

# The Pike Packet

News From The Snickersville Turnpike Association

March 2006

## Turnpike Update

Following prior meetings with Delegate Joe May and Supervisor Jim Burton, three members of the Snickersville Turnpike Association Board met last March with Dennis Morrison, the new District administrator for VDOT's Northern Virginia District, and other senior VDOT officials to reaffirm STA's Turnpike role. Supervisor Burton and Terrie Laycock, Loudoun County Associate Administrator, also attended. The role of STA as a partner in dealing with Turnpike issues was firmly reestablished. It was agreed there was a need for periodic meetings on selected areas of interest.

Last fall the milling and repaving of the entire Snickersville Turnpike, except for one section, was completed. On 20 October 2005, STA met with the new Leesburg VDOT Maintenance Manager, Gabriel Hakim and discussed a number of remaining issues. One was that, despite assurances from Mr. Morrison that the new shoulder material would be a mix of 20% soil and 80% aggregate with subsequent seeding, the contractor used a mix of gravel and "gravel dust" with no dirt and no grass seed. The cost and complexity of rectifying it was simply not worth pursuing.

The quarter-mile length of the Turnpike west of Airmont Road between the wooden bridge and the one-lane bridge was somehow deleted by VDOT from the repaving contract. Although its resurfacing was promised for this spring, VDOT (Richmond) removed it from a signed stand-alone contract and, under pressure from larger companies, included it under a more comprehensive contract. F.O.Day will now do the milling and paving "before November". In the meantime, the many potholes will be patched.

The VDOT Maintenance Facility at St. Louis Road has a new operations manager, Mike Bailey. Our working relationship with them has been very good. They have responded to our requests and seem to be willing to work with us. We get periodic advance notice from them regarding planned work along the Turnpike. We hope to continue with these cooperative requests.

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## HIBBS BRIDGE CRISIS

If the Woodrow Wilson Bridge can be built on schedule, why can't Hibbs Bridge be restored on schedule? The answer is lack of management control both in VDOT and Loudoun County Government. What began in 1994 as a three-way cooperative effort- VDOT, Loudoun County and the Snickersville Turnpike Association-has eroded over the years into a poorly managed, possibly catastrophic effort with the Turnpike Association's involvement essentially eliminated.

In 2001 the County and VDOT signed a Memorandum or Understanding in which the County would be responsible for the design and VDOT the construction, with the final roadway design plans to be completed by 1 April 2005. At the 20 May 2004 Public Hearing the preliminary design plans were presented, along with a construction cost estimate of \$864,000 and an Advertisement for Construction set for the Spring of 2006. As of this month, the Final Design has not yet been approved, the right-of-way agreements have not been signed, and the \$953,000 recently approved for the completion of the Hibbs Bridge

restoration is no guarantee that it will cover the construction costs.

There are two current structural issues. A bulge in the bridge's northeast retaining wall was recently detected. The VDOT District Bridge Engineer's assessment is that "the spandrel wall will remain sufficiently stable until the project is advertised, and we will continue to periodically monitor and inspect until then."

STA has been trying for over 2 years to get VDOT to put up our Adopt-a-Highway signs. We are now responsible for the entire turnpike east of Yellow Schoolhouse Road except for the Mountville Farms section. The previous sponsors' signs are in the process of being removed, but it will be weeks before ours are erected.

The Turnpike now has it's only stop sign. The Sheriff's Department, in response to a citizen's request, directed VDOT to install four-way stop signs at the intersection of the Turnpike and Airmont Road. Also, a no-parking sign was placed in front of the Airmont Store.

## THE 1862 BATTLE of UNISON THEN

**From the January 2006  
Unison Preservation Society's "Town Crier"**

In early October 1862, following the carnage of Antietam where there was a combined loss of 23,000 men in 24 hours, the major armies of both the Union and the Confederacy were within 70 miles of Washington, DC. Lincoln was worried, but he had a plan. With elections coming up, Lincoln saw an opportunity to both end the war quickly and, perhaps, help with the upcoming mid-term elections. To forcefully push his plan, the President journeyed out to his field commander, George McClellan, to urge him to rapidly move his forces between Lee's struggling army and the Confederate capital of Richmond.

Lee, understanding his opponents well, began to move his army south, just west of the Blue Ridge, and ordered Jeb Stuart and a band of less than 1,000 cavalry and horse artillery to delay the cautious McClellan so that Lee's forces could cross the mountains and get in position to resist the Union advance. Stuart, on 31 October with the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Virginia Cavalry, ranged east from Snickersville along the Turnpike to Mountville, surprising a 100-man detachment of the 1<sup>st</sup> Rhode Island Cavalry and capturing many.

From 1 November to 3 November Stuart's small force battled a Union advance force of 3,500 cavalry, infantry and artillery from Philomont through the village of Unison (now Unison) and south toward Upperville. The entire Union Army then started its advance, but Lee's Army had reached Culpeper on 3 November in time to regroup. Lincoln's plan was foiled, and the President abruptly relieved McClellan of his command.

## NOW

The beautifully preserved historic buildings, stone walls, open fields and dirt roads that have changed little in 150 years are in and around Unison, already a village historic district on the National Register of Historic Places. A developer, attempting to exploit the current lapse in zoning protection in western Loudoun, is preparing to put 28 large houses on small lots on a hill looming over the village, local farms, and in the battlefield area. The Unison Preservation Society has hired a lawyer, wetlands and environmental experts, and other consultants to help them fight the unwelcome intrusion. The Virginia Department of Historic Resources in January designated the seven-mile long site of the Battle of Unison as eligible for inclusion on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. Also, application has been made to the National Park Service for a battlefield study and mapping grant. STA members will be asked to support these preservation efforts when public hearings occur.

## Cell Towers

The STA Board is currently reviewing the draft STA Cell Tower Policy document. Our success to date in convincing the County and individual telecommunications companies to significantly decrease the original requested cell tower heights, while still achieving their desired connectivities, has been good. The recently operational Verizon 100-foot monopole at the Philomont Fire Station is an example.

Due in part to ongoing mergers of cell companies, many of the proposed cell towers on or near the Snickersville Turnpike are currently not being actively pursued. The T-Mobile 80-foot pseudo-silo proposal at Briar Patch on Route 50 is inactive. The 130-foot monopole on Wildwood Lane off Route 50 is on hold awaiting the applicant's response to the County. The pre-application 40-foot add-on to the Bluemont Grain Elevator by Mid-Atlantic Tower Management is also inactive.

Nextel had several cell towers planned. The 108-foot pseudo-silo on Williams Gap Road is inactive, as is the 106-foot pseudo-silo on Watermill Road. Nextel had conducted an environmental study for another 106-foot pseudo-silo on Charlie Cockerill's farm on the Turnpike but has not yet submitted an application to the County.

The Round Hill Council has just denied a Verizon cell tower in the Stoneleigh community. Instead, it proposed that Verizon install three antennas on the water tower next to Round Hill Elementary School. Verizon is also looking into negotiating a new release on the Middleburg water tower. Nextel, Cingular, Sprint and T-Mobile already have leases there.

(Hibbs Bridge Crisis continued from page 1)

(On the other hand, the bridge in that area could collapse!) The second issue relates to scouring, the possible erosion of the bridge's foundation due to the flow of water over time. The solution at the time of the Public Hearing was to lay large rip rap at the bridge's bases and along the adjoining banks of

Beaverdam Creek. The current design is to use grout-filled bags.

The current schedule calls for the Construction Request for Proposal to go out on 9 May and to award the contract on 10 August. Construction would begin on 12 September and last for seven months during four to five months of which the Turnpike in the area would be closed.

The Loudoun County Board of Supervisors and VDOT Northern Virginia senior officials need to get personally involved to assure that this undertaking stays on schedule and that the open issues get resolved satisfactorily. You can help by contacting all of the Supervisors about your concerns. STA will pressure VDOT.

## **BIKE/HIKE THE PIKE**

In the past, Snickersville Turnpike Association had sponsored events to raise funds and to provide enjoyment for local residents. Events have included trail rides and reenactments.

This year STA is planning to sponsor a fall Bike the Pike and Hike the Pike event for families throughout

Loudoun County. The event will take place on a Sunday morning and will be centered at the Bluemont Community Center. The bike route is about 10.5 miles (17km) and the hike route is about 6 miles (10km). Tired bikers and hikers may return to Bluemont at any time.

At the conclusion of this event, food and music will be provided at the Bluemont Community Center. It should be a healthy, festive family oriented event. We hope that many Loudoun families will take advantage of a fun time on a beautiful road.

Stay tuned for more information as the STA Board finalizes plans for this event. STA will be needing assistance in providing an event of this magnitude. We hope that our membership will be ready and willing to pitch in with making this a successful event.

### **STA Board Meeting**

The Snickersville Turnpike Board meets at 7pm at the Philomont Community Center the third Tuesday of every month except July and December. Meetings are open to the public.

**[www.snickersvilleturnpike.org](http://www.snickersvilleturnpike.org)**