



Loudoun County Equine Alliance
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September 4, 2016

To: Loudoun County Board of Supervisors

Re: Statement of Loudoun County Equine Alliance regarding the upcoming vote on the Secondary System Construction Program

The board of the Loudoun County Equine Alliance (LCEA), on behalf of its membership and as representative of the equine industry in Loudoun County, urges all members of the Board of Supervisors to reject the 2017 Loudoun County Secondary System Construction Program in its current form at your September 14 meeting.

We specifically request that four of the rural roads in the current plan be removed from the paving list and the funds allocated for those projects be redirected to alternative uses that will preserve our unique network of unpaved roads, which are **an integral part of the County's equestrian industry and rural economy.**

The most recent survey conducted by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service and the University of Virginia for the Loudoun County Department of Economic Development, showed that in 2013 alone the equine industry in Loudoun:

- Directly contributed over \$180 million annually to our economy (excluding property taxes).
- Supported some 3,000 jobs in the County.
- Brought an estimated 78,000-plus spectators and participants to the county to attend equine events, one-third of them from out of state.

Loudoun's unpaved roads are an asset to equestrians by creating riding corridors for our horses (now about 15,000) and riders. Fox hunters, carriage drivers, and pleasure riders (among others) use and enjoy these quiet gravel roads. As open space becomes less available to ride on, these roads serve as ever more important links to what land is permitted for equestrian use. Horses easily slip on pavement and injure riders; much worse is the inevitability of automobile – horse accidents with tragic results. Cars and trucks speeding past equestrians create hazards, just as they do for bicyclists and walkers. Paving rural roads immediately results in more traffic, faster speeds and development pressure. The ultimate result is a loss of the County's character, weakening of tourism draws, loss of open space and scenery, and negative pressure on the equine industry.

We are particularly concerned about the projects involving large stretches of lightly-traveled roads, specifically **Greggsville Road** and **Williams Gap Road**. These open up huge pieces of the County to higher volumes and speeds of traffic in areas used by equestrians and populated by horse farms.

Nixon Road is an additional concern, particularly because it is used as a cut-through for traffic heading to the northwestern part of the County, trying to avoid the congested intersection of Rt. 9 and Rt. 287. When that intersection is improved as planned, the need

for Nixon Road to be used by transient, high-speed traffic should be negated. Nixon Road, the unpaved Purcellville Road to which it adjoins, and the unpaved Legard Farm Road (which joins Purcellville Road just north of the intersection with Nixon), form a network of rural roads of critical importance to equestrians in that area.

Lakefield Road is a dead end, and provides a "back entrance" to the trails in Franklin Park. We understand that The Town of Round Hill has proposed this road for paving to ease its access to its water facilities on that road, and that the condition of the road has suffered from the Town's truck traffic. Our position is that paving is an excessive response, and that rehabilitation as an unpaved road would be more economical and in keeping with the rural character of the area, in addition to providing safer access for riders (and other recreational users) to Franklin Park.

Loudoun county's unpaved roads are a community resource and part of the charm attracting tourists to Western Loudoun.

Paving particularly beautiful stretches of unpaved roads imposes suburban values on a rural area, and would be a loss of an asset of great value to the entire County, the rural economy, and the equine industry.

Good rural road maintenance is less expensive than paving. We ask that alternatives to paving these roads be explored, and encourage the County and VDOT to redirect the funds allocated for paving to improvements such as enhanced drainage or alternative porous and equestrian-friendly surfaces, preserving the character and value of our old roads.

We ask that the Board take the time to learn more about the results VDOT has had with its enhanced rural road maintenance on these roads in the past two years. The decision to pave is permanent. Great care must be taken in making choices regarding any resurfacing.

In 2014, the Virginia General Assembly enacted H416, which directed the state's Department of Transportation to "...focus limited paving resources primarily on highly traveled roads in developed areas..." We ask that you abide by this directive.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important issue. We hope you will vote against this plan.

Sincerely,

The Loudoun County Equine Alliance
Kelly Foltman, DVM President, LCEA
Michelle King, Vice President
Stephanie Jennings, Treasurer
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Dorothy Beach
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