A **forth lane** extending Southbound from the Occoquan Bridge/Route 123 Interchange to the Prince William Parkway will; (1) reduce traffic congestion on the Occoquan bridge where commuters transit southbound on I-95 from 4-lanes to 5-lanes (including the overpass from HWY-1) back to 3-lanes over a 1000’ stretch of road as they approach and cross the Occoquan bridge, (2) better handle the southbound Route 123 traffic coming from Fairfax county onto I-95, and (3) improve the quality of life for residents in Lake Ridge and the Town of Occoquan.

I moved to Lake Ridge in 2003 (lived in Springfield during the” mixing bowl” project) and over the years watched VDOT begin work to widen I-95 over the Occoquan River and widen HWY 123 on the Occoquan bridge as valves for easing the I-95 traffic coming from Fairfax County. While VDOT might have eased traffic congestion in Fairfax County, their planning efforts appear to have merely pushed more of the congestion towards Prince William County’s (one of the fastest growing counties in VA).

In addition, while the I-95 express lane project created more highway capacity, it did nothing to reduce congestion at two major gateways into Prince William County (PWC Parkway and HWY-123). Moreover, the agreement with TransUnion also revealed a lack of judgement and long-range planning by signing a contract that did not allow for I-95 expansion without additional costs to the taxpayer; *“… if there is the talk of widening I-95, Transurban gets the first crack at adding new lanes to Interstate 95, which it would operate as toll lanes. If the company opts not to add new lanes, VDOT may add additional lanes as a department project…such Additional Lanes will constitute a compensation event, according to a copy of the agreement McCord shared with Potomac Local.”* http://potomaclocal.com/2017/01/13/virginia-wont-consider-widening-i-95-blames-express-lanes/

VDOTs own Environmental Assessment of the I-95 express lanes project concluded that, *“while the project would improve the overall situation, several currently failing road segments would remain at failing levels.”*  The Occoquan Bridge/HWY-123 sector on/near I-95 is one such example. It further concluded that *“after completion, the merge areas at the northern and southern ends of the HOT lanes would still operate at failing levels.”* So, *“while this billion-dollar project was primarily aimed at moving commuters through the corridor…it did not address the need to connect emerging urban nodes in the two counties…or to the surrounding region.”*

VDOTs mandate should be to address the Occoquan Bridge/HWY-123 interchange congestion by adding an additional lane leveraging better engineering designs. Please don’t wait until 2028 to address the issue.