A public meeting for the Graves Mill Road Corridor Study was held on Tuesday, December 12, 2017 at the Lynchburg Humane Society in Lynchburg, Virginia. The meeting was organized as an open-house format and was open to the general public from 4:00 – 6:30 pm. Advertisement for the meeting included:

- Mail-outs to residents and businesses near the study area approximately two weeks in advance of the meeting
- Deployment of variable message signs on Graves Mill Road approximately one week in advance of the meeting
- Press release
- Advertisement via social media
- Advertisement via local news agencies
- Notice included on the project website (www.gravesmillplan.com)

The goal of this meeting was for the public to 1) learn about the study, 2) review information about the corridor, and 3) share comments regarding concerns, opportunities, and improvement ideas. Attendees were encouraged to provide feedback and offer suggestions that would help to inform the project development process. Representatives from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), City of Lynchburg, Virginia’s Region 2000 Local Government Council, and project consultants were available to explain materials, answer questions, and record feedback. Information boards were set up in the meeting space that presented the following subjects:

- Welcome and purpose of the meeting
- Information about the study
- Summary of existing and future traffic conditions
- Crash data (six years)
- Summary of multimodal conditions (sidewalks, transit stops, etc.)
• General information on innovative intersection ideas applicable to the corridor

In addition to the information boards, large table-top maps of the corridor were available for attendees to gather around and mark-up. Comment sheets were also made available for participants. The meeting was attended by approximately 50 people (that signed in), including business owners/representatives along the corridor. There were also several local news organizations that covered the meeting (WDBJ7, NewsAdvance, WSLS, and WLNJ).

A consistent flow of attendees began right at 4:00 PM and continued through approximately 6:00 PM. Representatives were provided sufficient time to walk attendees through the study and answer questions, as needed. Several news organization interviews were provided by the public and agency representatives. Overall, attendees were very pleased. City officials were attempting to stay in front of potential growth that could exceed 50% over the next 20 years. In addition to managing traffic congestion, attendees were also pleased attention was being paid to transit, pedestrian and bicycle accommodations along the corridor.

It was further suggested by multiple attendees the City (or other agencies) undergo a study along Old Graves Mill Road between Graves Mill Road and Timberlake Road.

**Specific Public Comments**

The following public comments were written on comment sheets that were provided at the meeting, or emailed via the project website (specific identifying information has been removed, and at times, comments are paraphrased):

*I was not able to attend the meeting. One suggestion (and it might be a long shot) is to have Graves Mill Road 3 lanes each way. However, a more feasible suggestion would be signage. An issue with accidents in Lynchburg is the lack of signs. People from out of town that use Graves Mill to go to the expressway merge over at the very end and back end or swipe other cars. Every street that intersects with the expressway should have a sign like the one on Timberlake Rd. I have heard from transportation officials that ”signs are expensive” but this is one of the key reasons for congestion from 3-6pm weekdays.*

*I have lived in this area since 1976. There used to be little traffic even though it was a cut thru. Now, I can hardly get out of my street. The traffic from Timberlake Road is awful. From McConville Rd to 221 there are too many lights & way too much traffic. Traffic isn’t flowing, a light needs to be at Nationwide Dr., that ”annex” is a nightmare, it’s like crossing 3 lanes & you take your life in your hands using it. People block that light at Bella Rosa. Lots of times it*
turns green but you can’t go because of cars blocking it. People fly from 221 to just get to the exit for the expressway. There are lots of things that can be done to help traffic.

I was not able to attend the meeting, and I don’t know if a stop light at Lillian Ln or Millside Center is part of the discussion, but there are currently a lot of senior citizens that are trying to access this area of Graves Mill with no safe and/or easy way to do it. I’m not sure if a turn lane in this stretch or a stop light is a good solution, but if there is a master plan being developed, I think something like this would be quite helpful.

Has any thought been given to a roundabout at the intersection of Graves Mill Rd. and McConville Rd.? With Lynchburg’s consideration of roundabouts throughout the City, this seems to me to be one place that one would work well. The four-way stop is confusing at best and dangerous at worst, especially during times of heavy traffic.

Sync lights so the thru traffic doesn’t have to stop at every light.

Plan a stop light for the Bella Rose community development.

Do not add sidewalks directly beside the road. Needs separation by 3’ – 5’ from road. The same goes for bike lanes.

Road milling contributes to uneven lanes and vehicles crashing.

Add lights so they are on both sides of the road.

Keep speed limit at 45 mph.

Access to highway is currently acceptable.

Roundabout absolutely needed at McConville Rd.

My concerns relate to Old Graves Mill Road. As the area has grown, there has been a tremendous increase in traffic on Old Graves Mill Road between Timberlake Road and Graves Mill Road. Old Graves Mill needs traffic control to better manage cars and commercial truck traffic. Sidewalks throughout the section should also be installed. Old Graves Mill Road is also too narrow and has not been updated since it was originally designed as a rural road.

I attended the recent public meeting at the Lynchburg Humane Society which presented the Graves Mill Road Plan. I was disappointed that the Plan did not include a study of Old Graves Mill Road between Timberlake Road and Graves Mill Road. As a homeowner off Old Graves Mill road, I have no choice but the travel this section of road daily and am increasingly concerned whether this section of road can safely handle traffic. Recent years have seen a marked increase in traffic along Old Graves Mill Road as more drivers use it as a short cut to and from the Graves Mill Road and Timberlake Road areas. Recent development of the Old Graves Mill Road and Graves Mill Road areas has also dramatically added to this traffic. The planned development of this corridor in the near future will surely further increase traffic on Old Graves Mill Road. As you know, the section of Old Graves Mill Road north of Timberlake Road still has a narrow section without shoulders or sidewalks that dates back to an earlier and rural age. In addition, there is considerable commercial truck traffic to and from the Tomahawk Industrial Park not to speak of the number of school buses that pick up children throughout this neighborhood. All this makes for periods of heavy, unregulated traffic that result in the neighbors having difficulty turning onto Old Graves Mill Road from side streets and driveways. Also, please note that the speed limit of 35 MPH is routinely and grossly exceeded. I personally have had cars pass me on Old Graves Mill Road while I am driving the speed limit! I hope that you, VDOT and Lynchburg engineers find my concern warrant further interest. Specifically, I hope that consideration will be given to regulating traffic flow with a
stoplight at the intersection of Tomahawk Industrial Park and Old Graves Mill Road. I believe that a traffic light at that intersection would greatly add to the safety along this stretch of road.

The following public comments were written on table top maps that were provided at the meeting, or on blank note boards located between the informational boards. The comments are typically more specific and relate to intersection level improvements.

The memorandum ENDS after these comments and a summary of the news coverage.
Corridor-wide comments

- Finish & Connect Sidewalks → along Old Graves Mill (OGM) as well
- Currently, no pedestrians (might walk if felt more protected from high speed traffic)
- More street lights at night
- Need a roundabout at OGM, McConville Rd, and Nationwide
- Eastbound: speed limit feels artificial
  - No posted speed limit signs other than the 35 mph and reduced speed ahead
- New expressway to connect 460 to 221
- Add lane along entire length (eastbound) dedicated to right turns
Gristmill Drive & Graves Mill Road  (T-Intersection)

Observed Conditions
- Water pools between intersections #1 & #2 (Millrace Drive) to the east

Proposals
- Add center left turn lane (full length)
- Eliminate left turns entering/exiting Graves Mill Shopping Center parking lot
- Take away left turn on to 221 from Gristmill
Intersection #2

Millrace Drive & Graves Mill Road (T-Intersection)

Observed Conditions

- Can’t enter Graves Mill Rd from northside (State Farm Building) between 3-6pm
- High speeds
Intersection #3

Millside Drive & Graves Mill Road

Observed Conditions

- Westbound right turn too abrupt
- Between #3 & I#4 → water pools
- Difficulty making a left across Graves Mill Road
Intersection #4

Old Graves Mill Road & Graves Mill Road

Observed Conditions

- Danger: Westbound turning/veering left - cars have flipped
- From Old GM Rd., can’t pull out onto GM Rd. during peak hours (‘lacks gaps’)
- Bumper to bumper towards Timberlake Rd. (southbound)
  - Old GM Rd. shouldn’t be a cut through

Proposals

- Old Graves Mill Road → Need a Study!
- Add double left turn lanes Westbound
  - Add permissive phase
- Open up the end of Tomahawk Dr.
- Change name of either Tomahawk Dr. or Tomahawk Industrial Park
Intersection #5

Creekside & Old Graves Mill Road

Observed Conditions

- Not enough turn length on GM from interchange to OGM
- Gas station entrance at Creekside is challenging
- Heavy queuing

Proposals

- The cut through from OGM to GM (that turns into Creekside Drive after GM) should be made one way
- GM/OGM – disconnect or right turn only
- Overpass for OGM to Creekside
- Creekside: extend around Rosedale to Millrace
- Extend Creekside north to 221 and Breezewood Drive (parallels 501)
Intersection #6

501 Southbound & Graves Mill Road

Observed Conditions
- Danger: LT/RT EB/WB conflicts → crashes → sight/distance issue
- Heavy queuing

Proposals
- Add two right turn-only lanes eastbound onto Rt. 501 southbound
- Salt Facility needs to stay on this side of town
- Replace westbound left with a SB loop on the north side
**501 Northbound & Graves Mill Road**

**Intersection #7**

**Observed Conditions**

- While the southbound tends to be the problem, northbound queuing can be long.

- Eastbound left queuing can spill back out of turn lane.
Intersection #8

McConville Road & Graves Mill Road

Observed Conditions

• Yield sign confusion
• 700 block is too narrow

Proposals

• Consider a roundabout (multiple references)
LYNCHBURG, Va. (WDBJ7) Region 2000 leaders are calling the Graves Mill Road Corridor a “congested corridor”.

Gristmill Drive in Bedford County to McConville Road in Lynchburg is a popular commuter road in the region and, with that congestion in mind, Region 2000 is looking to make a plan for the future.

The Graves Mill Study was launched three months ago. Region 2000 and the Central Virginia Metropolitan Planning Organization as well as Bedford County, the City of Lynchburg and the Virginia Department of Transportation have teamed up to conduct the study. EPR, a firm out of Charlottesville, has been brought in and paid about $65,000 to conduct the study.

The study has revealed that while the corridor is congested now, the area surrounding it is expecting to grow more than 50 percent in the next 20 years. Current projects like the Rosedale development and a new apartment complex on Old Graves Mill Road will bring more traffic to the area.

“We really need to stay in front of that demand,” said Drew Draper, Principal Planner with EPR. “To create a safer…more multimodal environment.”

Tuesday night the public came out to learn more about the results of the study so far and to voice their opinions.

“In the morning and night there’s so much traffic you have to slow down,” said Albert Turner, who lives on Graves Mill Road.

“I try to avoid it sometimes of the day, but it’s not always possible,” said Laura Dooley, who travels the corridor daily.

The study not only showed how congested the corridor is, but also revealed higher than average crash rates. Leaders say high crash rates are typic of a congested corridor.
The study will be looking at short term and long term solutions. Ranging from signal lights and bike paths, to bigger projects like a roundabout or diverging diamond intersection.

This is the grassroots level of the study, they are working on things to consider moving forward with the future growth in mind.

“It seems as though they really understand that there’s these issues because they are addressed in a lot of the pictures here so I’m kind of hopeful that something really good will come of this,” said Dooley.

The leaders of the study will now take the public comments from Tuesday’s meeting and evaluate them further. They will hold another meeting sometime in February for public input and are hoping to have the study finished by early springtime. The goal of the study is to help plan things out so the project can be prioritized and implemented sooner.

To learn more about the project, go to their website: www.gravesmillplan.com

Source 1 Continued: WDBJ7:


LYNCHBURG, Va. (WDBJ7) -- Lynchburg City leaders are conducting a study on what is considered a congested stretch of road.

Graves Mill Road (WDBJ7)
The corridor study is looking at Graves Mill Rd. to make improvements to help with traffic flow and the crash rate.

The stretch of road is traveled by more than 27,000 vehicles daily; an amount of traffic that doesn't surprise Sherei Scott, who works at Moore's County store at the corner of Graves Mill and Creekside Dr. "It's hectic. It can get hectic … I mean you can sit at the light for five minutes just trying to get up the street," explained Scott.

That exact same intersection also has the highest crash rate on the corridor. So, now, city leaders want to make improvements. "We'll be looking at different lane configurations, different types of intersections, different types of signal configurations, pedestrian accommodations, bicycle accommodation," said Scott Smith, the Transportation Director with Region 2000.
The study includes the stretch of road from McConville to Grist Mill Rd., an area that is also seeing growth. "We have future developments that have been proposed. We want to get ahead of that make sure we can accommodate those developments," said Smith.

The new developments include Rosedale and a new apartment complex that is already under construction.

Smith says the study will help them determine what improvements to make to help with traffic flow and crash rates - which for most of the corridor is higher than other roads in the city and state. "If we can improve the through-put, the capacity of the corridor, while also reducing crashes then we're doing the right thing and that's what we're looking at," said Smith.

Project leaders will host a public workshop on Tuesday, Dec. 12 from 4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at the Lynchburg Humane Society.

Source 2 - NewsAdvance


Graves Mill Road has served as a transportation corridor since the 1700s, and it has been growing with traffic and business ever since — and regional officials looked at shaping the road’s future at a Tuesday public meeting at the Lynchburg Humane Society.

After Lynchburg and Bedford County planning and transportation officials informed Region 2000 Local Government Council about the concerns for high traffic volume and a higher-than-average vehicular crash rate, a plan to improve traffic in the corridor was developed.

“There is rather extensive growth in this area,” Scott Smith, transportation planning director of Region 2000, said at Tuesday’s meeting. “We wanted to get ahead of the growth and identify ways to address these issues.”

The meeting allowed area residents to see data on possible plans for the road.

Region 2000 Local Government Council and Central Virginia Metropolitan Planning Organization, in partnership with Bedford County and the city of Lynchburg and with assistance from Charlottesville-based engineering company EPR P.C., are conducting the study of Graves Mill Road between Gristmill Road and McConville Road in Lynchburg. The study began this summer and will be concluded next spring.
The planning process began in the summer and cost $65,000. It has been funded mostly by Region 2000, with some money from Lynchburg.

“Our job on a regional level is to help identify and prioritize projects and help get them ready for funding,” Smith said.

The area has grown during the past several years with new businesses like The Home Depot and Moore’s Country Store and will continue to grow with developments like Rosedale — a community that hopes to soon build and attract a hotel, grocery store, restaurants, a brewery and office space — as well as Elements at Old Graves Mill Road — new apartments being constructed.

“Graves Mill serves a larger purpose, and that is to get people from Forest to Lynchburg,” Smith said. “Forest is one of the fastest-growing areas of Bedford County and is one of the fastest-growing areas of Lynchburg metro. Even if no other businesses are proposed, we’re going to have increased traffic. It’s the connector of choice for most people.”

Every intersection between McConville Road and Gristmill Drive, except for one, has a higher than average crash rate than all of Lynchburg and the state, Smith said. There are seven signalized intersections and two with no signals in the corridor. The highest is Creekside Drive, where The Home Depot is located.

Bill Wuensch, principal transportation engineer and planner for EPR, has collected all of the data and looked at crash history.

Most crashes are caused by rear-ending and angle crashes — where drivers make turns and hit another vehicle. There is one reported fatality on Graves Mill Road since 2006, which occurred in 2013 near Bulls Steakhouse.

Kelly Duff Smith, of Amherst County — who works on Nationwide Drive, which intersects with Graves Mill Road — said she has to drive on the road on a daily basis.

There is a four-way stop sign at the intersection of Nationwide Drive, Graves Mill Road and McConville Road. In her opinion, she said drivers don’t know how to use it.

“When everyone is getting off at 5 o’clock p.m., it’s a madhouse and very dangerous because people don’t wait their turn to go, and it causes others to stop so they don’t get hit,” she said. “It has gotten worse and is more dangerous.”

She thinks there needs to be a stoplight instead of the four-way stop.
“These other stoplights truly do help out this traffic,” she said. “It’s a lot more people using the Graves Mill Road exit to cut through to get to [the U.S.] 221 Forest area or even Timberlake [Road].”

Wuensch said based off of the data found, traffic is anticipated to grow 1.25 percent per year by 2040, when it will reach traffic capacity.

Don DeBerry, Lynchburg traffic engineer, said the city has submitted a grant application for $500,000 to the Virginia Department of Transportation to install an adaptive signal system on the road that would consist of five signals that would coordinate signals and better utilize green light time during heavy traffic periods.

Smith said data only is being gathered now, but in the next few weeks, the team of transportation planners will be looking at possible solutions.

“It could be as simple as reprogramming traffic signals; it can be as complicated as building new roads,” he said.

There will be another public meeting held in the spring on possible solutions, and then funding for the project will be applied for through VDOT. Since the study is underway, they haven’t offered up figures for how much the traffic work will cost.

“We have to look at our biggest bang for our buck. These things cost a lot of money,” he said.

Source 3 - WSLS:


LYNCHBURG, Va. - Moore’s Country Store has been on Creekside Lane in Lynchburg for almost two years.

Store manager, Mark Emerson says they have three exits for customers to get out onto Graves Mill Road.

“Other than the construction we had a few months ago. But when it got up here close, near the bottom there, it affected us a little bit with people getting in and out of the shop here. But we haven't experienced a lot of wrecks or anything,” Emerson said.

Though Emerson said Moore’s Country Store hasn't seen any accidents lately, officials with Virginia’s Region 2000 say, the Creekside Lane -Graves Mill Road intersection has had the most accidents compared to the city and state average.
"As you can see, a majority of the crashes are rear-end crashes," said Scott Smith, transportation planning director for Virginia's Region 2000 Local Government Council, pointing to a Google image on their corridor study.

Graves Mill Road is a major connector between Lynchburg and Forest and many businesses have been developed over the years. And new developments are coming to the area soon.

“Because of the growth happening all along this corridor. We want to try to work out in the future and get ahead of that growth so that we can make plans to keep this corridor functioning well,” Smith said.

Officials say the study will cost about $60,000 paid for by the Local Government Council and a bit by Lynchburg. They will look from Nationwide Drive in Lynchburg to Gristmill Drive in Bedford County.

"We're going to be looking at the width of the lanes, can we add additional lanes without increasing the asphalt. We're going to be looking at synchronizing the traffic signals to make sure they're all working together properly. We're looking at pedestrian and transit accommodations to make sure other folks not using cars can get through here well," Smith said.

On Tuesday from 4 to 6:30 p.m. at the Lynchburg Humane Society, 1211 Old Graves Mill Road, officials will host an open-house format for members of the public to drop in and discuss concerns about Graves Mill Road.

To read more about the study, click here.

Source 4 - WLNI:


A public information workshop for the Graves Mill Road Corridor Study is scheduled for a week from tomorrow. The study is focusing on Graves Mill between McConville Road in Lynchburg and Gristmill Drive in Bedford County. The workshop is set for December 12th at the Lynchburg Humane Society on Old Graves Mill Road; it runs between 4:00 and 6:30 pm.

Click here for the Graves Mill Road Corridor Study website.

(Continue reading for the Region 2000 Local Government Council news release.)

LYNCHBURG— A public information workshop for the Graves Mill Road Corridor Study will be held between the hours of 4:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday December 12th, 2017 at the
Lynchburg Humane Society at 1211 Old Graves Mill Rd, Lynchburg, VA 24502. The meeting will be held in an open-house format; members of the public may stop by at any time during the event.

Area residents, employees, commuters, shoppers, and business and property owners are encouraged to attend the workshop to learn about the study, review information about the corridor, and share comments regarding concerns, opportunities, and improvement ideas.

The study, which focuses on the Graves Mill Road corridor between McConville Road in Lynchburg and Gristmill Drive in Bedford County, is being conducted by the Region 2000 Local Government Council and Central Virginia Metropolitan Planning Organization in partnership with Bedford County, the City of Lynchburg and the Virginia Department of Transportation. EPR, P.C. of Charlottesville is providing engineering and planning assistance on the project which began in August 2017 and will conclude next spring.

Graves Mill Road is an important roadway that serves heavy commuter traffic while also providing access to commercial interests. This corridor planning study will:

Investigate existing traffic conditions and consider what kinds of road improvements may be needed if future traffic continues to increase,
Assess existing and desired conditions for pedestrians, bicyclists, and users of transit, (multimodal options), and
Address safety issues.

The study effort will develop short and long-term recommendations that will help to minimize congestion and improve travel conditions and safety along this important corridor. Once the study is complete, the projects can be prioritized so that funding and implementation strategies can be pursued.

For more information on the study, please visit www.gravesmillplan.com.

For more information about this public information workshop or the study, please contact Scott Smith (Transportation Planning Director, Region 2000 Local Government Council) prior to the meeting at 434-845-3491 or by email at ssmith@region2000.org.