

# UNPAVED ROAD POLICIES AND REVIEW PROCESS

March 2023

## 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 and there is concern that the paving of roads can change the character of the Rural Area and may lead to new traffic management issues, primarily concerns with speeding.

Based on those factors, County staff does not proactively inventory, evaluate, or prioritize unpaved roads for paving. The Board and staff has typically relied on public requests to identify potential need and, most importantly, community support for road paving project. 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 only be used for that purpose. There is no option for a locality to request that those funds be used for other types of projects. If not used to paved roads, those allocations will be 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 stakeholder with interest in the road. The request should be made through a formal letter, or email, if it is being made by a private citizen or group. If the request is coming from a public agency or County Department/Division, a phone call is acceptable. After the request is received by staff the following steps are taken:

- 1. County staff determines the specific concern with the road**
  - a. Occasionally, the primary concern can be addressed through means other than paving (drainage concerns, unsafe curves/blind spots, no shoulders).
- 2. Staff verifies that there is general interest/support from residents in the area/along the road.**
  - a. Requests from residents, owners, or other private groups must be accompanied with documented support from other owners along the road. This should be done through a petition, with signatures of at least two-thirds of the owners of parcels abutting the segment requesting to be paved, and any adjacent segments with primary access from the segment requesting to be paved, acknowledging support for the paving. Signatures should include the adjacent road address or parcel identification number being signed for. 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. No public meeting is required at the time of the request submittal due to the typical length of time between receipt of a new request and full funding of the project (may be change in residents).
  - c. Once the project is nearing full funding, affected community is contacted (see 9.)
- 3. Road section is evaluated by VDOT staff to determine:**
- a. If the road section is eligible for paving.
  - b. If so, is it eligible for Rural Rustic Road (RRR) paving program standards.
  - c. If there are other more effective methods to address the primary concerns with the road conditions (spots improvement in lieu paving full length of road).
- 4. Based on direction of a prior Board, RRR eligible projects and non-RRR eligible projects are separated into two (2) distinct lists.**

### Prioritizing Projects

**5. New/eligible paving requests are evaluated and prioritized using the following criteria:**

- a. located within and/or serving the Development Area;
- 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.

- 6. By direction of the Board all projects, including those newly added to the paving list, should be prioritized by this same standard. This will entail reprioritizing all projects, each year and may result in new projects moving above older ones.** The schedule for prioritizing, funding, and implementation of paving projects is such that 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 insure VDOT can move forward with project scheduling as necessary.
- 7. The Board has prioritized Rural Rustic Road (RRR) eligible projects over non-RRR/conventional road paving.**
- a. RRR paving is more consistent with maintaining the character of the RA.
  - b. RRR minimizes impacts to adjacent properties and existing character of the road.

- c. RRR is more cost effective/less costly to pave.
  - d. No conventional paving project has been constructed in the last 15 years (Only RRR paving used).
- 8. Each year, typically in early Spring, the Board approves the Albemarle County Priority List for Secondary Road Improvements, Unpaved Roads, which is then used to develop the SSYP which is approved in late Spring.**
- 9. A list titled “UNPAVED ROADS SECTIONS REMOVED BY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS” is kept for roads that were appropriately requested to be paved but the Board of Supervisors has determined to remove it from the “Paving Priority” list during the annual Spring update.**
- a. Roads 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.

### 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. If significant opposition is received, that input will be forwarded to the Board member from the area, and/or the full Board, for further direction on the project. If no opposition is received, the Board will adopt a Resolution recommending the road for designation as a RRR and VDOT proceeds with surfacing the road.