

SUMMARY

The purpose of the Route 29 Corridor Study, as stated in the *Final Environmental Impact Statement, Section 4(f)/106 Evaluation (FEIS)* for the U.S. Route 29 Corridor Study – City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County, dated January 20, 1993, was “to find a solution to existing and future traffic congestion on a three-mile section of U.S. Route 29 between U.S. Route 250 Bypass and the South Fork Rivanna River in the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County north of Charlottesville. A secondary purpose of the study is to complete a gap in ongoing improvements to U.S. Route 29 through central Virginia.” (Emphasis added.)

Since the publication of the *FEIS*, VDOT has made the secondary purpose its primary goal and has pushed for construction of the proposed Route 29 Bypass. Additionally, VDOT has made significant changes in its plans for this Bypass. As a result, several new problems have arisen that were not addressed in the *FEIS*. Many times VDOT has manipulated data, withheld information, and misled elected and appointed officials, as well as citizens. On January 8, 1998, the Southern Environmental Law Center filed a federal complaint against VDOT, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), the Secretary of Transportation and the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB), alleging violation of the National Environmental Protection Act on several counts and violation of Section 4(f) of the Federal DOT Act of 1966.

Due to many critical problems surrounding this proposed Bypass, CATCO strongly believes that:

- The proposed Bypass will have serious short and long term impacts, especially relating to the main drinking water source for 80,000 citizens in Charlottesville and Albemarle County;
- The proposed Bypass does little to alleviate the local traffic congestion on Route 29 North which is the primary stated purpose of Sverdrup Corp.'s \$3.7 million Route 29 Corridor Study (*DEIS* and *FEIS*);
- VDOT, in various correspondence through 1994, affirmed the sequence of area traffic improvements as outlined in the CTB resolutions of 1990 and 1991. Since the CTB rescinded sections of these resolutions in 1995, VDOT has illegally pursued early construction of the Bypass;
- The proposed Bypass will cost taxpayers over \$200 million in 2003 to build an environmentally damaging road that will not save through traffic more than one or two minutes in travel time (compared to the Base Case with three grade-separated interchanges on Route 29 North);
- The proposed Bypass is overwhelmingly opposed by local officials, many organizations, and a large segment of the public;
- The proposed Bypass will negatively impact six area schools and six neighborhoods with noise, poor air quality, and destruction of property, thereby causing a decreased quality of life;
- The proposed Bypass will destroy one of the few remaining habitats of the federally endangered and protected James spinymussel; and
- The proposed Bypass will take jogging/walking trails on Albemarle County School Board property that are designated Section 4(f). It will also take a portion of the Ivy Creek Agricultural-Forestal District.

CATCO's research indicates that VDOT has significantly misrepresented and omitted critical information concerning many aspects of the proposed Route 29 Bypass project. These misrepresentations and omissions, combined with pressure from local CTB members, have erroneously led the CTB to approve this project.