



# Q&A – WHY CAHABA BEACH ROAD THREATENS OUR DRINKING WATER

- The new road/bridge will not benefit most Birmingham area residents. It will not reduce traffic problems on Highway 280 and will increase traffic problems in other areas.
- The drinking water for Birmingham Water Works Board (BWVB) customers will be at risk, costs could rise, and public BWVB lands would be taken for the road.
- Taxpayers will pay for the road and the full cost will be far greater than designated federal and state funds.
- The construction and long term impacts of any of the proposed routes pose too great a risk of degrading our drinking water source.

## How would a new road and bridge damage our drinking water source?

The new Cahaba Beach Road would cut a swath through forested open space lands around the Little Cahaba River, which help keep our drinking water clean as it comes from Lake Purdy to the water intake in the Cahaba River. **Much of the land is owned by the Birmingham Water Works, bought with ratepayer money many years ago to protect your drinking water.**

This is much more than reconnecting a 1-lane, part dirt road and replacing a historic bridge over the Little Cahaba that has been closed for 25 years. The new road would bring Highway 280 cut-through traffic right across our drinking water source, to Sicard Hollow Road, the Liberty Park area, and eventually to I-459. The new road is intended to open lands to private development. The road and bridge would increase risks from a direct hazardous spill into the drinking water, traffic impacts, urban runoff, construction runoff, and loss of the forests that keep our drinking water clean and abundant.



### **There's a lot of development around the Cahaba River. What's different about this road?**

There are many places where well-built development can be positive for communities. However, ***lands purchased with public ratepayer money with the intention of permanently protecting the region's drinking water source are not the right place for development.***

### **Who is paying for this new road?**

You, the taxpayer. According to preliminary estimates, It would cost \$10 - \$20 million dollars of public money to build this road and bridge. These are your tax dollars, spent in ways that endanger your drinking water. In addition, the Birmingham Water Works board bought much of the land with ratepayer money to protect our water. And, the real cost will be much higher, once necessary improvements to the Highway 280 intersection, Sicard Hollow Road, and other surrounding roads are factored in.

### **Where can I get more information and express my opinion?**

Visit [savethecahaba.org](http://savethecahaba.org) and the [ALDOT website](http://ALDOT website). ALDOT is holding the next public meeting on August 7, 2018, 4:00 – 7:00 pm, at Liberty Park Middle School, 17035 Liberty Parkway, 35242. Written comments for the official public record will be accepted through August 22, 2018. Include in your communications any concerns you have about the proposed new road and potential impacts to your drinking water. **We ask that you join in recommending the “no build” alternative.**

Send comments to: ATTN: Mrs. Sandra F.P. Bonner and Mr. DeJarvis Leonard, P.E. Region Engineer, either at [bonners@dot.state.al.us](mailto:bonners@dot.state.al.us) or Alabama Department of Transportation – East Central Region, PO Box 2745, Birmingham, AL 35202-2745

### **Did ALDOT do an environmental impact study on the project alternatives?**

ALDOT is doing a preliminary study of the potential impact of the road options, called an Environmental Assessment. This public hearing is a part of that process. ALDOT has said there will be another hearing in the future. ***ALDOT pays attention to the number of people who support or oppose a project.***

It is typical for ALDOT to conclude after this preliminary study that there is no significant impact requiring further study and the project can proceed. Cahaba River Society believes that an in-depth Environmental Impact Statement process, with required public involvement, is necessary.

### **How has urban growth been impacting the Cahaba River and our drinking water?**

Can we agree that we want our communities to grow, and we also want the Cahaba to continue to be a source of healthy, affordable drinking water for Birmingham and the region? Unfortunately, urban impacts have been degrading the River, increasing the cost to treat our drinking water and leaving us less water supply during drought, which can contribute to surcharges and water restrictions.

Because of urban storm runoff and conversion of forests to development, there is more pollution during rains and less water in the river during droughts and dry weather. Parts of the River have had unsafe levels of human disease pathogens. More treated sewage is being diverted into Lake Purdy and the River, and that increases potential carcinogens and drugs like hormones in our water source.

### **Where does Cahaba River Society stand about development around the River?**

The Cahaba River Society supports healthy growth in communities around the river. We prefer to work through collaboration and education. We have a strong track record for working with developers and with state, county and city officials as an expert resource and advisor for development best practices that protect the River and our drinking water.

However, we feel so strongly that the proposed road for Highway 280 cut-through traffic would endanger our drinking water that we are working together with other groups – including Southern Environmental Law Center, Cahaba Riverkeeper, and many area residents - to stop the road.