

FEDERAL CONSISTENCY DETERMINATION

Raphune Hill Road improvements Project, St. Thomas
FHWA Project Number: VI 38(2), Contract 2

Project Description and Background: The Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in cooperation with the Government of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Virgin Islands Department of Public Works (VI DPW) propose to improve Raphune Hill Road in Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas by: widening the existing two-lane road to four-lanes, flattening curves, constructing a vegetated strip and sidewalk on the westbound side of the road, relocating the Route 381 intersection, and other miscellaneous improvements. The improvements to Raphune Hill Road would start approximately 200 feet east of the Centerline Road (Route 313) intersection and would continue eastward for approximately 0.71 miles to Al Cohen's Plaza (Figure 2). Raphune Hill Road would then transition to the existing Weymouth Rhymer Highway. Additionally, the Route 381 intersection would be relocated approximately 425 feet east of its current location.

In 2017, FHWA and VI DPW prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) in accordance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, and its implementing regulations at that time (Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] §§1500–1508). The EA evaluated a No Build Alternative and two build alternatives, and analyzed the potential impacts that would result from the implementation of these alternatives on the natural, cultural, and human environment. Compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, and Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, occurred in conjunction with the NEPA process.

The EA determined that the Selected Alternative would have adverse impacts to cultural resources, water quality, noise, viewsheds and aesthetics, and wildlife and wildlife habitat; however, no significant impacts were identified. The draft EA was made available for public comment and a public meeting was held at the Auditorium of the Charlotte Amalie High School, on December 19, 2017. The EA was finalized with a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) on January 8, 2019 (enclosed). Measures to minimize or mitigate environmental impacts as a result of the proposed project are listed in the enclosed FONSI.

The project was broken into three segments, or contracts, for design and construction (Figure 2). Contract 1 consists of improvements to the intersection of Centerline Road and Raphune Hill Road and was completed by VI DPW in 2013. Contract 2 consists of the relocation of the Route 381 intersection with Raphune Hill Road, including the realignment of approximately 650 feet of Route 381, and is the subject of this Federal Consistency Determination package. Contract 3 consists of the widening of Raphune Hill Road from two 9-foot travel lanes to four 11-foot travel lanes from the terminus of Contract 1 to the former Al Cohen's Plaza and will be submitted for Federal Consistency review in late 2027 to 2028. All three contracts are located outside the Tier 1 coastal zone.

Project Location: Contract 2 is located at the intersection of Route 381 and Raphune Hill Road. The intersection will be realigned to the east approximately 425 feet to approximately Latitude: 18.335331°N, Longitude: -64.907982°W, or directly across from Estate Road.

Anticipated Environmental Permits - FHWA anticipates the following permits will be needed to construct the project: Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) Federal Consistency Determination Concurrence from the VI Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR), National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Construction General Permit (CGP) authorization, and Building Permit from DPNR.

Federal Consistency Determination Statement: In accordance with Section 307 of the Federal CZMA of 1972, and the Virgin Islands Coastal Zone Management Act of 1978, FHWA has determined that proposed improvements to Raphune Hill Road in Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas is consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of the U.S. Virgin Islands federally approved Coastal Zone Management Program. The following is documentation of the determination.

Relevant Enforceable Policies: The project meets each of the basic goals of the USVI for Its coastal zone as set forth in the Virgin Islands Code Title 12, Conservation Chapter 21, Virgin Islands Coastal Zone Management [V.1. Code tit. 12, § 903(b)]. Additional details as follows:

USVI Code Tide Twelve Conservation, Chapter 21 § 903 (b)

1. *Protect, maintain, preserve and, where feasible, enhance and restore, the overall quality of the environment in the coastal zone, the natural and man-made resources therein, and the scenic and historic resources of the coastal zone for the benefit of residents of and visitors of the United States Virgin Islands.*

The project area is not located within the Tier 1 coastal zone. As stated in the EA and FONSI, aesthetic elements to improve the view of the roadway include construction of a four-foot-wide vegetated strip and the installation of stone cladding on the guardwall in Contract 3. These elements were incorporated to create a more pleasant environment for drivers and pedestrians. The realignment of Route 381 under Contract 2 will improve road user safety by improving sight distance and constructing a pedestrian sidewalk where there currently is no sidewalk. The sidewalk constructed under Contract 2 will connect to the new sidewalk along Raphune Hill Road that will be constructed in Contract 3.

2. *Promote economic development and growth in the coastal zone and consider the need for development of greater than territorial concern by managing: (1) the Impacts of human activity and (2) the use and development of renewable and nonrenewable resources so as to maintain and enhance the long-term productivity of the coastal environment.*

Raphune Hill Road within the project area is located outside the Tier 1 coastal zone allowing the most environmentally sensitive land within the Tier 1 coastal zone to be preserved and for growth to be directed where appropriate. As stated in the EA and FONSI, land use along the corridor is primarily detached single family houses and some local businesses, although more businesses have been constructed along the corridor since the EA and FONSI were completed. The project is not expected to change land use or development in the surrounding area.

3. *Assure priority for coastal-dependent development over other development in the coastal zone by reserving areas suitable for commercial uses Including hotels and related facilities, industrial uses including port and marine facilities, and recreation uses.*

The proposed project does not impact coastal-dependent development within the coastal zone. The project site varies from approximately 0.44 to 0.70 miles inland, east of the Long Bay harbor. The realignment of the intersection of Route 381 and Raphune Hill Road in Contract 2 is located approximately 0.70 miles inland.

4. *Assure the orderly, balanced utilization and conservation of the resources of the coastal zone, taking into account the social and economic needs of the residents of the United States Virgin Islands.*

As stated in the EA, the purpose of the proposed project is to improve the safety and operation of Raphune Hill Road from its intersection with Centerline Road to near its designation as Weymouth Rhymer Highway (including the intersection of Raphune Hill Road and Route 381), while improving pedestrian access and minimizing impacts to private properties, natural resources and cultural resources along the road corridor. The overall project (combined Contract 2 and Contract 3) would expand roadway capacity to reduce congestion, flatten curves to improve safety, and construct a sidewalk to improve pedestrian access. All three contracts are located outside the Tier 1 coastal zone.

5. *Preserve, protect and maintain the trust lands and other submerged and filled lands of the United States Virgin Islands so as to promote the general welfare of the people of the United States Virgin Islands.*

The proposed project will not impact trust lands or other submerged or filled lands of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

6. *Preserve what has been a tradition and protect what has become a right of the public by ensuring that the public, Individually and collectively, has and shall continue to have the right to use and enjoy the shorelines and to maximize public access to and along the shoreline consistent with constitutionally protected rights of private property owners.*

The proposed project will in no way affect public access to, or use of the shoreline. Contract 2 is located 0.70 miles inland of the Tier 1 coastal zone.

7. *Promote and provide affordable and diverse public recreational opportunities in the coastal zone for all residents of the United States Virgin Islands through acquisition, development and restoration of areas consistent with sound resource conservation principles.*

The proposed project is not within the Tier 1 coastal zone and will not affect public recreational opportunities in the coastal zone. The project area is along the existing roadway and, as stated in the EA and FONSI, no publicly owned parks or recreational areas are located within the vicinity of the project area.

8. *Conserve ecologically significant resource areas for their contribution to marine productivity and value as wildlife habitats, and preserve the function and integrity of reefs, marine meadows, salt ponds, mangroves and other significant natural areas.*

As stated in the EA and FONSI, the project area does not contain threatened or endangered species or critical habitats, is not on or connected to a Coastal Barriers Resource System Unit or otherwise protected area, is not located in or near essential fish habitat, is not located along or will affect wild and scenic rivers, is outside the regulatory floodplain, and outside wetlands.

Habitat within the study area consists of a mixture of developed urban areas (cleared, paved, with commercial businesses or residences) and disturbed dry urban forests. Vegetation present includes the following species: Jerusalem thorn, seagrape, royal poinciana, West Indian mahogany, and gumbo limbo.

9. *Maintain or increase coastal water quality through control of erosion, sedimentation, runoff, siltation, and sewage discharge.*

As stated in the EA and FONSI, approximately 2.7 acres of new impervious area will be created under the Selected Alternative. The additional stormwater runoff generated by the new impervious area will be collected along the road and conveyed to the bottom of the hill through a storm drain system. Oil and grit separators will be installed where appropriate to improve water quality by removing pollutants from the water. Opportunities to treat some of the stormwater through infiltration practices will be analyzed during the design process. Currently the project has advanced design of the Route 381 realignment to 95% (Contract 2). Contract 3 will consist of the widening of Raphune Hill Road between Centerline Road (Route 313) and Al Cohen's Plaza and will be submitted for Federal Consistency review sometime near the end of 2027.

Coastal Zone Consistency Certification

Kevin S. Rose
Environmental Team Leader
Federal Highway Administration
Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division

7/15/2025

Date