



US 301 Project Development



OCTOBER 2005



PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY

On September 12 and 13, DeIDOT held two US 301 Project Development Public Workshops at the Middletown Volunteer Fire Company, and a third Workshop was held on September 19 at the Townsend Volunteer Fire Company. This was the second round of Public Workshops following those that were conducted in June to provide information to and obtain input from the public regarding alternatives under consideration for improving US 301. The Workshops were very well attended. Nearly 1,100 people - 645 people at the two Middletown Workshops and 450 people at the Townsend Workshop - were in attendance.

Attendees reviewed displays showing background information about the US 301 Project Area and US 301 itself. More importantly, the public viewed displays and maps regarding the seven alternatives under consideration, including those alternatives the Project Team recommended to be retained for more detailed evaluation.

Each person who arrived at the Workshop was given a comment form and information about each alternative and was encouraged to review all alternatives and to provide comments. Many comment forms were completed the evenings of the Workshops (165 at the two Middletown Workshops and 206 were submitted in Townsend). Additional forms were returned by mail, submitted through the project web site, or delivered to the Project Office or to DeIDOT's offices. As of October 17, a total of 1,056 forms and written comments were received. Additionally, four petitions containing almost 1,900 signatures of persons opposing several alternatives were submitted. Following is a summary of the highlights from review of the comments received through October 17.

PUBLIC COMMENT HIGHLIGHTS

- The Green Alternative, by far, received the highest degree of public support followed by the Purple Alternative. None of the remaining five alternatives received anywhere near the level of public support as did the Green and Purple Alternatives.
- The preference for Green and Purple over the rest of the alternatives was the same at both the Middletown and Townsend Workshops.
- Of all seven alternatives, the Orange alternative received the lowest level of public support - it received least support at the Middletown Workshops and second lowest at the Townsend Workshop. The Blue Alternative received least support at the Townsend Workshop.
- The Brown Alternative had the second lowest level of public support, followed closely by the Yellow, Red and Blue Alternatives.

PUBLIC COMMENT HIGHLIGHTS *(continued)*

- There is much greater preference for dropping the Blue Alternative. Though much less than Blue, the Yellow and Brown Alternatives received the same degree of opposition, followed closely by Orange.
- There was substantially more interest in dropping Blue at the Townsend workshop than at the Middletown workshops, where slightly more interest was expressed for dropping the Yellow than the Blue Alternative.
- Overall, there was the least interest in dropping the Purple Alternative.
- The public registered clear agreement, 88%, with the Project Team's recommendation to drop the Orange Alternative. However, there wasn't the same high degree of agreement regarding dropping the Red Alternative, as 53% of the people who provided comments agreed with the recommendation to drop the Red Alternative.



Public Preferences by Alternative
(based on 1056 comments received as of October 17, 2005)

SUMMARY OF ALL COMMENTS RECEIVED

The following summarizes the comments received at the public workshops and through October 17, 2005.

371	comments received at the workshops
508	written comments received during the comment period
177	email comments received during the comment period
1,056	TOTAL COMMENTS RECEIVED, plus petition signatures
54	signed petition opposing BLUE
52	signed petition opposing PURPLE - from Post & Rail Farms
22	signed petition opposing BLUE - from Townsend Citizens
1739	signed petition opposing BLUE - from Townsend Area Citizens
1,867	TOTAL PETITION SIGNATURES (1,815 opposing Blue and 52 opposing Purple)
58	comments from Middletown Baptist Church suggesting moving GREEN alternative to the north (These did not suggest dropping Green, only moving it)



COMMENT RESULTS (As Of October 17, 2005)

Alternative Preferences - Both Middletown Workshops
(165 comments received)

Preference	Alternatives						
	Yellow	Orange	Purple	Brown	Green	Blue	Red
Support/Retain	21	6	58	25	91	49	28
Oppose/Drop	65	57	35	60	27	63	42
Total	86	63	93	85	121	112	70
Support/Retain	24.4%	9.5%	62.4%	29.4%	75.2%	43.8%	40.0%
Oppose/Drop	75.6%	90.5%	37.6%	70.6%	22.3%	56.2%	60.0%

Alternative Preferences - Townsend Workshop
(206 comments received)

Preference	Alternatives						
	Yellow	Orange	Purple	Brown	Green	Blue	Red
Support/Retain	38	10	80	29	167	4	22
Oppose/Drop	36	35	9	26	3	191	27
Total	74	45	89	55	170	195	49
Support/Retain	51%	22%	90%	53%	98%	2%	45%
Oppose/Drop	49%	78%	10%	47%	2%	98%	55%

Alternative Preferences - Emails and Written Comments
Received after the September Public Workshops and through October 17, 2005
(685 comments received)

Preference	Alternatives						
	Yellow	Orange	Purple	Brown	Green	Blue	Red
Support/Retain	64	15	193	66	336	114	89
Oppose/Drop	158	130	55	173	109	281	88
Total	222	145	248	239	445	395	177
Support/Retain	28.8%	10.3%	77.8%	27.6%	75.5%	28.9%	50.3%
Oppose/Drop	71.2%	89.7%	22.2%	72.4%	24.5%	71.1%	49.7%

Alternative Preferences- Summary of All Comments
Received through October 17, 2005
(1056 comments received)

Preference	Alternatives						
	Yellow	Orange	Purple	Brown	Green	Blue	Red
Support/Retain	123	31	331	120	594	167	139
Oppose/Drop	259	222	99	259	139	535	157
Total	382	253	430	379	733	702	296
Support/Retain	32.2%	12.3%	77.0%	31.7%	81.0%	23.8%	47.0%
Oppose/Drop	67.8%	87.7%	23.0%	68.3%	19.0%	76.2%	53.0%

ALTERNATIVE RECOMMENDED FOR FURTHER EVALUATION

YELLOW Alternative



Over three times as many comments were in opposition to the Yellow Alternative compared to those indicating a preference for retaining it. There was considerably more interest shown in dropping it than retaining it at the Middletown workshops; whereas, there was a limited desire to retain the Yellow Alternative at the Townsend workshop. Among all of the alternatives, Yellow received the second highest level of opposition. Of the 382 people who commented on the Yellow Alternative, 68% would like to see it dropped from further consideration. A summary of the reasons given by persons who attended the Public Workshops and by those who provided comments during the subsequent comment period through October 17 for supporting or opposing the Yellow Alternative follows:

Support/Retain

- Like the Yellow Alternative as it uses existing roads.
- The option is needed to serve local traffic.
- Will have less impact on property values.
- Will improve traffic on US 301 through Middletown.
- Uses right-of-way already owned by the State.

Oppose/Drop

- Dislike the Yellow Alternative because it will cut the Town of Middletown in half.
- Comes too close to existing communities and will be very disruptive during construction and to local traffic patterns.
- Negative impacts on businesses along US 301.
- Don't want to see SR 896 widened.
- Has negative environmental impacts.
- Trucks will not use this alternative.
- Too much noise from trucks; keep trucks where they are.
- This alternative is too expensive, has many overpasses.
- Don't like the service roads.
- Alternative is not direct, will have negative traffic impacts, congestion will remain.
- A number of comments were offered by respondents who do not want major highway construction/improvements near their communities or homes or near those of friends and family members.
- Too many harmful impacts on current roads.

ALTERNATIVE CONSIDERED BUT NOT RECOMMENDED FOR FURTHER EVALUATION

ORANGE Alternative

Of the people who commented on the Orange Alternative, 88% registered opposition, and overall the Orange Alternative, by far, received the lowest level of support of all seven alternatives. This pattern was similar at both the Middletown and Townsend workshops, although in Townsend the Blue Alternative received even less support than did the Orange. A summary of the reasons given by persons who attended the Public Workshops and by those who provided comments during the subsequent comment period through October 17 for supporting or opposing the Orange Alternative follows:



Support/Retain

- It is good because the Orange Alternative uses existing roads.
- Takes advantage of existing traffic patterns.

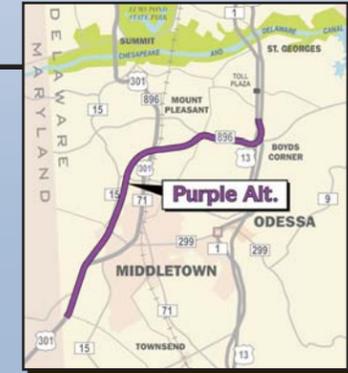
Oppose/Drop

- Will be harmful to Summit Airport.
- Too close to several existing communities, homes and businesses; heavy traffic on edge of Middletown.
- Orange will separate and isolate existing communities.
- Don't widen SR 896.
- This option is not direct enough, will result in congestion and noise - doesn't solve the problem.
- A costly solution, several overpasses.
- Has limited benefits and negative traffic impacts.

ALTERNATIVE RECOMMENDED FOR FURTHER EVALUATION

PURPLE Alternative

Of the 430 people who commented on the Purple Alternative, 77% stated that it should be retained for detailed study. Of all seven potential routes, Purple received the second highest amount of support and the lowest degree of opposition. High support and low opposition were the same at the Townsend and Middletown workshops. A petition signed by 52 people was submitted in opposition to the Purple Alternative. A summary of the reasons given by persons who attended the Public Workshops and by those who provided comments during the subsequent comment period through October 17 for supporting or opposing the Purple Alternative follows:



Support/Retain

- A direct route that fixes traffic problems, keeps traffic near Boyds Corner, provides better local access.
- Separates local from through traffic, helps truck traffic.
- Uses existing roads, impacts fewer homeowners.
- Strikes a good balance among the issues.
- Less property and environmental impacts.
- A lower cost approach.
- Doesn't divide Middletown; keeps the town whole.
- Will do a good job of keeping traffic moving.
- Uses land previously bought by DeIDOT for this purpose.

Oppose/Drop

- Impacts existing and new schools.
- Will destroy Choptank Road open space.
- Too close to several existing developments.
- Will hurt New Covenant Church.
- Several people concerned about the potential harm to their properties and neighborhoods.
- This alternative will cause negative impacts to an agricultural district.

ALTERNATIVE RECOMMENDED FOR FURTHER EVALUATION

BROWN Alternative

The preferences offered by the public at the three Workshops and during the comment period indicated that the Brown Alternative is next to the bottom in support and, along with the Yellow Alternative, is next to the top in opposition - 68% of the 379 people who commented on the Brown route preferred to see it dropped from further consideration. A summary of the reasons given by persons who attended the Public Workshops and by those who provided comments during the subsequent comment period through October 17 for supporting or opposing the Brown Alternative follows:



Support/Retain

- This alternative will impact fewer homes.
- Will allow trucks to continue to use Summit Bridge.
- Connects Summit Bridge area to SR 1.
- Solves problem of the dangerous Summit Bridge curve.
- Will be effective with tolls.
- Only alternative that will solve the problem.

Oppose/Drop

- Goes through Summit Airport.
- Too close to the school.
- Takes truck traffic through what is now a quiet community.
- Traffic will be pushed north to use Summit Bridge.
- Will bring more traffic causing noise and air pollution and unsafe conditions.
- Negative impacts for several existing communities.
- A long, costly route with construction issues, several overpasses.
- Concern regarding direct impacts on several individual property owners.
- Option is too near SR 15.
- Concerned about detrimental impact to farmland.
- Will reduce property values.

ALTERNATIVE RECOMMENDED FOR FURTHER EVALUATION

GREEN Alternative

The Green Alternative, by a wide margin, was the alternative with the most public support. Of all the alternatives, the highest number of people, 733, commented on Green and 81% of them preferred that it be retained. Green received the highest level of support at both Townsend and Middletown workshops. In addition, 58 persons suggested that the Green Alternative alignment should be moved slightly to the north in the vicinity of the Middletown Baptist Church property. However, they did not recommend that the alternative be dropped. A summary of the reasons given by persons who attended the Public Workshops and by those who provided comments during the subsequent comment period through October 17 for supporting or opposing the Green Alternative follows:



Support/Retain

- More direct route, keeps traffic out of Middletown, doesn't cut the town in half, lessens congestion.
- Will save fuel and time.
- Gets traffic out of business district.
- Like this alternative - would be better if roadbed were moved slightly west to the roadbed of SR 15.
- This alternative has a lot of public support.
- Moderate construction cost.
- Less impact on existing residences and businesses and on the environment.
- Good solution to traffic problems, less disruption during construction, handles trucks better.
- Fewer overall negative impacts.
- Changes can be made to proposed developments to accommodate the new road.
- Meets goals and objectives of the project.
- Follows close to existing US 301.

Oppose/Drop

- Takes trucks through neighborhoods that are now quiet.
- Harmful impacts on Vo-Tech and new high schools.
- Damages farmland.
- Negative impacts on individuals' properties and specific communities.
- Negative impact on open land.
- Will be too expensive.
- Too close to C&D Canal.

RECOMMENDATION FOLLOWING PUBLIC AND RESOURCE AGENCY INPUT

BLUE Alternative

The second highest number of people, 702, provided comments regarding the Blue Alternative, with slightly over 76% urging that it be dropped from further consideration. By a wide margin, the Blue route received the highest degree of opposition. Preference for dropping the Blue Alternative from further consideration was much higher at the Townsend than at the Middletown workshops. In addition to these comments, petitions signed by 1,815 persons against the Blue Alternative were provided. A summary of the reasons given by persons who attended the Public Workshops and by those who provided comments during the subsequent comment period through October 17 for supporting or opposing the Blue Alternative follows:



Support/Retain

- Blue is the most direct, shortest and least costly route.
- Contains traffic in an orderly and systematic way, but you do go south to get north.
- Gets interstate trucks through as quickly as possible.
- Gets traffic, including trucks, away from Middletown.
- Separates truck from local traffic.
- Doesn't impact as many homes, lives and neighborhoods.
- Will have fewer environmental impacts.

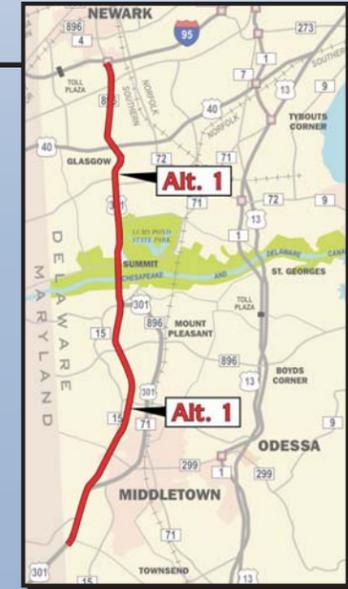
Oppose/Drop

- Little traffic benefit, doesn't solve problems, trucks will not use this route.
- Keep traffic north of Townsend, add ramps to SR 1.
- Carries lowest amount of traffic, not a congestion solution.
- Substantial negative impacts on Townsend.
- Will have negative impacts on Middletown's businesses.
- This alternative has considerable environmental impacts (wetlands, eagles, wildlife, forest and farmland, rare and endangered species).
- Too removed from where the problems are concentrated indirect route to get north.
- This alternative is contrary to the state's Livable Delaware policies.
- Growth in Middletown area caused the problem; new road should be near the problem.
- Middletown residents are trying to solve their problems in Townsend; don't want more development in the Townsend area.
- Why should Townsend pay for Middletown's mistakes - don't ruin our rural atmosphere.
- Will burden Townsend EMS and fire services.
- MOT Charter School and its students will be hurt by this alternative.

ALTERNATIVE CONSIDERED BUT NOT RECOMMENDED FOR FURTHER EVALUATION

RED Alternative

More people, 53% of 296, preferred to see the Red Alternative dropped from further consideration than those who recommended that it be retained. The gap between drop and retain for this alternative was smaller than for any of the other alternatives. Attitudes toward the Red route were similar at the Middletown and Townsend workshops. A summary of the reasons given by persons who attended the Public Workshops and by those who provided comments during the subsequent comment period through October 17 for supporting or opposing the Red Alternative follows:



Support/Retain

- Direct and provides separate road for local traffic.
- SR 896 needs to be upgraded.
- Only alternative that addresses southbound trucks from I-95, more direct to I-95.
- Takes traffic where it is headed now.
- A safer alternative.
- Separates local from through traffic.
- Need a new Summit Bridge.
- Provides a second major north-south route.
- Will impact environmental resources less.

Oppose/Drop

- Too expensive.
- Does not solve local traffic problems.
- Impacts many properties and communities.
- Will not move traffic from US 301 to SR 1.
- Will result in additional traffic on SR 1.
- Congestion problems will not be addressed.
- Worried about addition of interchanges.
- Does not meet goals of project.