

# When a **No-Win** Situation Just Won't Do

BY JOHN G. HOLT

Recently, an access management improvement project was undertaken in Lynchburg, Virginia that involved 19 relocations along Route 460. This four-lane divided highway was in dire need of safety enhancements, and most of the property owners were in favor of moving off this very busy and sometimes dangerous stretch of roadway. However, one 85-year old landowner in particular had no intentions of leaving her home - again.

Edna Jones (a fictitious name to keep the landowner anonymous) had been relocated by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) in the early 1970's due to a nearby highway improvement project. Forty years later, VDOT was knocking at her door once more. But this time, Ms. Jones was not budging. And she made this clear even before the appraisal process began.

The reason VDOT needed to acquire her entire property was because the entrance was being removed from the existing Route 460 and Ms. Jones would lose access.

After inviting Ms. Jones to meet with VDOT officials to discuss her concerns, there appeared to be no practical way to provide access directly to 460 due to access management guidelines. Not being deterred by this news, Ms. Jones contacted her local delegate who began working directly with VDOT Right of Way Department staff to find a solution for his constituent.



When attempts to keep Ms. Jones from relocating had failed, right of way staff started working with a different impacted property owner. If access could be provided via another street, then Ms. Jones could possibly remain in her house. It was soon determined that the adjoining landowner was willing to grant Ms. Jones an easement to access her property. Cost to cure estimates were obtained to construct a new entrance, and finally, what initially appeared to be a no-win situation turned out great for both VDOT and Ms. Jones.

It takes time and patience to find workable solutions. In this case, it required multiple levels of VDOT staff, including the State Right of Way Director, Regional Right of Way Manager, and several Western Region Right of Way staff members. All in all, a worthwhile effort. ★



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