

ITEM 8 – Information
April 15, 2025

Visualize 2050: Update on the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) I-495 Southside Express Lanes Project

Background: VDOT staff will provide an update on the development of the I-495 Southside Express Lanes (SEL) project and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process that is currently underway. In June 2024, TPB requested a second air quality conformity analysis with this project be conducted to provide more time for project technical analysis and discussions to take place. In September, the Board will decide to continue development of Visualize 2050 with or without the SEL project.



MEMORANDUM

TO: Transportation Planning Board
FROM: Cristina Finch, TPB Transportation Planner
SUBJECT: Visualize 2050: Southside Express Lanes (SEL) Status Report
DATE: April 9, 2025

In June of 2024, the Board adopted Resolution R13-2024, which amended the Air Quality Conformity (AQC) Analysis Scope of Work that had been adopted as part of resolution R12-2024 on May 15, 2024. This amendment directed staff to conduct two alternative sets of regional air quality conformity analysis: one without the I-495 Southside Express Lanes (SEL) project, and one including the SEL. This resolution also revised the schedule to adopt Visualize 2050 and FY 2026-2029 TIP to provide additional time for the analysis of the two options with the TPB acting at its December 17, 2025 meeting, unless it can do so earlier.

During the April 15, 2025 meeting, the Board will hear a status report presentation from the Virginia Department of Transportation on the development of the SEL project, including recent public information meetings. In September, the Board will be asked to vote on the SEL project's inclusion or not in the Visualize 2050 plan.

SOUTHSIDE EXPRESS LANES PROJECT BACKGROUND

Since March 2022, VDOT has been undergoing a study in coordination with the State of Maryland and other partners on the SEL project compliant with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process to potentially extend the express lanes system by approximately 11 miles from the Springfield Interchange (I-95/I-395/I-495) in Fairfax County, Virginia, across the Woodrow Wilson Memorial Bridge (WWMB), to the MD 210 interchange in Prince George's County, Maryland.

In April 2023, the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) published its final report on the I-495 Southside Transit/TDM Study outlining recommendations for expansion of regional transit services within and beyond the SEL project corridor including connections to existing metro rail stations in Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Virginia. Prior to the May 2024 TPB meeting, members of the Board had expressed concerns regarding the preservation of space on the WWMB for future rail transit and had sought clarification on how the SEL project would be developed and executed especially through a public-private partnership.

In April 2024, VDOT provided a letter stating that VDOT is fully supportive of future rail transit of the WWMB and as such is continuing to pursue rail preservation by advancing alternatives that can be pursued in the near term, while including flexibility for the long term. In June of 2024, the Board adopted R13-2024, which included a second analysis of the I-95/I-495 Southside Express Lanes (SEL) project. On May 15, 2024, the TPB had approved project submissions for the Air Quality Conformity analysis for the Visualize 2050 National Capital Region Transportation Plan and the FY 2026-2029 TIP. It was decided that more time was needed to address concerns and receive additional information on the project. Since this resolution has been adopted, VDOT has made

progress on the SEL development. This status report serves to inform Board members for the upcoming vote in September, where it will be decided, whether to continue developing the draft Visualize 2050 plan, either with the SEL or without it.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES & STATUS

Month	Milestones
January – April 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TPB staff and agencies complete zero-based budgeting exercise. TPB releases updated Technical Input Solicitation for TIP financial details on funding amounts by fiscal years between FY 2026-2029. TPB receives a briefing at the April meeting from VDOT on the I-495/95 Southside Express Lanes (SEL) project.
May 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All remaining ZBB activities including detailed FY 2026-2029 TIP financial inputs due Friday, May 9, 2025. TPB staff draft financial analysis for the plan and TIP.
June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TPB staff draft AQC and performance analysis for the plan and TIP.
July 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TPB work session: Detailed presentation of the Air Quality Conformity Results, Financial Plan, and System Performance Assessment for both options – with and without the I-495/95 SEL project; VDOT SEL project update. TPB meeting: Briefing on draft results of the Air Quality Conformity, financial plan and system performance analyses for both options; VDOT SEL project update. TPB to pick one option at its September meeting. TPB briefed on the draft system level key challenges beyond the current transportation plan.
September 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TPB votes to move forward with or without the I-495 Southside Express Lanes project for continuation in the plan development and air quality conformity processes. Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC) and MWAQC Technical Advisory Committee (MWAQC-TAC) reviews draft results of AQC analysis for the updated plan and FY 2026–2029 TIP. Staff finalize the draft plan, TIP, and AQC documents, website, and advertise the comment period.
October 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public comment period on the draft plan, TIP, and the results of AQC analysis for the updated plan and FY 2026-2029 TIP (tentative dates: <u>Saturday, October 4 – Sunday, November 2, 2025</u>). TPB, TPB Technical Committee review the draft Visualize 2050 plan, FY 2026-2029 TIP, and Air Quality Conformity Analysis Report.
November 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TPB and Technical Committee receive a summary of the comments received on the analysis, plan and TIP; the agencies sponsoring the projects will have the opportunity to provide responses to comments.
December 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TPB will be asked to approve the results of the AQC analysis and adopt the Visualize 2050 plan and the FY 2026-2029 TIP.