

Rio-29 Interchange Signage Business Outreach Findings Summary

From June through August 2015, Community Development and Economic Development staff organized multiple outreach activities to give businesses within the Rio-29 interchange project limits the opportunity to provide feedback on the impacts of construction on their business signage and to discuss their signage needs prior to, during, and after construction. During the three month period, the County canvassed over 200 businesses, distributed over 160 surveys, and hosted four drop-in sessions, two focus groups, and one open house. A detailed summary of the County's outreach activities can be found in Table 1.

Business Signage during Construction

The majority of project-related concerns shared by area businesses focused on the period *prior to and during construction of the Rio-29 interchange*. Primary concerns related to business visibility; customer, employee, and delivery truck access; the potential for driver confusion associated with a construction zone and altered traffic circulation patterns; and perceptions that businesses will be closed or go out of business as a result of construction. To address some of these concerns, a majority of businesses favored an extension of the 60 day temporary sign period to allow for additional marketing opportunities leading up to and through construction. Some felt that this should be an additional sign allowance so that the remaining six temporary sign permits could be retained for promotional efforts outside of the construction period.

When asked how to address the possible consequence of a proliferation of signage if the temporary sign period were extended for all 200+ businesses within the project limits, several businesses expressed support for group sign solutions that encourage multiple businesses to aggregate their temporary signage, particularly those located within a single shopping center. One business suggested allowing additional sign area for businesses who aggregate their signage, while another proposed a minimum spacing requirement between temporary signs. Other suggestions relating to temporary signage included waiving temporary sign permit fees during the construction period, increasing area and height allowances for all temporary signs, and allowing temporary signage to be posted along detour routes to assist motorists in locating businesses.

Business Signage after Construction

Far fewer businesses shared concerns about impacts to their permanent signage once construction is complete. Some felt that the visibility of their business would be impaired by the retaining walls separating through traffic from local lanes once the grade-separated interchange is constructed. Other concerns included the introduction of new right-of-way signage and its impact on a customer's ability to locate a business once traffic circulation patterns have changed. Some felt that temporary signage post-construction was equally important in order to let people know that businesses have survived construction and are still open for business.

Table 1. Route 29/ Rio Interchange Signage Business Engagement, June – August 2015

Activity	Time	Location	Goals	# of Businesses Reached
Email/ letter to Tier 2 businesses	June 18 – mailing June 19 – email	N/A	One page letter to inform businesses about what we are doing with regards to signage, upcoming opportunities to be involved & contacts for signage questions Direct people to website for info on signage & business assistance	280
Canvassing	June 24	Tier 2 area	Publicize drop-in sessions	280
Sign Survey	N/A	N/A	Gather feedback about concerns related to impacts of interchange construction on business signage Gather input related to business signage needs during & after construction	160
Drop-in hours	June 25 10-11:30 June 26 2-3 June 29 3-4 June 30 4-5:30	Hardee’s Sultan Kabob Jimmy John’s Kirt’s Ice Cream	Educate businesses about current sign allowances & plans for VDOT signage Gather feedback about concerns related to impacts of interchange construction on business signage Gather input related to business signage needs during & after construction Recruit for focus groups Promote/ answer questions about Business Assistance Plan	14
Focus group(s)	July 30 & 31	Northside library	Engage businesses in affected corridor Gather feedback about concerns related to impacts of interchange construction on business signage Gather input related to business signage needs during & after construction	3
Canvassing	August 6	Tier 2 area	Publicize open house	280
Open house	August 12	Northside library	Share information on County sign regulations Showcase County Business Assistance Plan Showcase GSI project design & construction schedule & right-of-way signage plan Gather input related to business signage needs during & after construction	30