

Friends wants no site bypass

Group says Virginia battlefield needs preserving

The Civil War heritage group, Friends of Manassas National Battlefield Park, issued a statement regarding proposed highway and road development in and around the Virginia battlefield site.

The position statement and overall strategy of the group reflects a desire for construc-

tion of traffic bypasses around the military landmark. Citing heavy traffic flow already through the park, the group wishes to see the work done before "traffic demands render it untenable to close the roads within the park."

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Friends of Manassas National Battlefield Park position statement

The resolution by the group requests project planners to reconsider options that bring a bypass corridor north of I-66 which would fall either within or border the park. Concerns over traffic noise, as well as possible destruction of parts of the battlefield which would compromise the integrity of the site, are the crux of the issue for the group.

Possible future commercial and residential development along the proposed bypass is also listed in the statement as a concern of the group.

Each project proposal is deemed as problematic by the group, defined as detrimental to the historical site by decreasing neighboring property values and creating additional traffic woes in the area.

The group seeks to present another option to the proposed bypass changes, currently realignments of Routes 29 and 234.

Adding lanes to I-66 to relocate Route 29 through the area has a great deal of support from the group.

The statement said, "Since the southern border of the Battlefield is already corrupted, collocating Route 29 onto I-66 would not further degrade nor demean the Battlefield, would not invite additional development on the border of the Battlefield, and would not devastate neighboring communities, the Friends wholeheartedly advocate collocating Route 29 onto an enhanced I-66 between Gainesville and Centreville."

According to this proposal, the additional interstate lanes would render Routes 29 and 234 through the park unnecessary, and therefore the roads could be closed to through traffic with no harm to the battlefield or to commuter traffic.

Original right-of-ways would be restored to the park under the group's proposal.

Closure of the two state routes, the group believes, would lead to more visitor exploration of the site.

The group is currently organizing a coalition to take their concerns to highway department planners.

The group hopes to generate enough opposition to current proposals to force project developers to reconsider highway plans.

Members will "coordinate our campaign with national, regional, and local organizations; coordinate with existing home owner associations and help organize residential communities that would be adversely affected by the proposed bypass; and continue to sponsor public information meetings and provide forums for community action," according to the statement.

The group urges interested individuals to contact their senators and congressmen (c/o U.S. Senate, Washington, DC, 20510; or c/o House of Representatives, Washington, DC, 20515), to express support for protecting the battlefield at Manassas from the proposed highway construction. The group also encourages opposition to more damage to the site from transportation routes encroaching site boundaries.

For more information about battlefield preservation, visit heritagepac.org on the Web.