

Roundabouts

Written by Christina Dimeo, Correspondent

Thursday, 04 February 2016 15:29 - Last Updated Thursday, 04 February 2016 15:33

Fluvanna roundabouts rank high for state funding

Some of the troublesome spots on Fluvanna County roads will soon become safer thanks to the likelihood of funding from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT).

VDOT now uses a ranking system called HB2 to award funding to transportation projects. The new rankings are out and “Fluvanna did very well this year,” VDOT Residency Administrator Joel DeNunzio told the Fluvanna County Board of Supervisors Wednesday evening (Feb. 3).

A proposed roundabout at the intersection of Rt. 53 and Lake Monticello Road (Rt. 618) was ranked second place in the district and 30th in the state, said DeNunzio, due to the roundabout’s “crash reduction potential.”

Stacy Londrey, acting communications manager at VDOT, said that final decisions about which projects to fund will be made in June.

If the roundabout is funded, DeNunzio said, the next step in its construction – advertisement – would begin in two to six years.

Work on a second roundabout at the intersection of Rt. 15 and Rt. 53 stalled at the end of last year when funding dried up. If selected under the new HB2 system, however, the roundabout will be fully funded. DeNunzio said the project ranked third in the district and 39th in the state. Because many steps toward the roundabout’s construction have already been taken, DeNunzio said he hoped advertisement could start this year.

Folks who drive back and forth to Charlottesville on Rt. 53 will see some relief as well. Federal safety funds are providing for shoulder widening and edge-line rumble strips on the road, especially in areas where there have been a lot of “road-departure crashes,” said DeNunzio. The \$1.2 million undertaking is a “very high-benefit type of project” that will keep drivers alert in high-crash and curvy areas where they are more likely to leave the road, he said.

Roundabouts

Written by Christina Dimeo, Correspondent

Thursday, 04 February 2016 15:29 - Last Updated Thursday, 04 February 2016 15:33

When Supervisor Tony O'Brien asked about guardrails in certain spots of Rt. 53, DeNunzio said that VDOT shies away from guardrail projects as much as possible given that the guardrails themselves can be dangerous. Trees cause the most injuries or deaths, DeNunzio said, followed by utility poles. But guardrails come in third, accounting for 9 percent of all fatalities.

"Guardrails help if they keep you from something worse," DeNunzio said. If there's a steep drop-off, for example, he said a guardrail could be "the safest thing." But overall, he said, VDOT tries to be sparing in their use.

"What's great about this project is that we're going to have to add shoulder to put rumble strips in, and the shoulder widening is a far safer project than anything you can do with guardrails," DeNunzio said.

O'Brien and Chairman Mike Sheridan brought up concerns they have with two of the entrances to Lake Monticello: Monish Gate on Rt. 53 and Riverside Gate on South Boston Road (Rt. 600). Both sites have seen a fair number of crashes, including fatalities.

When O'Brien asked how often VDOT reviews statistics about fatalities, DeNunzio said that his organization has a process in which it compiles rates of crashes, fatalities, and serious injuries. By putting together a crash rate per million miles traveled, VDOT is able to compare the roads to others statewide, and roads that come in with above-normal crash rates can qualify for federal funds.

VDOT has looked at Riverside and Monish Gates, DeNunzio said, but doesn't have a plan. "What's difficult about those gates is that they're privately-maintained commercial entrances, and spending tax dollars on improvements to commercial entrances is very difficult," he said. His opinion, however, is that the two gates need left turn lanes.

If Lake Monticello developers were trying to build now as opposed to 40 years ago, they would probably be required to build left turn lanes at those entrances, DeNunzio said. VDOT does have the authority to require updates for serious issues, he said, but "it's very difficult to do" and therefore "very rare that we do that."

Roundabouts

Written by Christina Dimeo, Correspondent

Thursday, 04 February 2016 15:29 - Last Updated Thursday, 04 February 2016 15:33

The responsibility for the safety at those entrances falls onto the commercial development itself – in this case, Lake Monticello, DeNunzio said. He estimated a left turn lane would cost \$300,000 or \$400,000.

Sheriff Eric Hess said that he brought Jamie Glass, VDOT residency program manager, along with him on a ride through some of the dangerous spots on South Boston Road. Glass will look into the areas where crashes have recently taken place and come back with recommendations, Hess said.

DeNunzio also said that both sections of North Boston Road (Rt. 600 and Rt. 633) are in preliminary engineering for road widening. There is also a bridge replacement scheduled for Deep Creek Road (Rt. 629).