

July, 2007 - **TRAFFIC IMPACT ANALYSIS PERFORMED FOR NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN VIRGINIA**

The following article was published in the July 2007 issue of Southeast Real Estate Business magazine.

At the urging of Virginia Governor Timothy Kaine, the 2006 Virginia State Legislature passed into law a bill requiring the establishment of statewide standards to ensure that a traffic impact analysis is performed for development projects that potentially impact the state-controlled transportation network. Localities will now be required to submit a traffic impact analysis for Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) review at three key stages of land use: comprehensive plans and amendments; rezonings, and site plans. For rezonings and site plan submittals, any residential development with more than 100 homes or 150 apartments units will trigger the need for a traffic impact analysis. Other land uses that generate more than 250 vehicles per hour or 2,500 vehicles per day, or that double the traffic volume on low volume roadways will also require a traffic impact analysis. This law will take effect on July 1, 2007.

Under Virginia's new 527 Regulations, guidelines for requiring a traffic impact study would consider factors such as the amount of traffic that would be generated by the land use and the density of a proposed site. Currently, the legislation provides information about transportation impacts without the enforcement power to require mitigation of off-site effects. The power to require monies to be devoted to off-site impacts has and will remain a purview of local governments. VDOT is going throughout the districts of the State conducting informational sessions to explain these new guidelines. The largest peak hour trip generation for the proposed site will be utilized to determine if a study will be needed. The anticipated trip generation of the proposed site will be measured against regulation thresholds for residential and non-residential sites. The thresholds vary depending on the type of land use and the stages of land development.

Once it is determined that a traffic impact study is required, the regulations outline what the composition of the study and the coordination required to determine the scope of the study will be. The methodology embraced by the new regulations provides a comparative analysis that not only determines what the traffic impacts are but also what aspects of traffic growth are responsible for the impacts.

The schedules for review of the traffic impact studies were also discussed at the Weinberg Land Use Forum. According to the new regulations, VDOT will be required to provide review of all submittals in a timely manner. The regulations provide specific timetables for all reviews depending on the stage of development and the complexity of the work to be completed.

It is hoped that the 527 Regulations will create a more cooperative relationship between VDOT, the municipalities, and the private development sector. In order that the regulations work for the betterment of the community, a new sense of cooperation must be developed so that all parties who participate in the land development process may benefit from the fruits of a good roadway infrastructure.

- Erich Strohacker, P.E. works for Ramey Kemp & Associates of Richmond, Inc.