



# County of Fairfax, Virginia

To protect and enrich the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods and diverse communities of Fairfax County

October 13, 2011

Mr. Garrett Moore  
District Administrator  
Northern Virginia District  
Virginia Department of Transportation  
4975 Alliance Drive  
Fairfax, VA 22030

Subject: Comments On Environmental Assessment/Design Plans For The I-95 High Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lanes Project (Mason, Lee, and Mount Vernon Districts)

Dear Mr. Moore:

I am writing you at the request of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to provide comments to you regarding the environmental assessment/design plans for constructing the I-95 High Occupancy Toll Lanes. The Board reviewed this matter at their Septemebr 27, 2011 meeting and expressed concerns and provided comments regarding the project. For your information, I have listed staff recommendations as presented to the Board and the comments made at the September 27<sup>th</sup> board meeting.

#### Staff Recommendations:

- Coordinate plans to manage stormwater runoff, including sediment and erosion control, outfall treatments, and necessary easements, with the Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (for all locations) and the Fairfax County Park Authority Planning and Development Division (for park properties). In particular, the County wants to ensure that areas of known existing stormwater management concerns and stream degradation adjacent to the project are adequately addressed to provide stabilization during and at the completion of construction, so as not to exacerbate existing stream degradation. It is desirable that planned stormwater management facilities and areas identified on preliminary road plans be maximized and optimized where possible to help alleviate existing and future stormwater impacts due to the highway. The County requests the opportunity to provide input during the early stages of stormwater drainage designs to provide collaborative opportunities for implementation of identified watershed capital improvement projects. Also, the County would like the opportunity to review the portions of the construction plans dealing with stormwater and erosion and sedimentation control and will provide comments on these elements on a priority basis within the Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT's) established review timeframes.
- To reduce the expected significant traffic impacts on neighboring communities and the

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secondary street system of various Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) installations being constructed along the I-95 corridor, direct access should be provided to and from the HOT lanes to/from the BRAC facilities where physically and operationally feasible. The cost of this direct access should be borne by the developers of the BRAC properties, rather than at project cost.

- The project team should provide the design exception documentation for the narrow shoulder widths along the corridor and identify specifically how they plan to address these constrained areas in terms of safety, both of transit and autos.
- Slugging has been very successful in moving large numbers of people in the corridor. This project should ensure that this practice continues at its current or increased levels.
- The project team must ensure that, at a minimum, the project meets the federal performance thresholds for High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes that are converted to HOT lanes. These lanes provide the fixed guideway miles that allow Northern Virginia transit systems to qualify for federal funding. Therefore, it is critical to the region that this level of service does not fall below the minimum standards. If the facility is not able to meet the standards to receive federal money, the project partners must replace the lost funding.
- Ensure that the current transit operating speeds are maintained. Even though federal laws only requires a speed of 45 miles per hour to be maintained, buses on the current HOV lane operate at significantly higher speeds. Decreased speeds will increase local operating costs.
- Introduction of low occupancy vehicles on the HOV lanes compromises transit's efficiency. Provide some type of priority to transit at especially congested points along the facility, such as the access/egress points.
- The project team must ensure that all the intersections in the corridor, such as Route 236 and Beauregard Street, that are affected by additional traffic are mitigated and operate at an acceptable level of service.
- In locations where feasible, construct new sound walls before existing sound walls are removed or, at a minimum, in those areas where pre-replacement is not feasible due to topographic changes, commit to replace the sound wall within a minimal time frame after removal, so that residents are not left without sound protection for long periods of time.
- Further review should be given to the construction of sound walls adjacent to Laurel Crest, Gunston Corner, Laurel Hill Park, Edsall Gardens, Landmark Mews, and Lincolnia Community Park to protect the public parks and the communities.
- Coordinate with Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT) Transit Services Division, WMATA, and other transit operators in the corridor and Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) to determine the best provision of transit in the corridor, including funding for the recommended service increases.
- Coordinate the design of the ramps and lanes with all the public and private transit providers in the corridor to ensure they can adequately and safely accommodate buses.

- Coordinate with FCDOT Transit Services Division and other transit operators using the I-95 HOV lanes to address safety concerns raised by the limited number of refuge areas for disabled vehicles in the segment of the facility north of the Occoquan River.
- The project should provide a detailed plan for the emergency pull-outs and how these pull-outs impact the flow of traffic.
- Provide information on the sequencing of construction and a construction staging plan for the project.
- Provide traffic mitigation during the construction phase and provide traffic mitigation measures where neighborhoods are impacted by diverted traffic.
- When a traffic management plan during the construction, develop traffic mitigation plans in accordance with the “Guidelines for Temporary Traffic Management During Construction” adopted by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors on September 22, 2008.
- Identify truck haul routes to be used for construction activity and ensure that construction vehicles associated with the project do not use local streets.
- Consider additional options for public transportation during construction.
- In identifying construction staging areas, work closely with the affected communities and district supervisors.
- Schedule regular briefings with the Board offices, County staff, community groups, and the general public on what to expect in the following months during the construction phase of the project.
- VDOT should provide the County the opportunity and sufficient time to review and comment on their finalized comprehensive agreement with Fluor-Transurban before it is executed.
- VDOT should provide the total cost of the project and indicate the source of the funding as well as the public and private shares of the project.
- VDOT should analyze the cost/benefit ratio of the project and show the return on this public investment.

The Board had the following additional comments for consideration:

- Additional coordination is requested to ensure that the project remains fully in conformance with the Board’s Environmental Agenda and the County’s Comprehensive Plan.
- VDOT should provide their philosophy on tolling and congestion pricing mechanisms. The project team should provide information on how they will price the I-95/495 corridor.
- Further review should be given to the construction of sound walls where feasible, to protect public parks and communities. VDOT should provide the new policy for sound walls and how it impacts the project.

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- VDOT should be transparent in regards to the source of funding for this project. VDOT should clearly present the public and private share for this project.
- The transit improvements in the corridor should be coordinated with DRPT and FCDOT Transit Services Division. DRPT and VDOT should show how the transit improvements in the corridor are funded.

Attached please find a copy of the Board item that was presented on September 27, 2011. I look forward to working with your Department to address these concerns. Please feel free to contact me, if additional information is needed.

Sincerely,

Tom Biesiadny, P.E.  
Acting Director, Department of Transportation

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cc: Members, Board of Supervisors  
Anthony H. Griffin, County Executive  
Robert A. Stalzer, Deputy County Executive  
Catherine Chianese, Assistant County Executive  
John D. Lynch, P.E., Regional Transportation Program Director, VDOT  
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