



May 30, 2025

Dear West Virginia Department of Highways,

We are writing to you as residents of the Town of Wardensville and the owners of Lost River Trading Post, a locally owned and operated business located in Wardensville, West Virginia. For years, Lost River Trading Post has served as a key destination for residents and visitors alike, offering locally crafted goods, outdoor supplies, and unique regional products that celebrate the natural beauty and heritage of the Lost River Valley and surrounding areas. Our business not only supports the local economy but also helps to foster a sense of community and tourism in Wardensville.

It is with great concern that I address the West Virginia Division of Highways' currently proposed route for the new highway project. After careful review, this plan will have severe and lasting negative impacts on our town, our environment, and the local economy.

Specifically, the proposed route will:

- Completely bypass the Town of Wardensville, which will significantly harm local businesses by reducing through traffic essential for our survival, and dead-end Route 55.
- Threaten Wardensville's water supply by blasting near a Wellhead Protection Area and within a fractured rock aquifer, a geologically sensitive region where groundwater is highly vulnerable to contamination from surface activities.
- Disrupt dozens of private homes, encroach upon the George Washington National Forest, affect two Tier-3 high-quality streams, and bisect the Tuscarora Trail, a critical part of the Great Eastern Trail, thereby damaging both private property and important natural and recreational resources.
- Create an unsafe traffic situation by merging onto the narrow, two-lane Route 55 at the top of a mountain. This design seems aimed at pressuring Virginia to build Corridor H, a political strategy that places our town and residents at risk without just cause.

In contrast, we strongly urge the Division of Highways to consider the **Save Wardensville Alternative**, which proposes:

- Simple safety improvements to the existing Route 55 that maintain traffic flow through Wardensville's downtown, supporting the survival and vitality of local businesses.
- Routing that circumvents the Wellhead Protection Area and avoids extensive heavy construction, thereby preserving our critical water supply.
- Using the existing road infrastructure, which avoids displacing residents, protects the George Washington National Forest, preserves the Tuscarora Trail, and prevents further damage to environmentally sensitive streams.
- A connection to the existing two-lane Route 55 that respects Virginia's position on Corridor H while enhancing road safety and community well-being.

We strongly encourage the West Virginia Division of Highways to carefully reconsider the current proposal in favor of the Save Wardensville Alternative, which aligns better with the safety, environmental, economic, and community values of our town.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We are available to discuss these concerns further and hope to work collaboratively toward a solution that benefits Wardensville and all stakeholders.

Sincerely,

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