

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Why did VDOT undertake this review?

*In September 2013, Virginia Secretary of Transportation Sean Connaughton asked VDOT to make a recommendation for congestion relief in the Fredericksburg area at Interstate 95, Route 17 and Route 3 near the Rappahannock River. Secretary Connaughton made this request at the September 17-18, 2013 CTB meeting and workshop held in Fredericksburg.*

*Before VDOT undertakes any project, it has to determine the project's purpose and need. For this review, the purpose was to reduce congestion by identifying alternatives that improve traffic operations and assist the flow of commerce along I-95, Route 17 and Route 3. The need was identified as reducing current and future congestion in the I-95 corridor near Route 3 and Route 17, as well as reducing crashes, gridlock and a failing level of service for motorists.*

### How did VDOT decide which concepts to study before making a recommendation?

*Commonwealth Transportation Board member Cord Sterling, who represents VDOT's Fredericksburg District, invited each locality in the Fredericksburg area to submit ideas for congestion relief improvements. Elected officials from Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania and Stafford submitted their recommendations on behalf of their city or county, and each one was included in the review process. The region's Metropolitan Planning Organization also submitted ideas that were included.*

### Who worked on the recommendation?

*With less than two months to compile a recommendation, VDOT gathered a small team of technical experts from its local offices in the Fredericksburg District and Central Office to contribute their skills in a specific subject area: Traffic Engineering, Design, Planning, Environmental/Historic Review, Budget, Right-of-Way, Maintenance, and Transit. A consultant from Michael Baker, Inc. was hired to assist VDOT in the development of this study.*

### How did VDOT review each idea?

*VDOT reviewed a total of 16 ideas for congestion relief, which are called conceptual alternatives in our review. Every idea put forward by Fredericksburg, Stafford, and Spotsylvania was considered with equal weight, and were initially screened by the following factors:*

*Cost, Average Daily Traffic Count, Ratio of Average Daily Traffic to Cost, Travel Time Savings, Benefit to Regional Vehicle Hours of Delay, Consistency with Local and Regional Plans, Federal Approval of Interstate Access, and impacts to National Park Service land, Civil War battlefields, Conservation Easements, Rappahannock and Rapidan Rivers, and Residential and Business relocations.*

*One project was considered a "baseline," or project that is assumed will be built. Conceptual alternative #1 would add collector-distributor lanes to Interstate 95 between Route 17 and Route 3, and is funded with \$55 million in the Six-Year Improvement Program. The other alternatives considered would be built in addition to Conceptual Alternative #1.*

*The seven conceptual alternatives that emerged from the first screening were screened a second time for additional factors, including the specific benefits to travel on Interstate 95, Route 3 and Route 17, as well as federal approval of environmental permits, and impact to protected species and wetlands.*

### Was one factor given more consideration than another?

*When building a transportation project, or any public project, some obstacles can be too challenging to overcome for legal or financial reasons. Cost is an important factor for every transportation project, given limited resources and a variety of needs. Also, any project that would impact National Park Service property or Civil War battlefields would be difficult to advance due to the impact on this historic land.*

*While several of the conceptual alternatives would reduce congestion in the Route 3 and Route 17 area, VDOT needed to consider the factor of cost and impact to these federal and historic lands. In other cases, some alternatives reduced congestion, but did not have an impact on congestion in the Route 3 and Route 17 area, which was part of our review's purpose and need.*

### What happens next?

*VDOT has fulfilled its mission to the Secretary of Transportation by making a recommendation on concepts for further analysis that could be advanced to address traffic congestion in the Fredericksburg region at the December Commonwealth Transportation Board meeting. VDOT will present our recommendations next to the Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, which is led by elected officials from Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania and Stafford. Following MPO action, the Commonwealth Transportation Board would be responsible for considering any project for inclusion in the Six-Year Improvement Program.*

### Who decides what will be built?

*This review provides the Fredericksburg region, and its residents and businesses, with a proposed project to be advanced for further consideration based on the most current information available on how projects would provide congestion relief, how those options would affect surrounding properties, and what the projects would cost. The Fredericksburg community will be asked to comment on what has been proposed and the direction that it chooses to go next.*

## **When will this project be built?**

*There is no construction schedule. This project is at the earliest possible stage. If the region decides to support a conceptual alternative, the project would need to be considered by the Commonwealth Transportation Board for inclusion in the Six-Year Improvement Program, which would provide funding for the required environmental review, as well as initial design and engineering work. Public input would be sought on any project that advances to the design phase, and would be required before any project could advance to construction.*

## **How much did VDOT spend on this review?**

*We estimate expenses are approximately \$150,000. A precise amount will be available in early 2014 after consultant hours are submitted and processed. Prior studies have exceeded \$5 million.*

## **Does the public have any say on what will be built?**

*If the region chooses to move forward with a conceptual alternative, the public will be included and involved in each step.*

*If a project is included in the Six-Year Improvement Program, the public has an opportunity to comment on the program several times a year by mail, email, and in-person hearings around Virginia. In addition, the public may contact their Commonwealth Transportation Board member year-round.*

*If a project advances to the preliminary engineering phase, a public hearing would be held on the federally-required environmental document and the project's proposed design. These hearings would be held before a design could be approved, and before a project would advance to construction.*

## **This project shows one of the corridors runs near my home/business. How will I know if I am impacted, and to what degree?**

*This review is conceptual, and VDOT used an exceptionally wide corridor of right-of-way access as we examined the possible impacts. If the project moves to the design phase, a precise corridor with exact right-of-way impacts would be determined. A public hearing would be held on the design before any design was approved, so property owners would be informed.*