

**INTERIM STATUS REPORT OF THE  
VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

# **Widening of Interstate Route 66 in Arlington County**

**TO THE GOVERNOR AND  
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



## **SENATE DOCUMENT NO. 7**

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
RICHMOND  
2003**





# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
1401 EAST BROAD STREET  
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 23219-2000

PHILIP A. SHUCET  
COMMISSIONER

November 5, 2002

The Honorable Mark R. Warner  
Members of the General Assembly

Dear Governor Warner and General Assembly Members:

The 2001 General Assembly passed SJR 411 requesting the Department to study the proposed widening of Interstate Route 66 from Interstate Route 495 to the Theodore Roosevelt Bridge. Attached is an interim status report of this study for the Governor and the 2003 General Assembly.

If you have questions or need additional information, please let me know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Shucet".

Philip A. Shucet

Attachments

Cc: The Honorable Whittington W. Clement



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## **Preface**

The work comprising this study will represent a comprehensive investigation of alternatives to deal with traffic congestion in the Northern Virginia (NOVA) District by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). The study will investigate options for reducing traffic congestion on I-66. The results generated by this study will prove to be valuable in determining the best alternative for a regional, comprehensive solution to reducing traffic congestion rather than a cosmetic “quick fix.”

The existing corridor is heavily congested and projected to get worse in the future. A first step in seeking relief is to identify, evaluate, and design transportation improvements that satisfy these future travel demands. The funding and construction of these improvements follow this step. In this study, potential improvements will be identified, evaluated, and designed to a level of detail to assist with decision-making.

Following the preparation of a Draft environmental impact statement (EIS) and receipt of comments at public hearings, the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) is to make a decision on a preferred alternative. The EIS will be finalized once the preferred alternative is selected. Progress of the project is dependent on availability of funding.





## **Introduction**

Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 411 was passed by the 2001 General Assembly. It required the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to conduct engineering and environmental studies to widen I-66 in Arlington and Fairfax Counties, from I-495 to the Theodore Roosevelt Bridge. This area is densely populated and settled. Right-of-way costs for such a project are likely to be very expensive; therefore it is prudent that a thorough study be conducted to determine the need for such a project. At the time of the resolution, this project was not included in a conforming Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), which is a Council of Governments programming document. Inclusion in this is required to secure federal funds for preliminary engineering, right-of-way and construction projects. A copy of the SJR 411 is provided in Appendix A.

To provide quality customer service on a growing road network with ever increasing traffic demand, VDOT must continue to do more with less. To accomplish this goal, VDOT must ensure that public dollars are being spent in the most cost-effective way.

## **Purpose and Scope**

The purpose of the engineering and environmental studies is the identification of project alternatives to increase capacity on I-66, including the costs and impacts of each alternative. Alternatives will be developed to minimize impacts to the natural environment, property owners and tenants adjacent to I-66, and to residents of the corridor in general.

Alternatives that will be considered in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document will include a “no-build” alternative, transportation system management alternatives, and one additional high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane in each direction. Included in the study will be a number of transportation analyses such as travel demand forecasts, origin-destination studies, effects of the project on transit operations in the corridor, and effects of imposing tolls, including HOT lanes, on the use of I-66 inside the Beltway.

In addition, all appropriate environmental and engineering analyses will be accomplished to document the impacts on the natural environment and the surrounding communities. Project costs for each alternative will be developed.

The EIS will provide government agencies and other interested parties with information about the extent and location of the proposed transportation improvements along I-66 so that an informed decision can be made. As such, the I-66 EIS will:

- Identify and explain the purpose and need for improvements in the I-66 corridor
- Develop and describe the alternatives being considered

- Identify the environmental consequences of each alternative
- Identify measures to avoid, minimize or mitigate consequences of the proposed action
- Describe the agency and public coordination efforts
- Serve as the basis for a decision between not building and building the proposed I-66 corridor alternatives.

## **Methodology**

The study shall include the origins and destinations of current users of I-66, travel demand forecasts, and various options for meeting this demand. In conducting the study, VDOT will consider, but necessarily confine its investigations to the following:

- A no-build option, in which no changes are made to the current design of the highway.
- A Transportation Systems Management approach, in which minor changes are made to entrance and exit ramps to improve transit service or travel flow, rather than major expansion or reconfiguration of the roadway itself.
- The implementation of HOV lanes in both directions on I-66 within the Capital Beltway during peak travel hours.
- All analyzes required for the appropriate environmental documentation, including the following:
  - An analysis of the social and economic impacts of the proposed project on adjoining communities. Some of the issues to be analyzed in the EIS:
    - Construction Impacts
    - Cultural Resources
    - Energy
    - Hazardous Materials
    - Indirect and Cumulative Impacts
    - Land Use
    - Natural resources

- Parks, Recreation Areas, and Open Space Easements
  - Right-of-Way and Relocations
  - Transportation (traffic and transit operations)
  - Visual Quality
- An environmental analysis of air and noise impacts, including air quality, noise and vibration.
  - An analysis of fiscal impacts of the proposed project on local governments.

VDOT will conduct its study in a manner ensuring that local governments and the general public are involved. This study shall take into consideration the independent and on-going studies conducted on the extension of Metrorail service, the establishment of a bus rapid transit alternative in the Dulles corridor, and the improvements at the I-66/495 Interchange. The decision process on this project will include public participation. The I-66 proposals will first be evaluated as part of a comprehensive regional plan that meets the following objectives.

- Is created with local input
- Respects the interests of commuters and residents
- Evaluates the total mix of transportation solutions for all of Northern Virginia
- Begins with analysis of methods to increase the efficiency of the existing paved lanes
- Preserves quality of life and community integrity
- Is based on a full environmental impact statement
- Protects the environment and uses the latest technology to reduce the impact of noise and air pollution on local neighborhoods
- Does not destroy homes to clear space
- Is the most efficient use of limited taxpayer resources

## **Study Schedule**

The I-66 Study will lead to a Commonwealth Transportation Board decision on a preferred alternative in approximately two years. The study consists of the following primary tasks.

- **Study Scoping:** This initial task defines the study by identifying issues and obtaining comments from the general public, agencies and jurisdictions.
- **Transportation Analysis:** Documents the existing and future transportation system capacity deficiencies.
- **Alternatives Development/Refinement:** Develops the options to address capacity deficiencies.
- **Conceptual Engineering:** Details the plans for the most viable alternatives.
- **Environmental Impact Analysis:** Evaluates the impacts of potential alternatives.
- **Draft EIS:** Documents the traffic, engineering and environmental information.
- **Location Public Hearing:** Provides opportunity to comment on the Draft EIS.
- **Final EIS:** Documents Commonwealth Transportation Board action and addresses the comments on the Draft EIS and from the Public Hearing.

The time line remains unknown for finalizing the assessment of the preferred alternative in the Final EIS and obtaining a federal Record of Decision (ROD) on the study findings. A federal ROD is needed to dedicate funding and to continue into final engineering design and construction.

## **Status**

On March 15, 2001 the Transportation Coordinating Council of Northern Virginia (TCC) approved a resolution to include the study of widening I-66 into the TIP. The resolution stipulates specific scope elements to be included in the study in addition to the scope elements specified in the joint resolution. A copy of the TIP resolution is provided in Appendix B.

On April 6, 2001 Secretary of Transportation Shirley Ybarra agreed to the study scope as proposed by the TCC.

On October 17, 2001 at the request of VDOT, the Transportation Planning Board of the National Capital Region (TPB) amended the I-66 Study into the TIP.

On November 16, 2001 the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) approved the amendment of the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

This project is included in the Six-Year Plan, funded by federal National Highway System funds, with federal oversight from the FHWA indicated.

Engineering and environmental studies will be initiated upon federal approval. An environmental document based on the final outcome of the study will be prepared in accordance with NEPA. The document will be submitted to the FHWA for review and approval. The recommended alternative will be submitted to the Commonwealth Transportation Board for approval.

## Appendix A

### SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 411

*Requesting the Virginia Department of Transportation to study the proposed widening of Interstate Route 66 within Arlington and Fairfax Counties.*

Agreed to by the Senate, February 22, 2001

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 21, 2001

WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Transportation's Transportation Development Plan for Fiscal Year 2000-2001 includes a study of the widening of Interstate Route 66 in Arlington County between the Theodore Roosevelt Bridge and Interstate Route 495; and

WHEREAS, in so densely settled a place as Arlington County, costs of right-of-way for such a project are likely to be very high, and it is prudent thoroughly to review the need for such a project; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Virginia Department of Transportation be requested to study the proposed widening of Interstate Route 66. Specifically, the Department shall seek an amendment to the Transportation Improvement Program for the Washington Metropolitan Region to include funding provided in the Transportation Development Plan for the study of widening Interstate Route 66 and include the project into the Constrained Long Range Plan for the National Capital Region to allow, upon approval of the amendment, for the conduct of a study of the proposed widening of Interstate Route 66 within Arlington and Fairfax Counties between the Theodore Roosevelt Bridge and Interstate Route 495. The study shall include the origins and destinations of people currently using Interstate Route 66, travel demand forecasts, and all options for meeting this demand. In conducting this study, the Department shall consider, but not necessarily confine its investigations to, (i) a no-build option, in which no changes are made to the current design of the highway; (ii) a Transportation Systems Management approach, in which minor changes are made to entrance and exit ramps to improve transit service or travel flow, rather than major expansion or reconfiguration of the roadway itself; (iii) the implementation of high-occupancy vehicle lanes in both directions on Interstate Route 66 within the Capital Beltway during peak travel hours; and (iv) the conduct of all analyzes required for the appropriate environmental documentation, including an analysis of the social and economic impacts of the proposed project on adjoining communities, an environmental analysis of air and noise impacts, and an analysis of fiscal impacts of the proposed project on local governments. The Department shall conduct its study in a manner ensuring that local governments and the general public are involved. This study shall take into consideration the independent and on-going studies conducted on the extension of Metrorail service and the establishment of a bus rapid transit alternative in the Dulles corridor.

The Department shall submit an interim status report by October 20, 2002, to the Governor and the 2003 Session of the General Assembly, complete its work in a time frame as is needed for preparation of thorough documentation, and submit its final findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

## Appendix B

### Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Proposed Project or Action Description Form FY 2002-2007

Project No.: 6

1. Agency: VDOT

Last Modified On: 4/18/01

2. Location and Jurisdiction

Facility: I-66  
From/At: I-495 (Capital Beltway)  
To: DC Line  
Jurisdiction: Arlington County, Fairfax County,

3. Description of Project or Action

Conduct engineering studies and develop a NEPA environmental document to analyze alternatives for the widening of I-66 for the reduction of congestion and the improved movement of people in the I-66 corridor between I-495 and the Theodore Roosevelt Bridge. These studies will be cognizant of the adjacent W&OD Trail and other cyclist / pedestrian facilities.

Specific study scope elements beyond those required in NEPA documents, and those specifically contained in SJR (Virginia State Senate Joint Resolution) 411, will also include:

- 1.) A no-build option that shall investigate at least these elements:
  - A.) The effect of expending increased resources on an aggressive program to increase HOV usage, including increased marketing of Metrochek, and promotion of telecommuting, among others.
  - B.) The effect of providing express bus service from D.C. and Arlington to Tyson's Corner, and longer term options such as high capacity bus rapid transit service or rail service.
  - C.) The effect of neighborhood transit service in the I-66 corridor, to serve localized need and connects to line-haul service.
  - D.) The effect of imposing tolls, including HOT lanes, on the use of I-66 inside the beltway.
- 2.) The effect of the addition and/or the widening of entrance and exit ramps to I-66 independent of any widening of the I-66 right-of-way itself such as addition of a second lane to the Washington Boulevard ramp in the short-term and explore new access locations to west and eastbound I-66 in the section between Sycamore Street and the Dulles Access Connector Road in the long-term, assuming both no-build and other alternatives.
- 3.) A description of the analytical tools that will be used in the study, including models, used to investigate and analyze the matters required to be studied by SJR 411 and those matters described herein. Although VDOT may consider past or on-going studies in conducting its analyses, VDOT shall assess the applicability and reliability of those studies in the context of this project. VDOT will use such analytical tools as are appropriate, and approved by FHWA, for this study. The study will include a description of the methodology and assumptions used.
- 4.) The impact of widening I-66 on congestion at bridge crossings into D.C. and other key points approaching and leaving I-66.
- 5.) The impact on private property, public trails and park land as a result of widening I-66.
- 6.) To the maximum extent possible, the impact of any induced demand resulting from the increased capacity of a widened I-66.
- 7.) A cost estimate of the entire scope of work for the widening of I-66 including any congestion mitigation costs.
- 8.) The impact of widening on Metrorail ridership.

- 9.) An assessment of the impact on travel demand in the I-66 corridor inside the Beltway of rail extensions in the Dulles and I-66 corridors.

There shall be an advisory committee for this study to ensure participation in, and advice regarding the study by, the governing bodies of Arlington County, Fairfax County, Loudoun County, Prince William County, the City of Alexandria, the City of Fairfax, and the City of Falls Church. Technical support for this advisory committee will be provided by representatives of the advisory committee members and the following organizations: VDOT, VDRPT, and WMATA. This advisory committee will be chaired by the Secretary of Transportation or his / her representative from the Northern Virginia Transportation Coordinating Council (TCC). The advisory committee will be comprised of one TCC member from each of the involved governing bodies.

4. Project Status

New project

5. Environmental Review

DEIS Proposed for preparation

6. Funding and Schedule Information

Date of completion or implementation: 2003

Source	FY	Amount	Phase	% Fed/State/Loc	
NHS					
	2001	\$2,500	P.E.	90	10
	2001	\$2,500	Carry Over	90	10
	2002	\$5,000	P.E.	90	10

Cost and schedule remarks:



