues, a new Rt 7/BRMR Intersection Improvement Project was added to Loudoun's approved Capital Improvement Program (CIP). This is important because no new infrastructure project in Loudoun can be planned or funded unless it is first listed on the County's approved CIP.
- As you can see below, the above mentioned new CIP project includes \$550,000 of Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22 began on July 1, 2021) local tax and Northern Virginia Transportation Authority funding for the planning and preliminary design of safety, operational, and access improvements in the vicinity of the Rt 7/BRMR intersection.

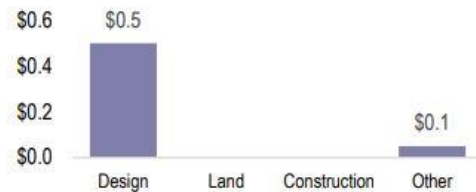


Route 7 – Blue Ridge Mountain / Raven Rocks Intersection Improvements

Details:

Project Number: C02394
Election District: Blue Ridge
Length: n/a
Project Type: Intersection and Access Improvements
Estimated Completion Year: n/a
Referendum: n/a

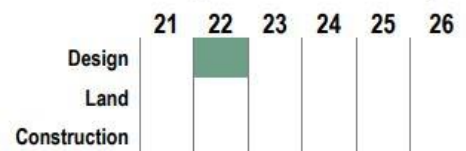
Phase Costs in Millions



Background:

This project provides for the planning and preliminary design of safety, operational, and access improvements in the vicinity of the intersection of Route 7 with Route 601 Blue Ridge Mountain / Raven Rocks Road. Specific improvements are undefined at this time but could potentially include lengthening of turn lanes, improvements to sight distance, and improvements to the Appalachian Trail head parking area.

Project Phase Timeline by FY



Capital (\$ in 1000s)	Prior Years	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	6 Year Total	Future FYs	Project Total
Professional Services	-	-	500	-	-	-	-	500	-	500
Personnel	-	-	50	-	-	-	-	50	-	50
Total – Costs	-	-	550	-	-	-	-	550	-	550
Local Tax Funding Roads	-	-	515	-	-	-	-	515	-	515
NVTA 30% Local	-	-	35	-	-	-	-	35	-	35
Total – Funding Sources	-	-	550	-	-	-	-	550	-	550

- As this project is located within two Counties (Loudoun and Clarke), our Loudoun County staff will utilize the above listed funding to work with Clarke County staff and the VDOT District offices for Loudoun and Clarke Counties in order to identify a future improvement design that all parties agree will work best to increase safety and provide a high level of service for the intersection.
- Once a future improvement design has been agreed upon by both Counties and VDOT offices, Loudoun County staff will estimate the funding needed for construction (and all

other costs) and make a future funding recommendation to the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors as part of the County Administrators recommended CIP budget to the Board. The Loudoun County Board will then consider the County Administrators funding request. Once a funding amount for the agreed upon design is approved by the Loudoun County Board, County staff will then seek funding to be programmed and utilized for eventual construction of the agreed upon design.

- It should be noted that there will be public hearings throughout this process during which members of the public who will have the same access to then current information as members of the Board of Supervisors are given, will be provided an opportunity to provide direct input to the Board regarding their thoughts on whatever the Board is considering at that time.
- It is also possible that Clarke County will seek to fund a portion of the future improvement project; however, it may be more advantageous (and less confusing) for only one of our two Counties to seek the funding, which is a process that Loudoun County has already began. Either way, a funding strategy will be discussed by all parties and agreed upon.
- I recently spoke with Virginia State Senator, Jill Vogel about the safety of this intersection and she asked whether it would be helpful for her to try and obtain some project specific dedicated state funding to assist with overall project funding. I assured her that it would be helpful and asked that she make every effort to do so. Her efforts at the state level will be in addition to the County's efforts to appropriate sufficient project funding from a variety of road project funding sources.
- Lastly, while I wish this intersection improvement project could be designed, funded and constructed overnight, that is simply not possible. Everyone involved needs to

understand that it will be years before this project is fully designed and approved, has all necessary funding from the various local and state funding sources, has acquired any necessary rights-of-way and/or easements, any necessary utility relocations have been completed, and construction has commenced and been completed.

As always, my office appreciates thoughts and ideas received from area residents and business owners and will share them for further consideration by the working group as efforts to improve safety in this area continue. Anyone wishing to provide input on this issue can do so [here](#).

Be safe!



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