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COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
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Joint Board Matter

Chairman Bulova
Supervisor McKay
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Last week, our citizens came back from vacation, children and school buses returned to school, and a myriad of business and personal vehicles added to Northern Virginia's chronic traffic congestion. This makes even more disturbing the August 18 announcement by the state that the high-occupancy toll lanes planned for I-395 and I-95 will be indefinitely delayed and will be phased to terminate initially on the northern end at the Capital Beltway.

While we understand the realities of the current economic situation, the transit and highway infrastructure associated with the HOT Lanes project is too important to let the region's transportation network be put on indefinite hold. Given the miniscule level of transportation funding available through other revenue sources, we believe that a tolling option, such as the HOT lanes proposal, may be the only viable opportunity to achieve the critical infrastructure we need in the I-95/I-395 corridor, as well as promote further use of mass transit.

This project has many local implications. In order to fast track the construction of a commuter parking lot in the Springfield area, Fairfax County has already committed to purchase the former Circuit City site and is counting on the state's completion of other land acquisitions (namely the service station and former Long John Silver's restaurant) for the parking lot. The commuter lot must be completed before the HOT lanes project begins to facilitate HOV use and reduce traffic during construction.

There are other serious issues associated with delaying the project and particularly with phasing the project to initially terminate at the Capital Beltway. These include essentially negating the value of the project for Fairfax County motorists and public transit users heading to jobs in Arlington, Alexandria, and DC if the project ends at the Capital Beltway. This will unfairly burden other transportation infrastructure in Fairfax County with traffic heading to inside the Beltway destinations and does not solve the many existing access problems inside the Beltway. Terminating the project at the Beltway will further exacerbate the commuting nightmare resulting from the ill-conceived BRAC decision to locate more than

6,000 employees at the Mark Center with very limited transit and roadway network capacity improvements and will make an unimproved Seminary Road area impassable.

We have very grave concerns about the idea of stopping the project at the Capital Beltway and call on the state to immediately re-examine the issues associated with the proposed phasing of the I-395/I-95 HOT lanes project, in close coordination with Fairfax County officials, and to evaluate, at a minimum, an option to include the Seminary Road interchange as the northern terminus rather than the Beltway. Without objection, we ask that staff prepare a letter to Governor Kaine outlining our Board's strong concerns regarding the implementation of the I-395/I-95 project and encouraging the Governor to keep this project of regional and local importance moving forward on an expedited basis.