

### Issues Related to the Chamber's signage request

Sign Size - The Chamber has requested the placement of four "oversize" signs, two in each direction, outside of the VDOT right-of-way. Section 4.15.2 of the County's zoning ordinance defines any freestanding off-site sign that is over 32 square feet in sign area as a billboard, which are prohibited in all zoning districts. Should the County wish to erect these as public signs, the signs may not exceed 32 square feet in order to be in compliance with the County's sign regulations.

Cost estimates provided by a local sign manufacturer for an aluminum sign panel with reflective vinyl lettering, materials recommended by the manufacturer for a durable and highly visible sign, were \$12 per square foot. Four 32 square foot signs at \$384 per sign would cost \$1,536. Installation costs were estimated at \$135/ hour.

Another alternative that the Board may wish to consider would be leasing space on one of the billboards located along the Rt. 29 corridor. Although these are legally nonconforming signs, refacing of these signs is permitted under the Section 4.15.24 of the County's zoning regulations. Preliminary cost estimates for refacing and leasing four of these billboard panels for 16 months is \$180,000.

Sign Location - The Chamber has requested that the signs be placed and maintained by Albemarle County and located outside of the VDOT right-of-way. Given that there are few if any County properties located along the Rt. 29 corridor, the signs would most likely require placement on private property. Placement of public signs on private property would require a lease or license agreement by which the property owner gives the County permission to erect a sign on its property. Signs placed on private property would count toward the property's freestanding sign area allowance.

Should the County wish to consider placing these signs within the right-of-way, staff has requested information from VDOT regarding feasibility and the permitting process. More information will be provided by staff at the July 1 Board meeting.

Sign Content - The design concept presented by the Chamber can be found on page 3 of Attachment B. Staff has concerns about the legibility of the quantity of text in the proposed design, particularly considering placement along a high speed, high traffic corridor. In addition, staff has concerns about listing specific businesses on the sign since over 200 businesses fall within the project limits of construction. As an alternative, staff recommends a more general message on the sign encouraging motorists to support Rt. 29 businesses during construction. For example, "*US 29 Open for Business, Please Support 29 Businesses during Construction.*" If desired, the sign could direct motorists to the County's Route 29 Solutions website for more information about the project.

Duration of Display - The Chamber requested that the signs be placed prior to, during, and for a limited time after the construction period. Should the Board support placement of the signs, staff recommends that the signs remain up from September 2015 – December 2016 in keeping with VDOT's construction schedule. VDOT intends to begin night construction work in the fall of 2015 with daytime construction beginning in May 2016. The interchange is expected to be substantially complete in September 2016.