

**REPORT OF THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION ON THE**

**EVALUATION OF RESIDENTIAL
CUT-THROUGH TRAFFIC
POLICIES**

**TO THE GOVERNOR AND
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



HOUSE DOCUMENT NO. 40

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
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Preface

Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) cut-through policy and procedures were approved by the Commonwealth Transportation Board on March 16, 1992.

The policy remains in effect and basically addresses local residential streets where the volume of cut-through traffic has been determined to be 40 percent or more of the total one-hour, single direction volume, with a minimum of 150 cut-through trips in one hour in one direction.

House Joint Resolution No. 404 by the 1995 General Assembly requested VDOT to study and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy and the solutions that have been implemented, and further, to determine whether the policy should be modified to include additional classifications of residential streets.

Executive Summary

This report contains the Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT) evaluation of the policy and procedures that were adopted by the Commonwealth Transportation Board on March 16, 1989, and includes recommendations relative to policy modifications as a result of the public meetings.

House Joint Resolution No. 404 of the 1995 General Assembly requested the Department of Transportation to study and evaluate this policy and submit its findings to the 1996 General Assembly. The study and evaluation were to involve citizens, civic organizations, and other interested persons or groups. The report was to further include a determination as to whether the residential cut-through traffic policy should be modified to include additional classifications of residential streets.

(See Appendix A for a copy of HJR 404)

VDOT's Traffic Engineering Division was assigned to conduct the review. Four public meetings were held on October 3, 1995, in the Department's Northern Virginia, Fredericksburg, Richmond, and Salem Districts. Verbal and written comments were solicited from citizens, civic organizations, community groups, and others who wished to be involved.

A majority of persons commenting felt the policy should be expanded to include additional classifications of roads. The current policy applies only to local residential streets.

Following the public meetings, a task force comprised of VDOT and local government representatives met on October 16, 1995, to evaluate the policy and public meeting comments and provide recommendations for consideration by the Commonwealth Transportation Board.

The task force determined that the policy has been working well for local residential streets meeting the cut-through traffic criteria and should remain in effect for these streets. Intervention strategies on streets meeting the cut-through traffic criteria may continue to be fully financed with state secondary roads funds with concurrence of the local Boards of Supervisors.

The task force also recognized that some localities may have unique needs and may wish to implement cut-through traffic intervention programs that would include some local streets not meeting the current cut-through traffic threshold criteria and some collector roads that function similar to local streets.

These localities should have the flexibility to implement these higher level programs provided they agree to provide a part or all of the funding. Agreements could be negotiated with the appropriate VDOT district administrators (prior to any implementation of the higher level programs) as to the types of allowable interventions and the amount of VDOT financial participation. Such a flexible supplemental option allows localities and VDOT to become more responsive to the public, and on a limited basis, addresses the citizens' suggestions to include other classifications of roads in the policy.

VDOT also recommends that the Commonwealth Transportation Board issue a broad policy statement on cut-through traffic that states that procedures will be determined by the Transportation Commissioner.

I. Introduction

As a result of initiatives by Delegate Alan E. Mayer and recognition by VDOT of the residential cut-through traffic problem in urbanized areas by VDOT, a task force comprised of local and state government representatives developed a policy to address this issue. After receiving public input, the policy was adopted by the Commonwealth Transportation Board on March 16, 1989.

The major objective of this new policy was to provide a mechanism for citizens, local governments, and VDOT to work together to reduce cut-through traffic within community infrastructures and to apply traffic control techniques to encourage cut-through traffic to use the collectors and arterial streets instead of residential streets.

The current policy and procedures set forth the definitions, quantified criteria for intervention, and responsibilities of VDOT and local governments.

Residential cut-through traffic has been defined as traffic passing through a specific residential area without stopping or at least having an origin or destination within the area.

The primary criteria for intervention are the street must be functionally classified as local, and the volume of cut-through traffic must be 40 percent or more of the total one-hour, single direction volume, with a minimum of 150 cut-through trips in one hour in one direction.

(See Appendix C for the current cut-through traffic policy and procedures which includes detailed criteria and definitions)

VDOT has been implementing traffic control strategies, including speed control measures such as speed humps on local streets when requested by counties or towns and when the traffic situation on these streets meets the criteria set forth in the policy. Counties and towns have been and continue to be partners with VDOT in this endeavor.

In the six years since the policy was implemented, four districts have received requests to employ traffic control measures to discourage cut-through traffic on local residential streets:

- Northern Virginia District
- Fredericksburg District
- Richmond District
- Salem District

The greatest number of requests for intervention has occurred in the Northern Virginia District where the interest is highest. Many of the complaints or requests were screened by the local governments prior to reaching the Department because the amount of cut-through traffic on local residential streets did not meet the criteria set forth in the policy or because the requests addressed collector streets not covered by the policy.

Many complaints or requests have been handled as traffic engineering problems rather than cut-through traffic problems, and were resolved by use of less expensive countermeasures such as installation of signs, reduced speed limits, and line markings.

Intervention has taken place or is in the process of being implemented at all locations meeting the criteria set forth in the policy. In several other instances the Department of Transportation made every effort to be sensitive to the high level of public concern about cut-through traffic on roads not meeting the criteria. Intervention strategies utilized in these instances did not degrade the integrity of the roadways and were decided upon working with the local governing bodies and the community groups.

VDOT has not conducted follow-up surveys to determine the level of satisfaction with the remedial actions, but the absence of complaints following the actions suggests that the public is generally satisfied with what has been done.

II. Objective and Study Approach

The objective of this effort was to study and evaluate the cut-through traffic policy as requested by HJR 404.

The study and evaluation were to involve citizens, civic organizations, and other interested persons or groups. The report was to further include a determination as to whether the residential cut-through traffic policy should be modified to include additional classifications of residential streets.

VDOT conducted public meetings on October 3, 1995, in the Northern Virginia, Fredericksburg, Richmond, and Salem Districts. The objective of these meetings was to receive comments and recommendations from citizens, civic groups, community groups, and any other person or group that may have an interest in this program. Over 100 persons attended these meetings.

III. Findings

The summary of comments resulting from the four meetings held on October 3, 1995, is tabulated in Table 1 below:

Table 1
Summary of Comments Relative to the Questions "Is Current Policy Effective" and "Should Classifications Be Added"?

	Attendance (No.)	Current Policy Effective?		Add Classification?	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
- Northern Virginia	75+	8	39	52	3
- Fredericksburg	4	-	2	-	-
- Richmond	10	2	5	3	3
- Salem	14	-	5	3	1

As can be seen from this data, approximately 103 persons attended the four meetings, a small number considering the policy has statewide application. Of these, 51 persons answered "no" to the question "Is current policy effective?" and 58 answered "yes" to the question "Should classifications be added"?

IV. Recommendations

The cut-through traffic task force met on October 16, 1995 to review the history of the cut-through traffic policy and discuss recommendations that may be appropriate from the comments gather at the public meetings. This task force consisted of representatives of county governments and VDOT district and central office personnel.

(See Appendix B for names and organizations of task force members)

The current policy applies only to local residential streets, however, approximately one-half of the citizens who commented verbally and in writing felt the policy should be expanded to include additional classifications of roads.

VDOT will recommend to the Commonwealth Transportation Board that the current policy and procedures remain essentially as they currently exist for local residential streets meeting the current criteria, and continue to be fully funded with state secondary roads funds with concurrence of the local Boards of Supervisors.

The task force also recognized that each county or town may have unique circumstances and some may want to have the flexibility to enact a broader application of the policy to include some streets that do not meet current cut-through traffic criteria. For example:

- Local streets where amount of cut-through traffic is lower than 40 percent of the total one-hour, single direction volume and/or does not have at least 150 vehicles per hour of cut-through traffic in one direction.
- Collector streets that are designed to move traffic from the residential streets to the arterial streets.

In the past, a majority of requests for intervention on these two types of situations have been screened out of the process by the local governing bodies prior to reaching the Department. In a minority of these cases there were high levels of public concern by citizens and local governing bodies, and VDOT has made every effort to be sensitive to these concerns. This sensitivity, however, has brought about a concern that funds that could be better utilized

elsewhere are being used to discourage already low volumes of traffic from using certain residential streets, and on other roads whose purpose is to collect traffic and move it to the arterials.

This points out the difficulty in applying a statewide policy to all of these localities. It is difficult to satisfy all cut-through concerns by applying one statewide policy to all localities. VDOT will, therefore, also recommend to the Commonwealth Transportation Board that counties and towns who wish to pursue a more aggressive program to include roads not meeting current criteria, including some collector roads, can negotiate with the Department to prepare a supplement to the policy for use in specific local jurisdictions and to determine the appropriate amount of financial participation. The task force intends for the amount to be flexible, and therefore did not recommend a percentage of cost that the localities should contribute.

Arterial streets and a majority of the collector streets are intended to provide service to the broad spectrum of traffic including residential, commercial, and recreational. Their functional integrity must not be compromised if they are to serve as intended.

Therefore, devices that are not in accordance with national standard practices for the type of road where the proposed intervention is to take place would be excluded. For example, speed humps would not be allowed on roads classified as collectors. On the other hand, those which would discourage cut-through traffic, but not actually prohibit it, would be allowed. Examples include but are not limited to signs designating preferred alternate routes and application of pavement markings to discourage traffic.

A "housekeeping" change will also be recommended to the Commonwealth Transportation Board. The current policy contains detailed processes and procedures, and the Board must approve even minor changes. It is proposed that the Board issue a broad policy statement that would include recognition of the cut-through problems and that these problems will be addressed by the Department of Transportation.

The policy would further state that processes, procedures, and eligibility criteria would be determined by the Commonwealth Transportation Commissioner. This change is needed so that the Commissioner will have flexibility to negotiate and to adjust residential cut-through remedies as necessary.

Appendix A

House Joint Resolution 404

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA -- 1995 SESSION

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 404

Requesting the Virginia Department of Transportation to study and evaluate cut-through traffic policy.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 4, 1995

Agreed to by the Senate, February 21, 1995

WHEREAS, residential cut-through traffic can be defined as traffic passing through a specific residential area without stopping or at least having an origin or designation within the area; and

WHEREAS, the health, safety and general welfare of residential communities are adversely affected by cut-through traffic; and

WHEREAS, even though cut-through traffic would better be served by using the street system intended for through traffic, for various reasons, it uses the residential street system instead; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Transportation recognized this problem and developed a policy, adopted by the Commonwealth Transportation Board in 1989, to establish clear guidelines for studying the issues of cut-through traffic, identifying possible solutions and implementing those solutions; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Transportation has been operating under this policy for approximately five years and has recognized the need to evaluate this policy, as well as the solutions that have been implemented to deter cut-through traffic; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Department of Transportation be requested to involve citizens, civic organizations and other community groups in evaluating effectiveness of the existing cut-through policy and the solutions that have been implemented to solve cut-through traffic problems; and be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Department of Transportation involve these same groups in determining whether its existing residential cut-through traffic policy needs to be modified to include additional classifications of residential streets; and, be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Department shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 1996 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

Appendix B

Cut-Through Traffic Task Force

CUT-THROUGH TRAFFIC POLICY TASK FORCE

1. J. Lynwood Butner VDOT State Traffic Engineer
2. Benjamin H. Cottrell, Jr. Transportation Research Council
3. Loren W. Epton, Jr. NOVA District Traffic Engineer
4. Danial R. Liston NOVA Manassas Res. Engineer
5. Rene N. Hamilton NOVA Fairfax Res.
6. James R. Smith, Jr. Richmond Dist. Chesterfield Res. Engr.
7. Jeffery A. Echols Salem Dist. Roanoke Res. Engineer
8. William S. Black Fredericksburg Dist. Traffic Engineer
9. James S. Givens VDOT Secondary Roads Division Admin.
10. Samuel T. Chamberlain Office of Transportation
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11. Sharon Bulova Fairfax County Board of
703-425-9300 Supervisors
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12. John McCracken Director of Transportation
748-1000 P. O. Box 40
Chesterfield, Virginia 23832-0040
13. L. Kimball Payne, III County Administrator
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14. James H. Mullen
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County Executive
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Prince William, Virginia
22192-9201

15. Thomas Blaser
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Appendix C

Current Policy and Procedures

ADOPTED BY THE COMMONWEALTH TRANSPORTATION BOARD MARCH 16, 1989

**POLICY AND PROCEDURES
FOR CONTROL OF RESIDENTIAL CUT-THROUGH TRAFFIC**

INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITIONS

Introduction This policy and attendant procedures identify the specific responsibilities and requirements of the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and of the affected County/Town in addressing concerns relating to cut-through traffic on local residential streets.

Definitions Residential Cut-Through Traffic is traffic passing through a specific residential area without stopping or without at least one trip end within the area. It is traffic that would be better served by the local street system intended for through traffic, but, for various reasons, uses the residential street system.

Local Residential Streets are streets within a neighborhood that provide direct access to abutting land uses and serve only to provide mobility within that locality.

POLICY ON RESIDENTIAL CUT-THROUGH TRAFFIC

Policy It is the policy of VDOT to recognize the problems associated with cut-through traffic and implement appropriate remedial measures wherever possible.

4. Verification by the County/Town that a petition outlining the perceived problem and signed by at least 75 percent of the total occupied households within the problem area is valid.
5. Identification of alternative routes for through traffic if travel is restricted on the street(s) in question.
 - * It is suggested that the support data requirements be collected in the above order as a means of screening requests.

- * It is suggested that the County/Town consider documenting procedures for performing its responsibilities.

VDOT
Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of VDOT to complete a study of the roadway network identified in the formal request. This study will be conducted in the following four phases:

-
1. The Resident Engineer, upon receipt of the adopted resolution, will review and submit it, along with any recommendations, to the District Engineer.
-
2. As directed by the District Engineer, the District Traffic Engineer will conduct the necessary studies and the evaluation of the County/Town request. The District Traffic Engineer's study may include, but not necessarily be limited to:
 - * Detailed traffic counts on existing affected streets and potentially affected streets.
 - * Intersection analyses on the proposed alternative route(s).

- * Identification of potential adverse safety impacts.
- * Identification of the geometrics of the existing facilities in light of the traffic analysis.
- * Speed analyses on affected street(s).
- * Pedestrian circulation and safety analyses in the study area.

3. Subsequent to completing the necessary traffic studies, the District Traffic Engineer will provide the District Engineer with his findings and recommendations. These recommendations will include alternatives for addressing cut-through traffic, including any sketches or diagrams necessary to implement the alternatives and the impact of each alternative on the existing roadway network.

4. The District Engineer will determine the appropriate alternatives and advise the Resident Engineer, who will convey the findings and recommendations of VDOT to the County/Town.

County/Town/VDOT
Joint
Responsibilities

1. The County/Town, upon receipt of the VDOT findings and recommendations, shall solicit and receive written comments thereon from appropriate local agencies such as fire, police, rescue, school transportation, etc.

2. A formal public hearing shall be held jointly by VDOT and the County/Town to provide for citizen input on the VDOT findings and recommendations. Advance notice of the public hearing must be provided by VDOT and will consist of:

- * VDOT publishing notice in a newspaper published in or having general circulation in the County/Town once a week for two successive weeks.
- * County/Town posting notice of the proposed hearing at the front door of the courthouse of the County/Town ten days prior to the hearing.
- * VDOT placing signs on the affected street(s) identifying, by name and telephone number or address, an individual to answer questions concerning the findings and recommendations.

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3. The County/Town shall furnish the Resident Engineer a synopsis and transcript of the public hearing and an approved solution of the actions desired.

Note: If the local governing body and the District Engineer fail to agree on the mitigating measure to be implemented, the governing body may appeal to the Commonwealth Transportation Commissioner or his designated representative. The Commonwealth Transportation Commissioner or his designated representative will analyze all the supporting data and render a decision, which will be binding.

Implementation Implementation of devices to remedy the cut-through situation shall be accomplished through the following sequence:

- * The Resident Engineer shall notify the appropriate local governing body and media of the action to be taken and of the estimated date of implementation.
- * Signs will be placed on the affected street(s) identifying, by name and telephone number or address, an individual to answer questions concerning the pending action.
- * The Resident Engineer will implement the diversion devices, some of which may be of temporary construction pending evaluation of their effectiveness.

Evaluation

Evaluation of the remedial devices shall be accomplished as follows:

- * After the devices have been in place for generally not less than 30 days, but not more than six months, the District Traffic Engineer will re-study the roadway network and convey his findings and any recommendations to the District Engineer.
- * The District Engineer will review the District Traffic Engineer's report and will provide this information to the Resident Engineer for transmittal to the local governing body.
- * If it is determined that the implemented treatment is not appropriate, the District Engineer may terminate such treatment and may consider alternate treatments, with notification of such action to the local governing body. If the local governing body fails to agree on the mitigating measure, it may appeal to the Commonwealth Transportation Commissioner or his designated representative. The Commonwealth Transportation Commissioner or his designated representative will analyze all the supporting data and render a binding decision.
- * If it is determined that the implemented treatment is an appropriate action, the local governing body will identify the source of funding for any permanent construction, as needed.

