

# Virginians for Appropriate Roads

## I-73 Bulletin

Volume 2, Issue 1  
May, 2004

**I-73 has been named one of the most wasteful road projects in the nation** in a newly-released publication, **ROAD TO RUIN**, by Taxpayers for Common Sense, available at [www.taxpayer.net/TCS/RoadRuin](http://www.taxpayer.net/TCS/RoadRuin).

### German Baptist community may be paved by I-73

The present alignment for I-73 will bisect Franklin County's Oak Hill German Baptist Brethren community. Founded in 1881, Oak Hill is one of Virginia's ten or fewer Old Order Anabaptist plain sect communities, where resident "brothers" and "sisters" in faith continue to practice their distinctive culture. This culture's hallmarks, which it shares with other Old German Baptist settlements and the Old Order Hutterite, Mennonite, and Amish Plain sects, include rural lifestyle, plain dress, use of traditional religious ritual, selective use of technology, and commitment to nonresistance.

Over 95 percent of Oak Hill's 1,600 acres remains in active agricultural use as it has been for more than two centuries.

I-73 will pave a four-lane freeway through the center of the Oak Hill settlement and actually will pave over the stream where Oak Hill practices its traditional outdoor bap-

tisms.

Because of their religious doctrine of non-resistance, the residents of Oak Hill have not protested this routing of I-73, which would effectively destroy Oak Hill as an agricultural and religious community.

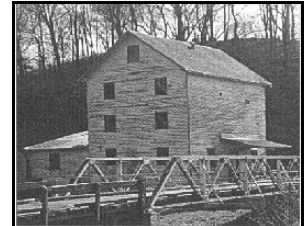
VAR is presently seeking determination of Oak Hill's eligibility for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places as a rural historic district and traditional cultural property. Federal Highway Administration claims that Oak Hill does not qualify for historic status and that no further review of the issue is required. VAR has requested that the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation (ACHP) ask the Keeper of the National Register to determine Oak Hill's historic status. ACHP also plans to examine Oak Hill's culture as a National Environmental Policy Act issue.

### VDOT announces I-73 re-routing

In March Virginia Department of Transportation re-routed I-73 to avoid paving through Southeast Roanoke, a historic district identified by Virginians for Appropriate Roads in 2002 working with historians and preservationists from Southeast Action Forum and Belmont Historic Preservation, Inc. The new route for I-73 is destructive, however, superimposing an

interstate-style freeway through a commercial area in Roanoke County and continuing southward to bisect the Oak Hill German Baptist community in Franklin County. VAR supports building I-73 as a context-sensitive upgrade of U.S. 220. We oppose building I-73 as an interstate-style freeway on new terrain.

**VAR is a chapter of Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League. Please visit us at the BREDL website: [www.bredl.org/transportation/I-73.htm](http://www.bredl.org/transportation/I-73.htm).**



*Clements Mill (ca. 1870) - a gristmill constructed on Maggodee Creek in Franklin Co. ground corn and wheat for Oak Hill area families. It is one of many historic structures located in the Oak Hill German Baptist community.*

### • TAKE ACTION

- If you are dismayed with VDOT's plans to build a new Interstate highway through the Oak Hill German Baptist settlement in Franklin County, isn't it troubling that the Franklin County Supervisors **support** this route?

- **CALL OR WRITE** the Supervisors today to protest their support for paving the Oak Hill community.

- **FRANKLIN CO. SUPERVISORS**, 40 East Court St., Rocky Mount, VA 24151 (540) 483-3030

- **EMAIL** the supervisors at:

- [countyadmin@franklincountyva.org](mailto:countyadmin@franklincountyva.org)

- Share your views with our Commonwealth Transportation Board rep: Dana Martin, Al-Mart Training Consultants, 2018 Electric Rd. Suite 216, Roanoke, VA



**\$1.3 BILLION WILL BE CUT FROM VIRGINIA'S HIGHWAY  
CONSTRUCTION BUDGET OVER THE NEXT 6 YEARS!**

**STOP PLANNING FOR I-73 AND FOCUS SCARCE STATE FUNDS  
ON A HIGH-QUALITY UPGRADE OF U.S. 220 !!!**

#### **VDOT's Timeline for I-73**

- VDOT and Federal Highway Administration are pushing hard to **finally** finalize the final I-73 Environmental Impact Statement by early summer, 2004.
- VDOT plans to go to the CTB in July for approval of a revised Approved Location Corridor.
- VDOT and Federal Highway Administration hope for a Record of Decision on I-73 by late summer, 2004.

#### **A tribute to Ferster and Reem**

VAR's recent victory on the Southeast Roanoke Historic District (see article, "VDOT announces I-73 re-routing" on page 1) is evidence of the talent, perspicacity, and know-how of two individuals who helped us along the way: our attorney, Andrea Ferster, a public interest lawyer in Washington D.C. who specializes in historic preservation law, and Harry Reem, a historic preservation consultant in Arlington, Va., who conducted field surveys, wrote reports, took photos, drew maps, and conducted exhaustive research to build the case for historic designation of districts, buildings and landscapes in the path of I-73.

Andrea Ferster's renown in the

area of historic preservation law, combined with her deeply-discounted rates and outright generosity, demonstrate her genuine commitment to serving the public interest.

Also, our thanks are offered to historians and residents who shared with VAR their family histories in Coopers Cove, Southeast Roanoke, Oak Hill, and elsewhere in the I-73 study area.

#### **Presentation on "Faith, Farming and Change"**

What will become of Franklin County's farms as the region loses its manufacturing base but gains residential development? What impact might I-73 have on Franklin County agriculture? Charles D. Thomp-

son, Professor of Documentary Studies at Duke University will speak on "Faith, Farming, and Change in the Virginia Blue Ridge" on June 24 at 7 p.m. at the Franklin County Public Library in Rocky Mount. Event is free and open to the public.

**It's big, it's here, it's now, the**

#### **VERY VAR YARD SALE**

**WHY:** VAR needs income to continue the job of fighting I-73 as a destructive interstate-style freeway through our region's unspoiled areas!

**WHEN:** Saturday, June 12, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**WHERE:** Happy's Flea Market, Roanoke

#### **WHAT TO DO:**

- (1) Donate yard sale items to VAR. Call Jerryanne Bier (540) 365-2230 for details.
- (2) Buy stuff at the Very VAR Yard Sale!
- (3) Please send a generous tax-deductible contribution to: VAR, P.O. Box 2153, Rocky Mount, VA 24151. Thank you!