

# **UNPAVED ROAD POLICIES AND REVIEW PROCESS**

## **Background**

### **County:**

- Since The 1980s, County Boards have considered road paving as a low priority initiative.
  - 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.
  - Paving of roads can change the character of the Rural Area.
  - Paving may lead to new traffic management issues, primarily concerns with speeding.
- Based on the above, County staff does not proactively inventory, evaluate or prioritize unpaved roads for paving.
- The Board 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.

### **State:**

- 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**

After request received by staff:

1. **County staff determines the specific concern with the road** - 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**
  - Most requests are accompanied with documented support from other residents along the road.
  - Typically have the person making the request provide info/confirmation of broader support for the paving project.
  - No public meeting is required at this time due the typical length of time between receipt of a new request and full funding of the project (may be change in residents).
  - 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 is a **other more effective methods to address the primary concerns** with the road conditions (spots improvement in lieu paving full length of road).

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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 Development Area
  - b. traffic volumes
  - c. crash data
  - d. surface condition/unique maintenance issues
  - e. through vs. dead-end road (through road is higher priority)The following may be considered as necessary to ranked projects
  - f. road geometrics, primarily road width
  - g. functional classification
6. **At the direction of a prior Board, new projects should not be prioritized ahead of projects already prioritized on the list, unless there is a significant condition or circumstance.** The intent is to allow all projects on the list to continue to progress up to the list towards inclusion in the SYIP for paving. The effect is that a road project is only prioritized once, in the year the project enters the list. Once on the list, the project's priority is permanently set relative to other projects, and will be ranked higher on the priority list than newer projects, some which score higher under the criteria.
7. **The Board has prioritized Rural Rustic Road (RRR) eligible projects over non-RRR/conventional road paving:**
  - RRR paving is more consistent with maintaining the character of the RA
  - minimizes impacts to adjacent properties and existing character of the road
  - more cost effective/less costly to pave
  - No conventional paving project has been constructed in the last 15 years-Only RRR paving used.
8. **Each Year the Board approves the Unpaved Road Priority List, which is now part of the Transportation Priority List.**

### ***Construction***

#### ***Prior to construction***

9. **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, VDOT proceeds with surfacing the road.