

CORRIDOR H Wardensville to VA Line : Comment by Tony Coogan 12 11 2022

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Re: Corridor H, Wardensville to Virginia Line Corridor H –Project X316-H-125.16
NHPP(0484)118

I speak as a Virginia citizen, a resident of Lebanon Church and Strasburg in Shenandoah County, a community that would be seriously impacted if West Virginia builds Corridor H to the state line in an attempt to bully its way across. Virginia governing bodies have taken positions against this.

Read this resolution from the Virginia Commonwealth Transportation Board in the 1996_FEIS_Vol_II page 237:

“Be it resolved: That the Commonwealth of Virginia adamantly cannot support the four-laning alternative of Corridor H in Virginia.”

All the published Corridor H documents state that the terminus is I-81 at the town of Strasburg. Again at its 12/7/22 work session, the Strasburg town council passed a resolution opposing Corridor H.

On 10/11/22 Shenandoah County, again clearly expressed its opposition to Corridor H in a letter to FHWA administrator, Mr. Thomas L. Nelson, and requested that before the Wardensville to Virginia line section is built in West Virginia, environmental documents analyze the impacts of the four-lane in Virginia.

CIVIL WAR BATTLEFIELDS

In 1996, Congress designated eight counties in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia—including Shenandoah County, which would be bisected by Corridor H-- as a National Battlefield Site, the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic *District (SVBNHD)* Battlefields are places for quiet reflection, remembering the price many paid for our freedoms in this country. Traffic and noise affect the feeling and significance of these hallowed sites. Specific local battle sites close to the Virginia Corridor H alignment include Cedar Creek and Fishers Hill.



THREATS TO LOCAL RESOURCES, RESIDENTS AND VISITORS

The 1993 Corridor H Alignment EIS maps display several Virginia alternatives which create varying negative impacts in Virginia. One natural resource is a roadside spring across from Trails End Drive on Route 55 about 2 miles east of the West Virginia line. This popular spring yields a water quality that registers less than 50 PPM of contaminants—a ratio some four times cleaner than commercially available bottled water. This spring, well-maintained with twin feed pipes and heavily used, is immediately accessible by a VDOT-maintained large graveled pull off from

48/ 55. A homeowner immediately adjacent to this spring reported seeing 15 people in line, waiting to draw water at 11:51AM on Dec. 12, 2022. .

The Map Referenced is identified as: Corridor H Section 2 Cedar Creek to WVA State Line Preliminary alignments. File code: Pc4aop@y52 corh rr21.m Thu Sep 30 21:09:27 EDT 1993 (4521.y52) from Michael Baker Engineering @ 500 Grant St. Suite 5400 Pittsburg, PA 15219 T: 412-918-4000

Alignment Line 2a, on this Baker-supplied “preliminary alignment” map, completely obliterates the constructed stone wall encapsulating the above mentioned spring, and shows the road being built right on top of the spring. It appears that Alignment Line 2-B cuts less than 450ft from the existing highway and less than 200 ft from the spring. Line 2B’s required cut threatens the source of this aquifer’s discharge point to the surface. The road -blasting will impact the existing subsurface course of the water. The most startling fact is that this long used water supply is not shown on Michael Baker maps at all-- attesting to WVDOH’s lack of attention to important geological details. The stream from the spring flows into Duck Run, which is populated up and downstream with native Brook Trout that I, a trout fisherman, have observed. The spring and other Virginia impacts are not mentioned in the 1996 Final EIS, possibly because Virginia had pulled out of the Corridor H project.

Five to ten occupied new homes constructed since 1993 would be impacted, which are obviously not on the map. I know one man who bought a 7 + acre lot, one of many tracts in Reynolds Estate, a development adjoining 55/48 from near Trails End Rd. to the state line, to hunt deer and turkey. He, like a lot of people, local and across the country near other federally owned lands, naively bought land adjoining what they assumed to be protected national forest, specifically to fulfill their dream of a safe cabin in the woods. It’s impossible to calculate the emotional and financial impacts of road construction on people in this position, but this needs to be considered.

HISTORY, PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of Appalachian Corridors is supposed to be to boost the local economy, but the only economic beneficiary I can see is the trucking industry trying to save a few minutes of travel.

All of the above issues show the need for a more current EIS for the Wardensville to Virginia line section. Since the West Virginia DOT is predicting growth in Route 55’s sparse traffic and demanding this project be imposed on Virginia, WVDOH should be responsible for this new EIS.

Virginia operates on a focused tight 6 year transportation plan, and the current plan contains no Corridor H.

Road conditions, technology, economics, purposes and needs, cultural heritage and natural resource impacts have changed on multiple levels since the inception of the Appalachian Regional Commission as a funding entity. The argument of economic development benefits for the build option in Virginia is weak save for the lawyers, consultants, surveyors and others hired to perpetrate this boondoggle. *[A boondoggle is a project that is considered a waste of both time and money, yet is often continued due to extraneous policy or political motivations.]*

The WV Corridor H plan to *supposedly* improve WV's future clearly harms Virginia's plan for Virginia's future. Let us not forget that John Marshall Highway, Route 48/55 is a designated Virginia state Scenic Byway so how does a new 4 lane highway improve that? WV's plan to build to the Stateline is an effort to again force Virginia into acceptance. Many in Wardensville are opposed to Corridor H for the same reasons we are; we love our mountains, trees, wild rivers, and farms.

How much of WV's highway budget that is federally mandated to be directed to Corridor- H would better serve the people of WV if directed to its secondary roads, route 50 and other similarly neglected roads?

Regarding the completed sections of Corridor H, when considering the state motto to draw people into "Wild and Wonderful West Virginia", it is clearly evident that opening up WV makes it less wild, resulting in less wonderful. The remoteness of West Virginia is the draw, just as it is in rural Virginia. Building a giant four-lane is not the path that will sustain the appeal of this area in either state.

West Virginia Gov. Justice, Senator Manchin, and Mrs. Manchin who heads the Appalachian Regional Commission, may think they are powerful enough to run over environmental laws-- and the will of the citizens of Virginia. But our government has checks and balances for a reason.

I request that this environmental re-evaluation period lead to WVDOH issuing a complete updated supplemental EIS for the Wardensville to Virginia line section, to include an analysis of Corridor H impacts on Virginia with design connecting to I-81, the project's ultimate stated goal. Due diligence would require consulting with impacted parties regarding NEPA, section 106 and section 4F procedures, to include US Fish and Wildlife Service, Cedar Creek Battlefield and Belle Grove National Park with the NPS, Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation, Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation, Toms Brook - Fishers Hill Civil War Battlefield, Shenandoah County whom requested inclusion in Shenandoah County Office of Tourism & Economic Development, George Washington & Jefferson National Forests Lee Ranger District. All should be among consulting parties on a requested new EIS for the Wardensville to Strasburg Va I81 section of Corridor H

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Shenandoah county Board of Supervisors

Town Councils of Strasburg, Toms Brook, Middletown

Cedar Creek Battlefield and Belle Grove National Park NPS

Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation

Civil War Preservation Trust

Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation

Toms Brook - Fishers Hill Civil War Battlefield

Shenandoah County

Shenandoah County Office of Tourism & Economic Development

George Washington & Jefferson National Forests Lee Range

Frederick County

National Trust for Historic Preservation

Stewards of the Potomac Highlands