

## **Chapter VI Transportation**

### **Existing Transportation Facilities**

Scott County is located within the Virginia Department of Transportation's Bristol District, one of nine such districts within the Commonwealth, also including the counties of Bland, Buchanan, Dickenson, Grayson, Lee, Russell, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington, Wise and Wythe.

A network of highways and railroads carries transportation within Scott County. The highway system transports both people and goods, whereas the rail system handles mainly coal and a limited amount of merchandise and other traffic.

CSX Transportation enters Scott County from the northeast, crossing the county in a generally southwestern direction. While its major commodity is coal, it also carries merchandise traffic connecting the Midwest with the Deep South. Norfolk Southern enters Scott County near the community of Jasper and traverses the county in a generally southeastern direction. Its hauling commodity is almost exclusively coal mined in neighboring Wise and Lee Counties. Norfolk Southern provides freight service to the Duffield industrial park.

Airport service is available to Scott County through Tri-Cities Regional Airport, a commercial, full service facility located near the community of Blountville, Tennessee, less than a 40 minute drive from the Scott County area. Nonstop destinations from the Tri-Cities Regional Airport include Orlando and Tampa, and international hubs in Atlanta and Charlotte. Smaller airports, lacking commercial commuter service, are located in Lee County, Wise County and Washington County.

Scott County is served by one major arterial highway, U.S. Highway 23, which stretches for nearly 27 miles across the county. U.S. 23 is a four lane divided highway that enters the county from Tennessee at Weber City and exits the county north of the Town of Duffield, into Lee County and beyond to Wise County. U.S. 23 provides excellent north-south transportation facilities to the tenants of the Duffield industrial park.

U. S. 58-421 enters western Scott County from Lee County, joining U. S. 23 at Duffield until the northern boundary of Weber City, at which point it leaves U. S. 23 and proceeds eastward, exiting into Washington County. Virginia Route 65 serves central Scott County, from the town of Clinchport, through Dungannon and into Russell County. Virginia Route 71 proceeds northeast from the eastern edge of Gate City, through the Town of Nickelsville, and exits into Russell County. Virginia Route 72 also proceeds from the eastern edge of Gate City, northward to Fort Blackmore, where it joins Rt. 65, then eastward to Dungannon before turning northward and exiting into Wise County. U.S. 23 Business can be classified as Old U.S. 23 and serves the interior flow of Gate City.

Scott County's secondary road system is extensive, containing 695 total miles, composed of 370 miles of hard surface roads; 224 miles of all weather surface roads; 80 miles of light surface roads; and 21 miles of unsurfaced roads. Among the more dominant of these secondary roads are Route 614 west and east of Weber City; Route 701; Route 704; Route 619; and Route 870.

Public transportation is available to Scott County through Mountain Empire Transit, a bus/van service operated by Mountain Empire Older Citizens. Service is open to the general public, regardless of age, and MEOC operates demand-responsive vans throughout Planning District One. Frequent service is available along the U.S. 23 corridor, while limited service operates along Rt. 71 to Nickelsville, Rt. 774 to Dungannon and Rts. 72 and 619 to Gate City, and into the Fairview, Sloantown and Hiltons areas of the county.

There are four VDOT-recorded park-and-ride lots in Scott County – Rt. 71 near its junction with Rt. 619, eastern end of Gate City (paved, 70 spaces); U.S. 23/58 near its junction with Bray Road, west of Gate City (paved, 45 spaces); U.S. 23/58 at its junction with Rt. 600, near Clinchport (gravel, 15 spaces); and U.S. 23/58 near its junction with Rt. 872, north of Clinchport (unpaved, 30 spaces). Current American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau) data reveal that nearly 10 percent of Scott County residents carpool to work, suggesting that such park-and-ride facilities provide an important service to the County's workers.

### **Special Transportation Planning - "3-C Study"**

On July 3, 1974, Scott County, the Town of Gate City, the Town of Weber City, and the LENOWISCO Planning District Commission received correspondence from the (then) Virginia Department of Highways and Transportation stating that since Kingsport, Tennessee and its surrounding area were classified as an Urbanized Area, the States of Virginia and Tennessee must establish a continuing, comprehensive and cooperative (3-C) transportation planning process for the Kingsport, Tennessee-Virginia Urbanized Area. Involvement in all of these 3-C activities assures that proper attention to transportation problems and needs is provided to that rapidly growing portion of Scott County which is part of the Kingsport, Tennessee Urbanized Area.

The modern day arrangement of this planning initiative sees the Scott County, Gate City and Weber City portions of the Kingsport Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) being represented by the LENOWISCO Planning District Commission. The LENOWISCO representative on the Kingsport MPO Executive Board works as a means of communication and collaboration between the MPO staff, VDOT and the local Virginia government.

**Secondary Highways**

Allocations of state funds for improvements to secondary highways are made through a cooperative effort between the Virginia Department of Transportation and the Scott County Board of Supervisors. Needed and funded improvements for Scott County's transportation infrastructure can be found in the approved FY 2023 Virginia Department of Transportation "Six-Year Improvement Plan," as follows:

UPC	Description	Route	Road System	Estimate	Previous	FY23	FY 24-28
(Values in Thousands of Dollars)							
118964	High Nob Road	619	Secondary	\$ 533,250	\$ 58,571		\$ 24,679
113653	Ann Goode Cooper	689	Secondary	\$ 455,000	\$ 183,480	\$ 271,520	
113652	Ann Goode Cooper	689	Secondary	\$ 490,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 488,000	
113651	Spurlock Hollow	856	Secondary	\$ 300,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 236,289	\$ 61,711
113650	Horton Summit Road	854	Secondary	\$ 400,000			\$ 400,000
113649	Eaton Hill Road	693	Secondary	\$ 350,000			\$ 350,000
115212	Obeys Creek Road	660	Secondary	\$ 350,000			\$ 350,000
115213	Turkey Lick Road	641	Secondary	\$ 350,000			\$ 350,000
115214	Fowlers Branch	697	Secondary	\$ 365,000			\$ 365,000
118342	Chestnut Ridge		Secondary	\$ 610,000			\$ 610,000
118343	Pippin Lane		Secondary	\$ 250,000			\$ 250,000
118344	Falin Hollow Lane		Secondary	\$ 300,000			\$ 300,000
118963	Fincastle Road	650	Secondary	\$ 395,000			\$ 395,000
119065	Quail Run Lane	821	Secondary	\$ 200,000			\$ 200,000
119064	River Bluff Road (Phase I)	659	Secondary	\$ 575,000			\$ 575,000
119064	River Bluff Road (Phase II)	659	Secondary	\$ 625,000			\$ 400,000
119063	Beeline Road	624	Secondary	\$ 325,000			\$ 325,000

Much like a grading system in an education setting, Level of Service (LOS) ratings show how certain stretches of highway measure up to current VDOT roadway standards. A table revealing the LOS ratings for the major highways through Scott County is included in **Appendix B**.

**Future Transportation Facilities**

Basic transportation improvements to the arterial highways within the county by 2035 include upgrading all roads to levels concurrent with the demand for traffic utilization as determined by the Virginia Department of Transportation. Most critical is the stretch of U. S. 23 within Weber City that suffers from heavy use and as a "collector" street serving the individual real estate parcels along its thoroughfare. With its primary responsibility to carry through traffic quickly and safely, these two uses are in direct conflict. A bypass around Weber City or additional improvements to the Route 224 corridor is likely the best long-term solution. Additional solutions include the County and/or Town adopting

access management guidelines to help develop future growth in a safe and efficient manner to avoid repeating safety and congesting problems.

In 2010, a planning study was undertaken by the Kingsport MPO, VDOT and LENOWISCO on the Route 224 / US Highway 23 Corridors from Gate City to the Tennessee State Line. The study looked at how both corridors can be improved in order to complement one another.

In 2015, a VDOT-commissioned roadway safety study was completed for the section of U.S. 23 between mile posts 0.0 and 3.0, from the Virginia/Tennessee state line to the intersection with U.S. 58/421 (Bristol Highway) at the northern boundary of Weber City. The study evaluated existing conditions – conflicting land uses and traffic patterns have contributed to driver confusion and a crash rate nearly twice the state average – reported collision data, and made recommendations to improve safety on that heavily traveled segment.

In 2021, VDOT began looking at the previous study that was conducted in 2015 to determine solutions along the Weber City corridor to enhance safety. The study looks at closing many of the entrances/exits that exist along the corridor and streamlining those so that each business has a designated entrance/exit. Railroad crossings are included in the study and the possibility of closing a portion of them is being considered. The study will be used to formulate upcoming applications for Smart Scale.

The following improvement projects are planned under the Primary System Classification. Additional documentation is included in Appendix C.

#### Moccasin Gap Bypass

This project consists of bypassing sections of U.S. 23 and U.S. 58 in the Moccasin Gap area. The project will begin at the intersection of Route 71 and Ellen Drive (Gate City), proceeding south roughly 1.3 miles to a new, signalized intersection with U.S. 58/Wadlow Gap Rd. The proposed roadway will consist of two-lane, divided highway. The project also includes a connection of 1,000' two-lane road to Filter Plant Ford that will provide access to several residences, the Scott County Sports Complex, and the county water filter plant. This project will help alleviate traffic congestion on U.S. 23 Business and Jones Street in Gate City (which is complicated by school and town traffic during peak times), and will also provide an emergency alternate route for travel, in the event of train derailment on U.S. 23/58 in Moccasin Gap.

#### U.S. 58 Climbing Lanes

This project consists of installing an additional climbing/travel lane, to be used as a truck climbing lane, westbound up Powell Mountain on U.S. 58, west of Duffield. The project begins at the top of Powell Mountain (at the Lee County line), and ends on the east side of Powell Mountain, near the intersection with Route 638, roughly 2.0 miles in length. Proposed improvements will involve excavating a rock cut section on the north side of U.S. 58.

Additional potential projects under consideration include U.S. 23/U.S. 58 improvements at Kane Street (Gate City), U.S. 23 improvements at Hilton Road (Weber City), U.S. 23/U.S. 58 intersection improvements (Duffield), and improvements at East Carters Valley Road (Rt. 704), Yuma Road (Rt. 614) and A.P. Carter Highway (Rt. 614). The County is also looking at further improving access to the Scott County Sports Complex from U.S. 23 via Filter Plant Road or other alternatives. Specific scopes and implementation estimates have not been compiled for these projects.

### **New VDOT Funding Mechanism**

Set forth in the General Assembly's House Bill 1887, Virginia's SMART SCALE (§33.2-214.1) is designed to select appropriate transportation projects for funding and ensure the best use of limited tax dollars. Transportation projects are scored via an objective, transparent, outcome-based process.

Improvements are to focus on safety, accessibility, economic development, congestion mitigation, environmental quality, and multi-modal access (bicycle, pedestrian, transit).

### **VDOT Land Use and Development Regulations**

The Virginia General Assembly and VDOT over the recent past have developed a series of new guidelines and regulations related to land use and development as they pertain to the state highway system. These new regulations can have significant impacts on developments, especially large developments. Roads are a critical public resource and constitute a major investment of the public's money. Traffic impacts caused by new development – a reduction in the traffic carrying capacity of the highways, more crashes and traffic congestion – can be very costly for state and local governments, as well as the broader community.

### **Traffic Impact Analysis Regulations**

Chapter 527 of the 2006 Acts of Assembly added § 15.2-2222.1 to the Code of Virginia. The legislation establishes procedures by which localities submit proposals that will affect the state-controlled transportation network to the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) for review and comment. The chapter also directs VDOT to promulgate regulations to carry out the provisions of the statute. The statute intends to improve how land-use and transportation-planning decisions are coordinated throughout Virginia by establishing standardized methodologies (definitions, analytical methods, etc.), procedures for analyzing transportation impacts and providing that information to citizens and policymakers. The Traffic Impact Analysis Regulations (24 VAC 30-155), sets forth procedures and requirements governing VDOT's review of and submission of comments regarding comprehensive plans and amendments to comprehensive plans, rezoning proposals, and subdivision plats, site plans and plans of development and the accompanying traffic impact analyses.

Additional information on the Traffic Impact Analysis Regulations can be found online at:

[http://www.virginiadot.org/info/traffic\\_impact\\_analysis\\_regulations.asp](http://www.virginiadot.org/info/traffic_impact_analysis_regulations.asp)

## Secondary Street Acceptance Requirements

The Secondary Street Acceptance Requirements (SSAR) regulation, which became effective on March 9, 2009, sets requirements that newly constructed streets will need to meet to be accepted into the secondary system of state highways for public maintenance. The Virginia Department of Transportation recognizes that all parties involved with the development process will need to become familiar with the contents of the SSAR. VDOT has developed a website to offer interested parties information, materials, and training opportunities to become more familiar with the SSAR.

For more information on these regulations, visit:

[http://www.virginiadot.org/info/secondary\\_street\\_acceptance\\_requirements.asp](http://www.virginiadot.org/info/secondary_street_acceptance_requirements.asp)

## Access Management Regulations and Standards

Access management focuses on the location, spacing, and design of entrances, street intersections, median openings, and traffic signals. Each of these creates conflict points where vehicles have to stop or slow down, disrupting the flow of traffic. As the number of conflict points increase, so does traffic congestion and crashes. Better management of access to the highway can reduce the number of conflict points and their adverse impact on highway operation and public safety. Roads are a critical public resource and constitute a major investment of the public's money. Access management can maximize this investment. Because the motorist spends less time waiting in traffic, fuel efficiency is maximized, air pollution is reduced, and commuting times become shorter. Businesses benefit because better mobility expands their market area.

The 2007 General Assembly unanimously approved legislation directing VDOT to develop access management regulations and standards with the goals to:

- Reduce traffic congestion
- Enhance public safety by reducing conflicting traffic movements
- Reduce the need for new highways and road widening by maximizing the performance of existing state highways
- Support economic development by promoting the efficient movement of goods and people
- Preserve the public investment in new and existing highways
- Ensure that private property is entitled to reasonable access to the highways.

The legislative goals will be accomplished through regulations and standards for: spacing entrances, intersections, median openings and traffic signals; locating entrances a safe distance from intersection turning movements and from interchange ramps; providing vehicular, and where appropriate, pedestrian circulation between adjoining properties; and sharing highway entrances. The regulations and standards only apply to VDOT-controlled highways. They do not apply to roads that are maintained by localities (such as cities, towns).

For more information on VDOT's access management tools and guidelines, visit

[http://www.virginiadot.org/info/access\\_management\\_regulations\\_and\\_standards.asp](http://www.virginiadot.org/info/access_management_regulations_and_standards.asp)