

# UNPAVED ROAD POLICIES AND REVIEW PROCESS

Revised April 2025

## Background

Since the 1980s, the County Boards of Supervisors have considered road paving as a low priority initiative. The Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan recommends that funding for infrastructure improvements should be directed to the Development Areas to support growth management policies. Most unpaved roads are in the Rural Area (RA) and there is concern that the paving of roads can change the character of the RA and may lead to new traffic management issues, primarily speeding.

Based on those factors, County staff does not proactively inventory, evaluate, or prioritize unpaved roads for paving. The Board and staff have typically relied on public requests to identify potential need and, most importantly, community support for road paving projects. The County has typically applied only the minimum funding available/required for unpaved roads.

At the State level, the goal is to pave all unpaved roads. State funding allocated to a locality for paving unpaved roads can be used only for that purpose. As of now, localities are unable to use these Rural Rustic (RR) funds for any other projects. Any unallocated funds are returned to the State.

## Unpaved Road Project Review, Prioritization, and Construction

### Initial Review of Request

A request to pave a public road can be made by any owner of an occupied parcel on either the unpaved road or on a road whose primary access is from the unpaved road. The request can be made by letter, email, or phone call to County staff. After staff receives the request, the following steps are taken:

- 1. County staff determines the specific concern with the road**
  - a. Occasionally, the primary concern (such as drainage, unsafe curves/blind spots, or lack of shoulders) can be addressed through means other than paving.
- 2. Staff verifies that there is general interest/support from residents in the area/along the road.**
  - a. Staff provides the requesting resident(s) with the Rural Rustic Resident Paving Toolkit and a list of residences that require feedback. At least two-thirds of the owners of occupied parcels abutting both (a) the segment requested to be paved and (b) any adjacent segments with primary access from the segment requested to be paved must show support for paving. When determining the percentage of owners in agreement, an owner owning more than one parcel abutting the road in question is equivalent to an owner owning one parcel.
  - b. Paving requests must be made before November 1 to be eligible to be included in the upcoming SSYP, with a deadline to demonstrate resident support by February 1. If support is not demonstrated, staff will ask if the BOS would like to add the requested road to the “**UNPAVED ROADS SECTIONS REMOVED BY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**” list (see 9).

- c. If only a portion of the road is requested to be paved, a parcel owner is considered affected if the parcel's driveway touches the unpaved portion of the road.
  - d. Once the project is nearing full funding, affected owners are contacted (see section 10 below).
- 3. **Once the 2/3 support is demonstrated, the road section is evaluated by VDOT staff to determine:**
  - a. If the road section is eligible for paving.
  - b. If it meets Rural Rustic (RR) paving program standards.
    - a. If a road is not eligible to be paved, the road is added to a list titled **"UNPAVED ROADS NOT SUITABLE FOR RURAL RUSTIC PAVING"**. The only way for a road to be removed from this list is through VDOT review .
  - c. If there are other more effective methods to address the primary concerns with the road conditions (spot improvements in lieu paving full length of road).
- 4. **RR eligible projects and non-RR eligible projects are separated into two distinct lists.**

#### Prioritizing Projects

- 5. **The Board has prioritized RR eligible projects over non-RR/conventional road paving.**
  - a. RR paving is more consistent with maintaining the character of the RA.
  - b. RR minimizes impacts to adjacent properties and existing character of the road.
  - c. RR is more cost effective/less costly to pave.
- 6. **New/eligible paving requests are to be evaluated and prioritized using the following criteria:**
  - a. located within and/or serving the Development Areas;
  - b. traffic volumes;
  - c. crash data;
  - d. surface condition/unique maintenance issues; and
  - e. through vs. dead-end road (through road is higher priority).

**The following may also be considered as necessary in project ranking:**

- f. road geometrics, primarily road width; and
  - g. functional classification.
- 7. **By direction of the Board, all projects, including those newly added to the paving list, should be prioritized by this same standard. This process will entail reprioritizing all projects each year and may result in new projects moving above older ones.** Given the schedule for prioritizing, funding, and implementing paving projects, projects funded in the

first year of the SSYP will have already been determined and property owner notification will have been completed to allow engineering and environmental work to begin immediately after the SSYP is approved. Therefore, projects funded in the first year of the SSYP will not be included in any reprioritization to ensure VDOT can move forward with project scheduling as necessary.

8. **Each year, typically in the early Spring, the Board approves both the Albemarle County Priority List for Secondary Road Improvements - Unpaved Roads and the draft SSYP, which are then used to develop the SSYP to be approved in late Spring following a public hearing.**
9. **A list titled “UNPAVED ROADS SECTIONS REMOVED BY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS” is kept for roads that were appropriately requested to be paved and received 2/3 support from residents, but which the Board of Supervisors determined to remove from the “Paving Priority” list during the annual Spring update.**
  - a. A road placed on the Unpaved Roads Sections Removed by the Board of Supervisors list will remain there until the Board votes to place it on the Paving Priority list.
  - b. A new request for paving must be submitted, as described in Section 2 above, to have the Board reconsider a road segment for paving.
  - c. Roads on this list are eligible to be reconsidered for paving six years from when they were put on.

## Construction

10. **Prior to construction, as a project approaches full funding (year of construction), the Board adopted public notice procedure is followed,** which is to notify property owners along the road section to be paved of the upcoming project and provide an opportunity to ask questions about, or comment on, the project. The SSYP is presented at a public hearing to the Board of Supervisors, where final comments and edits can be made. This public hearing concludes with the adoption of the SSYP. Staff returns in June with resolutions for each of the roads added to the SSYP that year to allow VDOT to move forward with paving.