



May 29, 2025

Ms. Sarah L. Runyon  
P.E. Deputy Chief Engineer - Development  
West Virginia Department of Highways  
1900 Kanawha Blvd, East Building 5, Room 820  
Charleston, WV 25305

RE: State Project X316-H-125.16, Federal Project NHPP (0484)118, Hardy County, WV  
(submitted via email to [Sarah.L.Runyon@wv.gov](mailto:Sarah.L.Runyon@wv.gov))

Dear Ms. Runyon,

Belle Grove Inc. would like to submit comments on the Supplemental Environmental Assessment on the proposed development of Corridor H from Wardensville, West Virginia to the Virginia state line.

Belle Grove Inc. operates Belle Grove Plantation, a National Historic Landmark one mile south of Middletown, Virginia. It was the home of Major Isaac Hite Jr. (grandson an early German settler to the region, Jost Hite) and his wife Nelly Madison (sister of President James Madison). Thomas Jefferson was consulted when the Belle Grove Manor House was constructed, and the 1797 historic home is an exemplary example of his architectural style. Belle Grove was at the epicenter of the October 19, 1864 Battle of Cedar Creek. Today the 283-acre Belle Grove property is farmed and operates as a National Trust for Historic Preservation historic site serving 14,000 visitors annually.

Belle Grove Inc. also owns Fort Bowman, a 96.4-acre historic site in Shenandoah County, Virginia, listed on the Virginia and National Registers of Historic Landmarks and under easement with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and the Virginia Outdoors Foundation. The 1771 limestone house on the property was the home of George and Mary Elizabeth (Hite) Bowman. The Bowman family cemetery is also on this land.

Belle Grove Inc. and the National Trust for Historic Preservation are Congressionally designated partners in Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park.

Because these nationally significant historic properties in southern Frederick County and northern Shenandoah County are so close to the I-81, I-66, and Route 55, we have grave concerns about how Corridor H might continue into Virginia. If continued along the same trajectory as the Wardensville to Virginia extension, the highways would connect directly where Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park is located.

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The Commonwealth of Virginia and state and local transportation agencies have no plan to continue Corridor H in Virginia. Furthermore, the Commonwealth Transportation Board adopted a resolution opposing Corridor H construction in Virginia after several public hearings. Locally, these concerns prompted Shenandoah County Board of Supervisors to oppose construction of Corridor H in Virginia, resolving in 2022 that “said route through Shenandoah County would likely be harmful to farms, private homes, and public-use facilities such as churches, community centers, lodges” and “said route would cause irreversible damage to the Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park and the Fishers Hill Civil War Battlefield.” This same sentiment caused the Town of Strasburg to adopt a similar resolution of opposition.

Even with no construction in Virginia, the severe consequences of taking a four-lane divided highway to the state line must be considered. We support our many colleagues in Virginia and West Virginia in their request for a new Environmental Impact Statement. This is needed to fully assess the adverse impacts to community, natural, and cultural resources in Virginia that will occur if the Wardensville to Virginia state line segment is developed as currently proposed.

Without any review of the route from the state line east of Wardensville through Shenandoah County to connect with I-81 near Strasburg, Virginia, it is wasteful and destructive to continue construction of Corridor H past Wardensville. It would end at the state line in the middle of a narrow mountain road (Route 55). Road construction in this area would be in direct opposition to Shenandoah County’s Comprehensive Plan Goal 1.2, “Protection of important lands & landscapes and opportunities for public enjoyment of them will increase.” It also would contradict Goal 1.2.3 “Support the expansion and improvement of State Parks, National Parks, National Recreation Areas, and National Scenic Areas.”

We respectfully request the project be reassessed and that a new design be evaluated.

Sincerely,



Kristen Laise  
Executive Director

cc: Mr. Jason Workman, Director, Program Development, West Virginia Division,  
Federal Highway Administration  
Senator Tim Kaine  
Senator Mark Warner  
Congressman Ben Cline  
Senator Timmy French  
Delegate Todd Gilbert  
Kimberly B. Woodwell, Deputy Director, Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley