



County of Fairfax, Virginia

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

April 13, 2009

Mr. Morteza Salehi
District Administrator
Virginia Department of Transportation
14685 Avion Parkway
Chantilly, VA 20151-1104

Subject: Comments on Design Plans for the I-95/395 High Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lanes Project (Mason, Lee, and Mount Vernon Districts)

Dear Mr. Salehi:

I am writing you at the request of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to provide comments to you regarding the design plans for constructing the I-95/395 High Occupancy Toll Lanes. The Board reviewed this matter at their March 30, 2009 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 March 30th 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). The County wants to ensure in particular that areas of known existing stormwater management concern 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.

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- In order to reduce the expected significant traffic impacts on neighboring communities and the secondary street system of various Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) installations being constructed along the I-95/I-395 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.

NOTE: The Board asked that this comment be emphasized and highlighted-see additional Board comments below.

- 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 auto users.
- Slugging has been very successful in moving large numbers of people in the corridor. This project should ensure that this arrangement continues at its current 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.
- 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.
- 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, Lincolnia Community Park, and Brighton Square to protect the public parks and the communities.
- Provide a suitable pedestrian bridge at Franconia-Springfield Parkway (F-S Parkway). The project should either provide a separate pedestrian bridge that is functional and has no conflict with the traffic or change the alignment of the pedestrian bridge to follow the alignment of the F-S Parkway and to have the bridge tie into the Metro/Parkway trail located east of I-95. In addition to tying into the trail, the bridge should also provide an at-grade tie-in at the location that is currently shown on the plans.
- Coordinate plans for the location of the 3,000 park-and-ride spaces throughout the corridor with Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT) Transit Services

Division and Transportation Planning Division. As part of this commitment, construct at least 450 park-and-ride spaces in the Springfield/Lorton area to serve the HOT lanes.

- Coordinate with FCDOT Transit Services Division and VDOT's Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) study to determine the best provision of transit in the corridor.
- Coordinate the design of the ramps and lanes with all the public and private transit providers in the corridor in order to ensure they can adequately and safely accommodate buses.
- Coordinate with FCDOT Transit Services Division and other transit operators using the I-95/395 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 traffic mitigation during the construction phase and provide traffic management measures where neighborhoods are impacted by diverted traffic.
- When traffic is displaced as a result of 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.
- 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.

The Board had the following additional comments for consideration:

- Additional information is needed on transit and a report is due back to the Board at the upcoming Board Transportation Committee meeting on April 20. Transit improvements in the corridor should be coordinated with FCDOT Transit Services Division and VDOT's Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) study to ensure the best use of transit in the corridor.
- **The Board requested emphasizing the comment that the developer of Mark Center should bear the cost of constructing direct access from I-95/395 HOT lanes to/from the BRAC facilities. This access is critical to Mason District and to the County due to potential traffic impacts.**
- The narrow shoulder widths along the corridor should be reevaluated and the safety issues of these constrained areas are to be addressed for both transit and auto users.
- The Board emphasized the importance of further review of sound walls and expressed hope that lessons learned from the Beltway HOT Lanes project would benefit this project.

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- It is important to integrate this project with the Beltway HOT Lanes project for a seamless system so that people can get from Woodbridge to Tysons and other destinations.

Attached for your information is a copy of the Board item that was presented on March 30, 2009.

I look forward to working with your Department to address these concerns. Please feel free to contact me or Seyed Nabavi at 703-877-5759 if additional information is needed.

Sincerely,



Katharine D. Ichter, P.E.

Director, Department of Transportation

Attachment

cc: Members, Board of Supervisors
Anthony H. Griffin, County Executive
Robert A. Stalzer, Deputy County Executive
Catherine Chianese, Assistant Fairfax County Executive
Ronaldo T. Nicholson, Regional Transportation Program Director, VDOT
Ellen Gallagher, Chief, Capital Projects and Operations Division, FCDOT
Karyn Moreland, Chief, Capital Projects Section, FCDOT
Tom Biesiadny, Chief Coordination and Funding Division, FCDOT
Randy White, Senior Transportation Planner, FCDOT
Seyed Nabavi, Senior Transportation Planner, FCDOT