



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

4975 Alliance Drive  
Fairfax, VA 22030

GREGORY A. WHIRLEY  
COMMISSIONER

November 28, 2011

Mr. Tom Biesiadny, Director  
Fairfax County Department of Transportation  
4050 Legato Road, Suite 400  
Fairfax, VA 22033-2895

Dear Mr. Biesiadny:

This is a follow-up to my letter of October 20, 2011, regarding the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors' comments about the environmental assessment/design plans for the I-95 High Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lanes Project.

Attached is the Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT) response to the Board's comments of October 13, 2011. Please note that our responses directly follow each comment; when one response was appropriate for several comments, we did not repeat our response. If you have any questions, please contact me.

My staff and I look forward to working with you and your staff through the many challenges we will have as this design/build project moves forward.

Sincerely,

  
Garrett W. Moore, P.E.  
District Administrator  
Northern Virginia District

Copy: John D. Lynch, P.E.

RESPONSE OF THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO  
FAIRFAX COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COMMENTS  
OF OCTOBER 13, 2011

The Comments and Responses are as follows:

Comment 1:

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 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.

Response:

VDOT and the design-build team are committed to working with Fairfax County DPW&ES and the Park Authority Planning and Development Division as the design work for stormwater management facilities are developed. Since this is a design/build project and project plans have not advanced to 100% design, we cannot anticipate all issues at this time or what the best resolution of those issues might be. We can say with certainty that all outfalls created by the project will be fully mitigated, and we will continue to explore how design might serve to mitigate existing outfall concerns that may result from adjacent commercial/residential development or roadways. Construction drawings which will include the drainage design will be provided to the County. Design at prior points of completion will be coordinated with the County through the VDOT Project Manager. Contractual requirements are that stormwater management and erosion and sediment control are to be designed to VDOT standards, which in some cases may be at variance with County standards. We should be able to schedule meetings to facilitate the dialogue between us on a regular basis to discuss the easements required and the overall design. We appreciate your willingness to provide comments on a priority basis. VDOT and other members of the Project Team will meet with FCPA, and the County's Stormwater Planning Division to better understand this issue and to work in partnership to determine an appropriate path forward.

Comment 2:

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 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.

Response:

A proposed Defense Access Road (DAR) ramp to Fort Belvoir North Area involves the construction of a new connection between Heller Road on the eastern side of the Fort Belvoir North area and the existing flyover bridge that connects the HOV lanes with the northbound I-95 general purpose lane. Southbound, an exit to the Fairfax County Parkway already exists.

There are two more related projects that are not part of the I-95 HOT Lanes project. These include the VDOT Seminary HOV/Transit ramp to link the HOV lanes on I-395 to the growing Mark Center; and connecting the Seminary/Duke I-395 Auxiliary Lanes to improve traffic movement.

Comment 3:

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.

Response:

VDOT will provide the design exception documentation when it is available. VDOT's number one concern is for the safety of the users of the highway network in the Commonwealth. As you are aware, much of the interstate system in Northern Virginia has similar characteristics. There are currently 11 foot lanes with variable shoulders on the northern section of I-395, the Dulles Toll Road, and other roads throughout the commonwealth.

Comment 4:

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.

Response:

The concerns of sluggers have been taken very seriously by VDOT and the concessionaire. The DRPT I-95 Transit and TDM Plan outlines the additional park and ride spaces that will be built along the corridor to assist individuals in forming carpools and vanpools. These park and ride lots also will be the backbone of additional transit service in the corridor. Their plan can be viewed at [www.drpt.virginia.gov](http://www.drpt.virginia.gov). This corridor will remain one of the strongest HOV corridors in the country and will now extend these travel options into the Beltway corridor.

Comment 5:

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 list funding.

Response:

VDOT and the Concessionaire are committed to meeting, at a minimum, the federal performance speed threshold, which will be a contract requirement

Comment 6:

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.

Response:

We believe that VDOT, the Concessionaire and Fairfax County have common financial interests in maintaining the highest speed possible.

Comment 7:

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.

Response:

As stated above, VDOT, the Concessionaire and Fairfax County have common financial interest in maintaining the highest speed possible. The low occupancy vehicles will be dynamically tolled to limit their use on the HOT lanes to below capacity.

Comment 8:

The project team must ensure that all the intersections in the corridor, such as Route 236 Beauregard Street, that are affected by additional traffic are mitigated and operate at an acceptable level of service.

Response:

A Transportation Management Plan (TMP), in coordination with local jurisdictions, is being developed by VDOT that will address expected traffic impacts on streets near the project. The program will use a variety of control and technology strategies throughout construction. These will be augmented by both project level and regional TMP strategies to address bring both location-specific and region-wide congestion mitigation during construction. Continual monitoring of the maintenance of traffic plans will occur to make needed adjustments to minimize impact for residents, drivers and local businesses.

Comment 9:

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.

Response:

VDOT will insure that where possible, the contractors will start with construction of sound walls. Construction of new walls prior to dismantling old walls will be extremely difficult. The construction will do everything possible to minimize the time when the communities are without the sound walls and also to monitor and, where possible, to reduce the impact of noise during construction. There will be on-going communications with the affected communities. The final noise study and design will determine the final locations and heights of sound walls. Once the results are determined, we will work with the affected communities.

Comment 10:

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.

Response:

The Environmental Assessment conducted on this project has determined that none of the parks listed would be impacted. No construction is planned outside of the existing right-of-way near these properties. The I-95 project plans show sound walls along this corridor. The final noise study and design will determine the final locations and heights of the sound walls. Once that information is developed, we will work with each of the communities.

Comment 11:

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.

Response:

VDOT is working closely with the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) in conjunction with the development of the Transportation Management Plan which will help to mitigate construction impacts and for the post construction as outlined in DRPT's transit plan. This will insure that there is coordination with the Fairfax County Department of Transportation, Transit Services Division, WMATA and other operators in the corridor.

**Comment 12:**

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.

**Response:**

VDOT adheres to FHWA and AASHTO standards in construction of roadways, bridges and ramps. These standards insure the safe accommodation of all vehicles, including standard transit vehicles.

**Comment 13:**

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.

**Response:**

VDOT and DRPT will work with the transit community to address these issues of concern.

**Comment 14:**

The project should provide a detailed plan for the emergency pull-outs and how these pull-outs impact the flow of traffic.

**Response:**

The pull-out areas are shown on the design plans that were made available to the public. They can also be viewed on the website at [www.vamegaprojects.com](http://www.vamegaprojects.com).

**Comment 15:**

Provide information on the sequencing of construction and a construction staging plan for the project.

**Response:**

This will be a design-build project, and construction sequencing and staging will be available at a later date. The Project Team will provide Fairfax County with copies of those plans when they are available.

**Comment 16:**

Provide traffic mitigation during the construction phase and provide traffic mitigation measures where neighborhoods are impacted by diverted traffic.

**Response:**

A Transportation Management Plan (TMP) is being developed by VDOT and the contractor in conjunction with localities, DRPT, and transit providers in the corridor that will address expected traffic impacts on streets near I-95 during construction. The program will use a variety of control and technology strategies throughout construction. These will be augmented by both project level and regional TMP to bring both location-specific and region-wide congestion mitigation during construction. Continual monitoring of the maintenance of traffic plans will occur to make needed adjustments to minimize impact for residents, drivers and local businesses.

**Comment 17:**

**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.**

**Response:**

VDOT will develop their Transportation Management Plan in accordance with FHWA guidelines and will coordinate this effort with each jurisdiction along the I-95 HOV/HOT Lanes corridor.

**Comment 18:**

**Identify truck haul routes to be used for construction activity and ensure that construction vehicles associated with the project do not use local streets.**

**Response:**

VDOT will continually monitor this situation. A majority of the supplies and equipment needed for this construction project will be delivered to the project site using access from I-95 and arterial streets. All project suppliers will be strongly encouraged to use I-95 whenever possible and thus avoid local streets. Strict guidelines will be developed and instituted for training truck drivers and other construction personnel to minimize any local road traffic by these vehicles.

**Comment 19:**

**Consider additional options for public transportation during construction.**

**Response:**

VDOT has included public transportation options as a primary TMP strategy and as such our TMP committee will be focused solely and specifically at programming and implementing transit solutions. This committee includes Fairfax County representatives. There are eight (8) strategies that are specifically transit TDM. We will integrate these strategies with DRPT's post-construction plans. We will also work closely with the counties and regional transit providers.

**Comment 20:**

**In identifying construction staging areas, work closely with the affected communities and district supervisors.**

Response:

VDOT and their partners are committed to working with the communities throughout the life of the project to provide timely, useful information about what to expect, where to expect it, and when to expect it. The project team anticipates holding many meetings with communities in the corridor throughout the life of the project.

Comment 21:

**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.**

Response:

VDOT is committed to a project-long community outreach program and will use many venues, including the [www.vamegaprojects.com](http://www.vamegaprojects.com) website, regular dissemination of mail through the web-based distribution channels, and other media. We welcome a program of periodic meetings with the Board, its members and the County staff, and community groups.

Comment 22:

**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.**

Response:

An agreement between the Commonwealth and private parties is currently being negotiated and release of this document may jeopardize VDOT's negotiation position. The major business terms will be made available to the public before the execution of the agreement. The comprehensive agreement will be available to the public upon full execution of the agreement.

Comment 23:

**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.**

Response:

As shown in public hearing documents, the I-95/I-395 project will cost approximately \$1 billion. The project is being financed and constructed under Virginia's Public Private Transportation Act. The private sector is expected to contribute a majority of the project's funding and financing, with support from a state contribution. Financial plans are expected to be finalized by year's end.

Comment 24:



VDOT should analyze the cost/benefit ratio of the project and show the return on this public investment.

Response:

Please see the preceding response.

#### THE BOARD'S ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. 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.

Response:

VDOT will continue to have periodic meetings with the Board, its members and staff.

2. 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.

Response:

The operation of the HOV/HOT Lanes will be managed by the Concessionaire. Virginia is mandating that HOV-3+, motorcycles and transit will travel free on the HOT lanes. Variable toll prices will be used to manage the number of toll-paying customers who choose to enter the lanes and keep the lanes free flowing. An informational campaign on the operation of the HOT Lanes on I-495 will begin to reach the public in early 2012. Information on the I-95 HOT Lane operations will begin about one year before the project is completed.

3. 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.

Response:

VDOT has recently updated the State Noise Abatement Policy and created a Guidance Manual. The policy and manual can be located at the following address: <http://www.virginiadot.org/projects/pr-noise-walls-about.asp>.

4. VDOT should be transparent with regards to the source of funding for this project. VDOT should clearly present the public and private share for this project.

Response:

Please see the response to Question 23.

5. 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 will be funded.

Response:

The transit improvements in the corridor will be funded through DRPT. Please refer to their I-95 Transit and TDM Plan on their website at [www.drpt.virginia.gov](http://www.drpt.virginia.gov).