
Paving a Road

When the secondary system of highways was established in 1932, VDOT accepted nearly 34,000 miles of unpaved roads. Today, nearly 9,000 miles of state maintained unpaved roads still exist and are an important part of each county's Secondary Six-Year Plan in addressing the unpaved road needs. Each county's secondary allocation included funds designated to improve unpaved roads based on their proportion of qualifying unpaved roads with traffic volumes over 50 vehicles per day.

The process of revising the Secondary Six-Year Plan includes an advertised public hearing to provide all citizens an opportunity to ask that their road be included in the plan. If all these requirements are met, a road will be improved and paved when funding reserved in the plan becomes available for spending.

Options available for paving unpaved roads.

The General Assembly has provided additional options in paving unpaved roads in recent years. This has provided increased flexibility and allowed more unpaved roads to be paved than previously possible. The options currently available include the Rural Rustic Road approach, the Pave-In Place approach and the traditional reconstruction approach when greater improvements and additional right of way are necessary.

Rural Rustic Road Program

As of July 1, 2003, the "Rural Rustic Road" program was implemented which allows a more flexible approach to paving many unpaved roads. This option should be evaluated first.

For a road to qualify for rural rustic road treatment, several criteria must be met:

1. The county's Board of Supervisors must pass a resolution declaring the road to be a "Rural Rustic Road";
2. The Board of Supervisors indicates that expected growth and traffic increase along the road in the near future is minimal;
3. The curves along the road should be generally adequate for the traffic and any increase in speeds expected after the improvement;
4. Roadway drainage must currently be sufficient or require only minor improvements;
5. The daily traffic volume must not exceed 1500 vehicles; and
6. The citizens along the road should support this improvement concept.

Roads that are good candidates are paved with minimum disruption beyond the ditches and usually result in a significant cost savings. For roads with traffic volumes greater than 400 vehicles per day, 18 foot pavement width is desirable and some typical section improvements may be necessary. The Residency Administrator will determine whether this approach is suitable for a requested unpaved road. The Rural Rustic Road approach should be considered first when paving a road but it should be recognized that not all roads are good candidates for this concept.

Paving a Road, continued

Pave-In-Place Program

If the rural rustic road approach is not a good option for a road, the pave-in-place approach might be considered if:

1. The traffic is under 750 vehicles per day;
2. Only minor improvements are needed to accommodate traffic; and
3. Needed improvements can be made within the available, existing right of way. Easements might be necessary for spot improvements.

Under the pave-in-place option, the road is improved to a minimum standard of 18 feet of pavement with 2-foot shoulders.

Traditional Reconstruction with Additional Right of Way

If significant improvements are needed or if significant development is proposed along the road, a more traditional approach is used to reconstruct the unpaved road and improve the alignment. A minimum 40-foot right of way is usually required for these projects with additional R/W or easements acquired based on the proposed improvement.

The residents along the road are usually asked to donate any additional right of way needed. If that is done, the funds otherwise required to buy right of way can be used for construction. If additional right of way is needed and will be donated, the donated right of way should be acquired before the project is added to the Secondary Six-Year Plan.