

Lucketts Citizens Work with County and VDOT to Improve Safety **NOW** on Route 15

The death of a young mother, Amanda Shontere from Brunswick, MD in the early morning hours of January inspired several Lucketts Citizens to redouble efforts now to improve the safety of Route 15. In March, a second person – Michael Larrick of Leesburg, lost his life in a similar accident further south on the same highway. What did these senseless accidents have in common and could they have been avoided? Both fatalities involved head-on collisions with oncoming vehicles that crossed the double yellow centerline and red medians of the Route 15 in early morning hours.

Steve and Cheryl Hillebrand and Peter Gustafson, aided by several other Lucketts residents took the time to measure and map the locations along the entire stretch of the road north of the White's Ferry traffic light where shoulder and centerline rumble strips were installed. A detailed map was created to document the significant number of places where rumble strips were not completed. **It was of note that in the case of both fatal 2017 accidents, centerline rumble strips were not present on either side of the red medians where the accidents occurred.** Raising the question, could centerline rumble strips have prevented these deaths?

In March, this map was presented to Supervisor Geary Higgins and his office took immediate action to set up a meeting with the representatives of VDOT responsible for this road so the Lucketts residents could present the map and ask VDOT for action. They learned in the meeting that VDOT was already in the process of awarding a contract to complete the missing centerline rumble strips on the length of Route 15 north of Leesburg. (That contract has now been awarded and work is to begin this fall.) The map also detailed where shoulder rumble strips were missing. VDOT is now studying where the shoulder needs to be widened to two feet so edge rumble strips, as they call them, can be installed next summer.

In the same meeting Steve Hillebrand and Peter Gustafson along with four additional Lucketts residents, brought to VDOT's attention several additional current safety hazards. First the northbound right turn lane between Lucketts Elementary School and the Lucketts traffic light was being used as a through lane due to unclear road markings. Residents have frequently observed illegal right lane passing at the Lucketts traffic light as a result. Second, the red paved "Enforcement Zone" on the west side of Route 15 where it intersects with Spinks Ferry Road was being used as a through traffic lane when southbound cars were stopped and signaling a left turn on to Spinks Ferry Road. In this area the Speed Limit is 45 miles and hour, creating very hazardous conditions for anyone turning south on Route 15 from Spinks Ferry Road.

Last month VDOT removed the **straight** through arrows from the right turn pavement in front of school, painted another right turn arrow on the pavement and added two signs stating, "Right Lane Must Turn right" to make clear that the far right, northbound lane of Route 15 between the school and the traffic light is for right turn only. Additional enforcement has also been requested. The red paved area of Route 15 southbound on the west side of the Spinks Ferry intersection is an enforcement area. The only immediate action VDOT said they could take was to install a road sign saying "Do Not Drive On Shoulder." The sign is now installed in this location.

The detailed map created by Steve Hillebrand and Pater Gustafson is on display at the Lucketts Community Center through the month of October. The citizens group will stay engaged with VDOT to see that they complete the center and shoulder rumble strips to the Point of Rocks Bridge.