



West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

Virginians, West Virginians protest Highway Agencies' Finding of No Significant Impact on Corridor H around Wardensville

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CONTACT

Jordan Howes, Communications Coordinator, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, (304) 282-8448, jordan.howes@wvhightlands.org

WARDENSVILLE, W.Va — Corridor H opponents in Hardy County and neighboring Virginia have panned Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)'s November approval of a [Finding of No Significant Impact \(FONSI\)](#) for the Wardensville-to-Virginia State Line section of the long-debated east-west highway from Elkins.

Much of Corridor H has been built, except for highly disputed sections in Hardy and Tucker County. The FONSI allows the West Virginia Division of Highways to advance toward constructing this 6.8-mile Wardensville section of road, which would parallel the existing Route 55/48. It is projected to cost taxpayers \$542 million dollars, roughly \$80 million per mile.

The FONSI only slightly acknowledges environmental concerns in the highly sensitive Cacapon River watershed and Great North Mountain.

Although FHWA presents the FONSI as evidence that the highway's impacts can be managed, many Wardensville area residents and regional conservation groups maintain that a four-lane highway is not justified, and that traffic can be made safer and more efficient with spot improvements to existing Route 55. The Commonwealth of Virginia, which has declined to build its originally planned section of Corridor H from the state line to connect with Route 66 and 81 outside Strasburg, is studying this kind of spot improvement plan.

"We urge the West Virginia Division of Highways to consider the long-term impacts this project would have—not only on small businesses like ours, but on the cultural and environmental heritage of this region," said Greg McCarley, owner of New Star Market in Strasburg, Virginia. "We support sustainable development that respects the land and its people. Corridor H, as it stands, does not meet that standard."

Citizens have raised concerns in several public comment periods since 2022, but WVDOH has made few concessions in the FONSI regarding the effect of construction-related blasting on the Town of Wardensville's drinking water, the effects of a major bypass on the town's economy, and the effects on the adjacent George Washington National Forest, its wildlife, and safety of users of the Tuscarora Trail, which crosses Route 55.



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“Drifters Cafe was built on community — neighbors supporting neighbors, familiar faces walking through our doors,” said Lexy and Lucas Shifflett, owners of Drifters Cafe. “The proposed bypass threatens to pull that lifeline away. Redirecting traffic around our town doesn’t just affect our business; it affects the entire fabric of the community. We stand with the families, farmers, and small businesses who will be harmed by this plan.”

“The FONSI marks another step in the decades-long effort to complete Corridor H,” said Olivia Miller, program director at the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy. “But the project remains rooted in a 1960s-era plan that assumes four-lane highways are an asset to every rural area. This does not reflect today’s values and needs: clean water, climate-resilient infrastructure, intact forests, outdoor recreation opportunities, thriving rural town Main Streets, and community-driven planning. We maintain that WVDOH should fully consider targeted safety improvements that would make driving easier through our hills while keeping historic Wardensville whole and reducing impacts on the national forest.”

MEDIA

An aerial view of Wardensville. *Photo courtesy West Virginia Highlands Conservancy.*

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