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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 259

Offered January 9, 2019

Prefiled November 15, 2018

Requesting the Virginia Department of Transportation to study the feasibility of an eastern bypass for U.S. Route 29 around Charlottesville. Report.

Patrons—Peake; Delegate: Ware

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, a project aimed to move traffic around Albemarle County's rapidly growing Charlottesville corridor on U.S. Route 29 was originally conceived in the 1980s, with the Virginia Department of Transportation (the Department) beginning to purchase land for a proposed western bypass in the early 1990s; and

WHEREAS, the proposed western bypass faced strong opposition from the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors for over 20 years until June 8, 2011, when supervisors changed policy positions, at which point the Commonwealth Transportation Board started allocating funding for the construction; and

WHEREAS, the western bypass project was abandoned in 2014 after the Federal Highway Safety Administration wrote a letter to the Department calling into question the possible environmental impacts of such bypass; and

WHEREAS, over \$200 million dollars in funding was reallocated to other congestion-mitigating projects affecting and surrounding U.S. Route 29 in and around Charlottesville through a project called Route 29 Solutions; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Route 29 corridor is still in need of an overarching congestion-mitigating transportation solution to allow commuters and travelers to bypass the inevitable traffic caused by the University of Virginia and the area's hospital facilities; and

WHEREAS, the rural areas east of U.S. Route 29 present a viable and appealing option for constructing a bypass that would allow travelers and commuters to more quickly traverse the corridor without adding to the congestion to the already overused U.S. Route 29 in Charlottesville; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Virginia Department of Transportation be requested to study the feasibility of an eastern bypass for U.S. Route 29 around Charlottesville.

In conducting its study, the Department shall review and catalogue the land east of U.S. Route 29, consider the current traffic conditions on U.S. Route 29 in Charlottesville, meet with local business owners and employees of the University of Virginia and the University of Virginia Health System, and research possible funding options for such development, including revenues from the potential sale of right of way properties acquired for the western bypass project that are not already designated for other purposes.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Department for this study, upon request.

The Virginia Department of Transportation shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2019, and shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an executive summary and a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summary and report shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports no later than the first day of the 2020 Regular Session of the General Assembly and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

INTRODUCED

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