

**ITEM 7 – Action
June 20, 2024**

Visualize 2050: The I-95/I-495 Southside Express Lanes Project will be reconsidered for inclusion in the Air Quality Conformity Analysis of Visualize 2050 and the FY 2026-2029 TIP

Action: Adopt Resolution R13-2024 to approve the I-95/I-495 Southside Express Lanes Project for inclusion in the Air Quality Conformity Analysis of Visualize 2050 and the FY 2026-2029 TIP.

Background: At the May TPB meeting, the Board approved the project inputs for the Air Quality Conformity Analysis of Visualize 2050 and the FY 2026-2029 TIP, electing to remove the I-95/I-495 Southside Express Lanes Project from R12-2024 to allow more time to consider this project’s inclusion in the analysis. At this meeting, the Board will act on R13-2024 to approve the inclusion of the I-95/I-495 Southside Express Lanes in the analysis.

TPB R13-2024
June 20, 2024

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD
777 North Capitol Street, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002

**RESOLUTION ON INCLUSION OF THE I-95/I-495 SOUTHSIDE EXPRESS LANES PROJECT IN
THE MAY 15, 2024 APPROVED PROJECT SUBMISSIONS FOR THE
AIR QUALITY CONFORMITY ANALYSIS OF THE
VISUALIZE 2050 NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION TRANSPORTATION PLAN AND THE
FY 2026-2029 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP)**

WHEREAS, the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB), as the federally designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Washington region, has the responsibility under the provisions of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, reauthorized November 15, 2021 when the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) was signed into law, for developing and carrying out a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive transportation planning process for the metropolitan area; and

WHEREAS, the federal metropolitan planning regulations (23 CFR.450) assign TPB the responsibility to cooperatively develop the metropolitan transportation plan (MTP) and transportation improvement program (TIP) specified in Sections 450.324 and 450.326; and

WHEREAS, the TIP is required by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) as a basis and condition for all federal funding assistance to state, local and regional agencies for transportation improvements within the metropolitan Washington, D.C. planning area; and

WHEREAS, the Statewide and Metropolitan Transportation Planning rule as published in the May 27, 2016, Federal Register by the FTA and FHWA requires that the MTP and the TIP be reviewed and updated at least every four years; and

WHEREAS, federal conformity regulations, originally published by the Environmental Protection Agency in the November 24, 1993, Federal Register and with latest amendments published in April 2012, based on the federal Clean Air Act (CAA Section 176(c)), require that the metropolitan transportation plan, program and projects in metropolitan areas not in attainment of national ambient air quality standards, demonstrate conformity to the area's state implementation plan; and

WHEREAS, federal conformity regulations require that the conformity analysis of the plan, program and projects be reviewed and updated at least every four years; and

WHEREAS, on June 15, 2022, the TPB adopted resolution R16-2022 determining that the 2022 Update to Visualize 2045 Plan and FY 2023-2026 TIP conform with the requirements of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, resolution R15-2022 approving the 2022 Update to Visualize 2045 Plan and approving the FY 2023-2026 TIP, and

WHEREAS, the 2022 Update to Visualize 2045 Plan and FY 2023-2026 TIP were approved by the FTA and FHWA on August 25, 2022; and

WHEREAS, TPB's resolution R19-2021 called for updating Visualize 2045 using a "zero-based budgeting" approach to update projects in the MTP that would have the TPB member agencies re-examine all of the projects in Visualize 2045 and resubmit an updated mix of projects in order to better achieve the region's goals, while providing for projects under construction or funded to be exempt from the above requirement; and

WHEREAS, the TPB issued the Visualize 2050 and FY 2026-2029 Technical Inputs Solicitation Submission Guide on February 15, 2023, asking the TPB member agencies to review the Visualize 2045 re-submit projects, and on April 19, 2023, approved an updated schedule providing additional time for projects input and moving final plan approval to June 2025; and

WHEREAS, following the direction from TPB's resolution R19-2021, as part of the Visualize 2050 Technical Inputs Solicitation, TPB and agency staffs conducted a process to re-examine the current Visualize 2045 capacity-related project list, where such improvements are significant for consideration in the air quality conformity analysis, and resubmit an updated mix of projects supported by updated revenue and expenditure estimates for new capital projects through 2050; and

WHEREAS, TPB staff launched an open period for public input on projects that would be submitted for Visualize 2050 between February 15 through November 30, 2023, sharing the feedback monthly with the TPB and TPB Technical Committee; and

WHEREAS, in March 2023, TPB staff hosted three virtual facilitated listening sessions, for the staff of its member agencies during which the Transportation agencies presented their processes for re-examining the projects in the current transportation plan and developing new projects proposed for inclusion while also hearing from the TPB members about the types of projects the TPB would like to see proposed to be included in Visualize 2050; and

WHEREAS, on March 1, 2024, the scope of work for the air quality conformity analysis of the Visualize 2050 National Capital Region Transportation Plan and the FY 2026-2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which includes projects submitted for air quality conformity analysis were released for a 30-day public comment period and inter-agency review; and

WHEREAS, the submitted inputs for the update to the Visualize 2050 Plan and the FY 2026-2029 TIP and the Air Quality Conformity Analysis Scope of Work have been reviewed by the Technical Committee at its meetings on October 6, November 3, 2023, February 2, March 1, April 5, and May 3, 2024; and

WHEREAS, the TPB was briefed on the submissions for the Visualize 2050 Plan and the FY 2026-2029 TIP at its November 15, December 20, 2023, March 21, and April 17, 2024 meetings and a board work session was conducted on March 21, 2024 to provide a facilitated review of those inputs; and

WHEREAS, the project submissions for the Visualize 2050 Plan and the FY 2026-2029 TIP have been developed to meet the financial constraint requirements in the Metropolitan Planning Rules and show the consistency of the proposed projects with already available and projected sources of transportation revenues; and

WHEREAS, prior to the May 15, 2024 TPB meeting, members of the Board had expressed concerns regarding the preservation of space on the Woodrow Wilson Memorial Bridge (WWMB) for future rail transit and had sought clarification on how the I-95/I-496 Southside Express Lanes (SSEL) project would be developed and executed especially through a public private partnership; and

WHEREAS, the TPB's 2022 Update to Visualize 2045 plan endorsed the regional pursuit to expand the express highway network as an effective strategy to incentivize carpools and vanpools and expedite transit service, while using dynamic tolling to manage congestion; and,

WHEREAS, per the September 14, 1998 fact sheet from the U.S. Department of Transportation, Attachment 1, compliance with the Record of Decision entails no more than 12 traffic lanes, including 8 general purpose lanes, 2 merging/diverging lanes, and 2 high occupancy vehicle, express bus, or rail transit lanes; and

WHEREAS, since March 2022, the Virginia Department of Transportation has been undergoing a study in coordination with the State of Maryland and other partners on the SSEL 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, to the MD 210 interchange in Prince George's County, Maryland; and

WHEREAS, in April 2023, the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation published its final report on the I-495 Southside Transit/TDM Study outlining recommendations for expansion of regional transit services within and beyond the SSEL project corridor including connections to existing metro rail stations in Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Virginia; and

WHEREAS, VDOT has provided a letter, Attachment 2, stating VDOT is fully supportive of future rail transit over 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, the concepts under NEPA review incorporate rail preservation either through retaining existing, unoccupied space or by incorporating a commitment to convert necessary space to rail transit in the future and that terms within any future contract or concessionaire agreement would similarly incorporate a requirement for conversion to rail transit in the future; and

WHEREAS, VDOT further notes in its letter, Attachment 2, regarding transit investments, that should the project proceed to procurement through a concessionaire agreement it intends to continue the practice of the Commonwealth to incorporate on-going transit payments from express lane projects in Northern Virginia to enhance multimodal options in the respective corridor.

WHEREAS, on May 15, 2024, the TPB approved Resolution R12-2024, which included the Air Quality Conformity Analysis Scope of Work, amended project submissions of the TPB member agencies for inclusion in the Air Quality Conformity Analysis for the proposed FY 2026-2029 TIP and Visualize 2050 Plan, and the draft Round 10.0 Cooperative Forecasts of employment, population and households developed by COG's Planning Director's Technical Advisory Committee for use in the Air Quality Conformity Analysis; and

WHEREAS, during discussion on Resolution R12-2024, the Board noted the need for additional time to address concerns with and get additional information on the Virginia I-95/I-495 Southside Express Lanes project (Line 373) and decided to remove that project from this approval, and the Board agreed to reconsider this project for inclusion in the Air Quality Conformity Analysis of Visualize 2050 and the FY 2026-2029 TIP at the June 20, 2024 TPB meeting; and

WHEREAS, as noted in Resolution R12-2024, VDOT agrees to incorporate a requirement for conversion to rail transit across the Woodrow Wilson Memorial Bridge in the future consistent with the preferred alternative approved through the NEPA process into any future concessionaire agreement and further agrees to explore with a future concessionaire, the ability to incorporate on-going transit payments to invest in multimodal enhancements in the project corridor; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT: the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board amends the projects to be included in the Air Quality Conformity Analysis for the proposed Visualize 2050 and the FY 2026-2029 TIP by adding Virginia's construction of the I-95/I-495 Southside Express Lanes project as shown in Attachment 3.



Fact Sheet

WOODROW WILSON MEMORIAL BRIDGE							
Year	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Authorization	(\$30M)*	\$25M	\$75M	\$150M	\$200M	\$225M	\$225M

*Funded from FHWA's administrative takedown.

Program Purpose

Design and construction of a new bridge where Interstate 95 crosses the Potomac River, along with related approaches and interchanges, as well as any needed interim repairs to the existing Woodrow Wilson Memorial Bridge (together, the "Project").

Background

On September 26, 1996, the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Coordinating Committee identified its preferred alternative for improvement to the Woodrow Wilson Bridge.

The preferred alternative for the Project has now been selected: two side-by-side, 70-foot-high drawbridges along the current alignment, plus associated improvements at 4 interchanges in Maryland and Virginia.

On November 25, 1997, a record of decision (ROD) was executed in compliance with the 1969 NEPA.

Funding Features [1116(c)]

A total of \$900 million in HTF contract authority is authorized, to remain available until expended.

None of the funds shall be available for construction before the execution of an agreement concerning transferring ownership of the Bridge. Until such time, only maintenance and rehabilitation of the Bridge, the design of the Project, and right-of-way acquisition (including early acquisition of construction staging areas) can be funded.

Costs associated with the new bridge shall be given priority for funding over other eligible Project costs, other than design costs.

Federal Share [1116(c)]

The Federal share of the Bridge component of the Project shall not exceed 100 percent.

The Federal share of the cost of any other component of the Project shall not exceed 80 percent.

Ownership Agreement [1116(b)]

TEA-21 requires that an agreement be entered into between the Secretary and the Authority (or another designated political jurisdiction) that accepts ownership of the new bridge.

In compliance with the ROD, the agreement must require that —

- the Project is to include no more than 12 traffic lanes, including 8 general purpose lanes, 2 merging/diverging lanes, and 2 high occupancy vehicle, express bus, or rail transit lanes.
- all provisions described in the environmental impact statement for the Project or a ROD for mitigation of environmental and other impacts of the Project are to be implemented.

The agreement must also contain a financial plan satisfactory to the Secretary that specifies —

- the total cost of the Project
- a schedule for Project implementation
- the sources of funding for the non-Federal share of Project costs

September 14, 1998



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Stephen C. Brich, P.E.
Commissioner

1401 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

April 30, 2024

The Honorable Christina Henderson, Chair
National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300
Washington, DC 20002-4201

RE: I-495 Southside Express Lanes Study

Dear Chair Henderson:

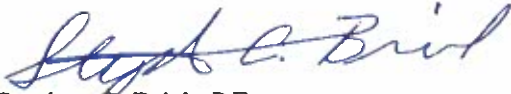
The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) continues to value the partnership with the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) as we collectively seek to update the Visualize 2050 Constrained Long Range Plan (CLRP). The efforts and collaboration amongst TPB and its member states, jurisdictions, legislative representatives, and regional authorities is critical to the support of regionally significant projects. As you are aware, project submissions for Visualize 2050 by VDOT include the I-495 Southside Express Lanes project. This critical project seeks to develop a multimodal solution with a goal of moving the most people as efficiently as possible through this congested segment of the Capital Beltway. The project presents the opportunity to create and expand transit connections within the region while also providing congestion relief and increased travel reliability. The project is consistent with the TPB's adopted goals for the development of Visualize 2050, specifically through its objective to reduce travel times for transit services and the free use of the express lanes network by these services and other high occupancy vehicles.

Over the last several months, we have heard concerns regarding the preservation of space on the Woodrow Wilson Memorial Bridge (WWMB) for future rail transit. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) study completed in 2000 delineated the inside lanes of the bridge for future rail transit and its ensuing Record of Decision memorialized this requirement. I am writing to clearly state that VDOT is fully supportive of future rail transit over 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, are cost effective, and can be built largely within the footprint of the existing corridor. The concepts under NEPA review incorporate rail preservation either through retaining existing, unoccupied space or by incorporating a commitment to convert necessary space to rail transit in the future when Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) and the region are positioned to implement service across the WWMB. Incorporating this commitment as part of the NEPA process and its ultimate federal approval means this requirement is legally enforceable. VDOT's adherence to this requirement will not result in costs for WMATA to convert the space when they are ready to implement service. Further, VDOT has stated, and I reiterate, that terms within any future contract or concessionaire agreement would similarly incorporate a requirement for conversion to rail transit in the future consistent with the preferred alternative approved through the NEPA process. This means a future agreement would make clear the need for the concessionaire to vacate the space necessary to operate heavy rail.

The Honorable Christina Henderson
April 30, 2024
Page Two

Regarding transit investments, it has been the practice of the Commonwealth to incorporate on-going transit payments from express lane projects in Northern Virginia to enhance multimodal options in the respective corridor. It is VDOT's intent to continue the advocacy for our established practice with this project. However, since this project is still at preliminary stages, we are not able to identify the amount nor the nature of funding for transit investments in the corridor at this time. To underscore the Commonwealth's commitment to this approach, it is worth noting that since 2017 VDOT alone and in conjunction with our express lane partners have provided \$156 million to the Commuter Choice Program which has been used to fund park and ride lots, bus purchases, shared use paths, and transit stations.

In closing, we understand the importance of future rail transit on the Woodrow Wilson Bridge and are committed to ensuring the space will be available. I hope you will continue to support the Commonwealth's efforts to solve the region's most challenging congestion in the near term while also retaining the flexibility necessary to adjust our problem-solving approaches in the future.
Sincerely,



Stephen C. Brich, P.E.
Commissioner of Highways

C: The Honorable W. Sheppard Miller, III, Secretary of Transportation
Mr. Kanti Srikanth, TPB, Executive Director
Ms. Cathy McGhee, P.E., VDOT, Chief Deputy Commissioner
Ms. Angel Deem, VDOT, Chief of Policy
Mr. Bill Cuttler, P.E., VDOT-NoVA, District Engineer
Ms. Maria Sinner, P.E., VDOT-NoVA, ADA Planning and Investment

TPB R13-2024 ATTACHMENT 3

DRAFT 6/20/2024

VISUALIZE 2050 AIR QUALITY CONFORMITY NETWORK INPUTS
(highway)

	PIT Project ID	Con ID	Project ID	Agency ID	Improvement	Facility	From	To	Fr	To	Lanes From	Lanes To	Completion Date
373	CE3814	24840 28929			Construct	I-95/I-495 Southside Express Lanes (SEL)	East of Springfield Interchange	East of MD 210	1	1	varies	+2 express in each direction	2031
374	CE3814	24840 28929			Construct	I 95/I 495 Express Lanes access ramps	Van Dorn St., US 1, I-295, and MD 210		1	1			2031



MEMORANDUM

TO: Transportation Planning Board
FROM: Cristina Finch, Transportation Planner
SUBJECT: Visualize 2050: The I-95/I-495 Southside Express Lanes Project will be reconsidered for inclusion in the Air Quality Conformity Analysis of Visualize 2050 and the FY 2026-2029 TIP
DATE: June 13, 2024

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide information to support the TPB's consideration of including the I-95/I-495 Southside Express Lanes (SSEL) project in the scope of work and technical inputs for the Air Quality Conformity Analysis of Visualize 2050 and the FY 2026-2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The SSEL project would be modeled in the Air Quality Conformity Analysis to include two (2) express lanes in each direction from east of the Springfield Interchange to east of MD 210 including express lane access ramps at Van Dorn Street, US-1, I-295, and MD 210, allowing vehicles with 3 or more people to ride for free or toll vehicles with one or two passengers.

BACKGROUND

The TPB is currently engaged in updating its long-range transportation plan, Visualize 2045. The updated plan, Visualize 2050, would not only extend the horizon year of the plan, but it would also reflect a completed re-examination of the region's current planned transportation investments, using a process referred to as "zero-based budgeting". After undergoing the TPB's zero-based budgeting exercise, VDOT proposed the SSEL project's inclusion in Visualize 2050 for construction. The project was included in the larger list of projects the TPB released for public comments in March 2024. The TPB reviewed the comments received and responses from the transportation agencies at its April 17, 2024 meeting.

On May 15, 2024, the TPB adopted Resolution R12-2024, approving the Scope of Work for the Air Quality Conformity Analysis, including the list of transit and highway capacity-related projects proposed by the member agencies, authorizing staff to commence with the analysis for Visualize 2050 and the FY 2026-2029 TIP. In its action adopting the resolution, the TPB removed the I-95/I-495 SSEL project from the AQC inputs table pending further discussion. The TPB noted that it will consider including the I-95/I-495 SSEL project in the Air Quality Conformity Analysis at its June 20 meeting.

Since the TPB's adoption of Visualize 2045 in October 2018 and subsequently in its June 2022 update, the expansion of the express lanes network in the National Capital Region has been promoted as an aspirational initiative. As part of the TPB's Synthesized Policy Framework guiding the development of Visualize 2050, the expansion of the express highway network, with rapid transit, and allowing carpools/vanpools to ride free, has continued as a priority strategy to achieve the TPB's goals including reliability, affordable and convenient, efficient system operations, environmental protection and livable and prosperous communities.

The I-95/I-495 SSEL project was included as a study in current plan, Visualize 2045, and was not part of the Air Quality Conformity Analysis, and over the past few years, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has continued development of this project. Since March 2022, VDOT has been undergoing a [study](#) in coordination with the State of Maryland and other partners on the SSEL project compliant with the 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, to the MD 210 interchange in Prince George's County, Maryland.

Additionally, in April 2023, the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation published its [final report on the I-495 Southside Transit/TDM Study](#) outlining recommendations for expansion of regional transit services within and beyond the SSEL project corridor including connections to existing metro rail stations in Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Virginia.

In 1997, the [Woodrow Wilson Memorial Bridge Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Section 4\(f\) Evaluation](#) was completed, and the Record of Decision (the ROD) signed on November 24, 1997 (see PDF page 127). The ROD set the maximum number of lanes on the bridge to 12 specifying how the lanes could be used and provided a typical section of the Preferred Alternative 4A's space configuration. A simple [Fact Sheet](#) on FHWA's website summarizes the ROD noting the requirement to include no more than 8 general purpose lanes, 2 merging/diverging lanes, and 2 HOV, express bus, or rail transit lanes, leaving flexibility in how transit could be provided across the bridge.

ACTION OVERVIEW

The TPB will consider approving resolution R13-2024 to amend the R12-2024 approved list of project submissions for use in the Air Quality Conformity Analysis and add the I-95/I-495 Southside Express Lanes project with details as shown in Attachment 3 of R13-2024.

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

Related supplementary information provided at the May TPB meeting on the SSEL project included [two letters from VDOT and a letter from Fairfax County](#). At the May TPB meeting, VDOT reviewed their response letters to public comments and provided additional information verbally to the TPB. Additionally, the TPB received a copy of the May 31, 2024 letter from the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) to VDOT with questions surrounding the SSEL project to which VDOT has provided a response letter dated June 13, 2024. VDOT has also provided TPB with a copy of a June 13, 2024 letter to Prince George's County.

ATTACHMENTS

1. R13-2024 Resolution on inclusion of the I-95/I-495 Southside Express Lanes project in the May 15, 2024 approved project submissions for the Air Quality Conformity Analysis of the Visualize 2050 National Capital Region Transportation Plan and the FY 2026-2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
2. May 31, 2024 WMATA letter to VDOT
3. June 13, 2024 VDOT letter to WMATA
4. June 13, 2024 VDOT letter to Prince George's County



May 31, 2024

Mr. Bill Cuttler, P.E.
Northern Virginia District Engineer, VDOT
4975 Alliance Drive
Fairfax, VA 22030

Dear Mr. Cuttler:

I am writing regarding VDOT's interest in including the I-495 Southside Express Lanes Study (I-495 SEL) as a funded project¹ in the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board's (TPB) Constrained Long Range Transportation Plan prior to selecting a locally preferred alternative. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (Metro) has the following questions about the proposed near-term bus service and the future opportunity for high-capacity transit, including bus rapid transit, light rail, or Metrorail, across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge.

The 2000 Wilson Bridge Record of Decision documented the need to preserve the center through lanes for future transit use, including rail transit, which resulted in the center bridge spans being built to accommodate that possibility. As noted previously, Metro strongly supports transit investments in the I-495 corridor, including near term bus service and preserving right-of-way for future high-capacity transit along I-495 and across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. To meet the region's adopted climate mitigation goals of 50 percent greenhouse gas emission reductions below 2005 levels by 2030 and 80 percent reduction by 2050, a future I-495 SEL project must incorporate robust transit and manage congestion.

Providing answers to the questions below will assist Metro and our regional partners to better understand the Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT) and a potential future concessionaire's ability to provide transit in the near-term and preserve the region's future high-capacity transit options. This information will enable a more thorough consideration for the project's inclusion in the Long-Range Transportation Plan. Key open issues include how bus service will be integrated into the project and questions about rail transit preservation and future conversion.

**Washington
Metropolitan Area
Transit Authority**

300 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024
202-962-1234

wmata.com

*A District of Columbia,
Maryland and Virginia
Transit Partnership*

¹ Projects included in TPB's long range plan must have reasonable expectation of funding.

Future Rail Transit Right-of-way Preservation

1. Based on the potential future Metrorail concept alignment and typical section documentation provided to VDOT in February 2024,² please provide documentation that details that sufficient space will exist within the I-495 SEL Beltway corridor to accommodate future rail transit, including access onto the Beltway and across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge.
2. Please describe in detail how VDOT believes future construction and operation of a rail line (light rail or Metrorail) would occur once the current alternative concepts of one or two Express Lanes in each direction are constructed and operational.
3. Please provide the near-term commitments VDOT will make prior to final Commonwealth Transportation Board approval of a I-495 SEL project to ensure future rail transit can be constructed efficiently with no additional cost burden to a future rail project.
4. Is the future conversion of Express Lanes to rail transit use contingent on agreement by a concessionaire in a future solicitation? Can VDOT commit to making this term non-negotiable?
5. If an Express Lane concessionaire is selected to build and operate a future I-495 SEL project, would the concessionaire also be required to provide temporary access to enable adjacent construction of a future rail transit project? Would there be any cost (to the entity requesting access) or penalty (to VDOT in terms of reduced revenue or concessionaire payment or otherwise) for such construction access to be granted?
6. Please provide a construction cost estimate for the conversion of the two I-495 SEL Express Lanes (one in each direction) from operating highway travel lanes to a fully available rail transit right-of-way for future rail construction (not the rail construction itself). Please describe what is included in those costs, and which organization (between VDOT and Metro) would be responsible for which costs.
7. Please provide examples of where a successful conversion from managed highway lanes to rail transit has been completed, including the interplay with a concessionaire.

Near-Term Bus Service

8. How does VDOT plan to integrate bus service into the I-495 SEL Project? At what point in the project development process will bus service planning

² This potential future Metrorail concept is aligned with Metro's Blue, Orange, Silver Study.

- and decision-making begin? When does VDOT expect that bus service funded by the project would begin?
9. Please provide documentation, assumptions, and analysis from the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation study that was completed in 2023 that recommended four new bus routes and estimated 8,000 daily riders.
 10. Assuming buses are integrated into the future I-495 SEL project, would the concessionaire be required to directly fund the full operational cost of new Metrobus service between Virginia and Maryland? Would existing service be eligible for funding? What would the start and end of such an agreement be? Please provide confirmation that no transit provider will be required to pay to use the Express Lanes.
 11. Will the I-495 SEL alternative study concepts include Express Lane access points at Telegraph Road and I-295 in Maryland? Current and future Metrobus service – notably the current NH2 and future P94 route³ – would benefit from direct Express Lane access including to National Harbor.

We look forward to further discussions about how the region can provide near-term and long-term opportunities for transit within the I-495 SEL study area. If you have any questions regarding the study or this memo, please contact Jonathan Parker at jhparker@wmata.com and (202) 962-1040.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Webster
Executive Vice President and
Chief Planning and Performance Officer

cc: Randy Clarke, General Manager & Chief Executive Officer, Metro
WMATA Board of Directors
Kanti Srikanth, TPB Executive Director
Christina Henderson, TPB Chair
Jennifer DeBruhl, Director, DRPT
Allison H. Davis, SVP, Planning and Sustainability, Metro

³ Based on Metro's Proposed 2025 Better Bus Network.



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Stephen C. Brich, P.E.
Commissioner

1401 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

June 13, 2024

Mr. Thomas J. Webster
Executive Vice President and Chief Planning Officer
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
300 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Mr. Webster:

On behalf of the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), thank you for your letter on May 31, 2023, regarding the I-495 Southside Express Lanes Study (495 Southside Study). We greatly value our continued partnership with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) regarding the 495 Southside Study, which began when the Study was initiated in 2022.

VDOT continues to lead a robust agency coordination effort to ensure key regional partners such as WMATA are informed and have many opportunities to provide input on the 495 Southside Study. This coordination with agency and regional partners involved establishing a Stakeholder Technical Advisory Group (STAG). To date, three STAG meetings have been held, in which WMATA staff attended and provided input. VDOT also invited WMATA to participate with other stakeholders and agencies in our monthly agency meetings, referred to as NEPA Day, which provide additional opportunities to engage on the 495 Southside Study. VDOT has presented the 495 Southside Study eighteen (18) times at NEPA Day and WMATA has participated in several of these meetings.

Following our 495 Southside Study public information meetings held in fall 2023, WMATA provided written comments (dated October 10, 2023) responding to the information presented at the meeting. VDOT is appreciative of those comments, as they provided needed information and offered support for the alternatives under consideration, noting the need for these alternatives to support transit options across the WWMB including buses in the shorter term and rail transit in the longer term.

In the May 31, 2024, letter several specific questions were raised regarding the 495 Southside Study. Responses that will provide clarity to the study, our processes, and commitments moving forward are included below.

1. Based on the potential future Metrorail concept alignment and typical section

documentation provided to VDOT in February 2024, please provide documentation that details that sufficient space will exist within the I-495 SEL Beltway corridor to accommodate future rail transit, including access onto the Beltway and across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge.

The existing WWMB is 52' wide in the local lanes (outer span), and 52' wide in the through lanes section (inner span) in each direction. A typical section across the bridge that includes one, new express lane and barrier-separated rail transit in each direction can be accommodated within this available space through utilization of the existing 18' inside shoulder in the through section. Discussions of space needs for rail transit in November and December 2023, along with WMATA's February 2, 2024, correspondence to VDOT confirmed the adequacy of the 18' rail typical section assumption. Based on the width of the through lanes section on the WWMB, there is enough room to provide two Express Lanes in the near-term, or to accommodate one Express Lane and space for rail transit in the long-term. The difference would be a shift of one through lane into the local lanes section.

- 2. Please describe in detail how VDOT believes future construction and operation of a rail line (light rail or Metrorail) would occur once the current alternative concepts of one or two Express Lanes in each direction are constructed and operational.**

While construction and operations details will be evaluated later in the project development process, common practices employed within confined work areas and complex construction activities include temporary reductions to lane and shoulder widths to accommodate work areas, temporary lane closures, and reduction of speed limits. Additionally, there may be opportunities to shift lanes between the local and through sections (barrier separated) on the WWMB, subject to final engineering details, along with means and methods of construction.

- 3. Please provide near-term commitments VDOT will make prior to final Commonwealth Transportation Board approval of a I-495 SEL project to ensure future rail transit can be constructed efficiently with no additional cost burden to a future rail project?**

Please see Commissioner Brich's correspondence to TPB members dated April 30, 2024, for an outline of VDOT's commitments to rail preservation on the WWMB. This letter makes clear that the alternatives under construction in the ongoing NEPA process incorporate rail preservation, therefore, selection of a preferred alternative by the Commonwealth Transportation Board will be one that provides the opportunity for future rail transit. Further, the letter states regarding the federal approval of the preferred alternative, "VDOT's adherence to this requirement will not result in costs for WMATA to convert the space when they are ready to implement service."

- 4. Is the future conversion of Express Lanes to rail transit use contingent on agreement by a concessionaire in a future solicitation? Can VDOT commit to making this term non-negotiable?**

As stated in the April 30, 2024, letter, the concepts included in the 495 Southside Study incorporate rail preservation either through retaining existing, unoccupied space or by incorporating a commitment to convert necessary space to rail transit in the future when

WMATA and the region are positioned to implement service across the WWMB. Terms within any future contract or concessionaire agreement would incorporate a requirement for conversion to rail transit in the future consistent with the recommended, preferred alternative approved through the NEPA process. The future procurement process and resulting agreement would make clear the need for the concessionaire to vacate the space necessary to operate heavy rail. As such, a separate solicitation for the conversion will not be required.

- 5. If an Express Lanes concessionaire is selected to build and operate a future I-495 SEL project, would the concessionaire also be required to provide temporary access to enable adjacent construction of a future rail project? Would there be any cost (to the entity requesting access) or penalty (to VDOT in terms of reduced revenue or concessionaire payment or otherwise) for such construction access to be granted?**

A comprehensive agreement with a concessionaire could include provisions to coordinate construction activities with the rail contractor. The efforts associated with this coordination along with vacating the space for rail will be the subject of future negotiations between the Commonwealth and a potential concessionaire. As we have stated, VDOT is fully supportive of future rail transit over the WWMB at such time WMATA and the region are positioned to implement service.

- 6. Please provide a construction cost estimate for the conversion of the two I-495 SEL Express Lanes (one in each direction) from operating highway travel lanes to a fully available rail transit right-of-way for future rail construction (not the rail construction itself). Please describe what is included in those costs, and which organization (between VDOT and Metro) would be responsible for which costs.**

Construction cost estimates are not available. Detailed engineering and the associated cost estimating will follow the NEPA study as part of VDOT's project development process. As stated in the April 30, 2024, letter to TPB members from Commissioner Brich, "VDOT's adherence to this requirement will not result in costs for WMATA to convert the space when they are ready to implement service."

- 7. Please provide examples of where a successful conversion from managed highway lanes to rail transit has been completed, including the interplay with a concessionaire.**

The Department is not aware of a managed lane highway project that was converted to transit. VDOT's Transform 66 is an example of a managed lanes project that successfully includes provisions for transit, BRT and the Orange Line, from the beginning. More specifically, the Orange Line is listed as an Alternative Facility in the contract, which states that only the opening of the Orange Line within 10 years from project completion of the Transform 66 project would constitute a compensation event.

8. How does VDOT plan to integrate bus service into the I-495 SEL Project? At what point in the project development processes will bus service planning and decision making begin? When does VDOT expect that bus service funded by the project would begin?

It has been the practice of the Commonwealth to incorporate on-going transit payments from express lanes projects in Northern Virginia to enhance multimodal options in the respective corridor. The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) completed the [I-495 Southside Transit/Transportation Demand Management Study](#) in April 2023 for the purpose of identifying a range of multimodal solutions in the corridor to inform VDOT's NEPA study. Should the I-495 Southside Express Lanes project advance under a concessionaire agreement, as currently anticipated, it could provide a dedicated source of revenue to implement the types of investments identified in the DRPT study which include express and local bus routes, as well as commuter assistance programs and technology enhancements.

9. Please provide documentation, assumptions, and analysis from the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation study that was completed in 2023 that recommended four new bus routes and estimated 8,000 daily riders.

For reference, the DPRT study can be found at the following link: <https://drpt.virginia.gov/studies-and-reports/i-495-southside-transit-tdm-study/>. Specific sections in the study that describe the assumptions and methodology for the transit recommendations are on pages 88-149, with pages 134-136 summarizing the data for the refined transit recommendations. Additionally, within the study, eight new bus routes are recommended in the refined transit recommendations that are estimated to generate 7,875 daily riders by 2045. Appendix E also provides information on each new bus route. If there are additional questions regarding the DPRT study, a direct contact with DPRT can be provided.

10. Assuming buses are integrated into the future I-495 SEL project, would the concessionaire be required to directly fund the full operational cost of new Metrobus service between Virginia and Maryland? Would existing service be eligible for funding? What would the start and end of such an agreement be? Please provide confirmation that no transit provider will be required to pay to use the Express Lanes.

Multimodal solutions, including bus service and transit funding, have been a focal point of negotiations for all concessionaire-operated facilities in Northern Virginia. Since 2017, the Commuter Choice program has received \$156 million, which has funded 42 buses, 29 bus service improvements, 14 new express bus routes, 6 commuter incentive programs, 4 rail station enhancements, 3 park and ride lots, and 1 BRT line. VDOT intends to continue our established practice to incorporate on-going transit payments for the I-495 SEL project. Since this project is still in the study phase, VDOT is not able to identify the amount nor the nature of funding for transit investments in the corridor at this time. The tolling policy for the I-495 SEL project will

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be consistent with the existing express lanes in Northern Virginia, which include free use by buses and vehicles carrying 3 or more travelers.

11. Will the I-495 SEL alternative study concepts include Express Lane access points at Telegraph Road and I-295 in Maryland? Current and future Metrobus service- notably the current NH2 and future P94 route- would benefit from direct Express Lane access including to National Harbor.

Both build alternatives under consideration in the 495 Southside Study assume access at the I-295 interchange. These build alternatives also assume access just East of the Springfield Interchange for entering and exiting the Express Lanes, at the interchanges of Van Dorn Street, US Route 1, MD 210, and just east of MD 210 for entering and exiting the Express Lanes. Key consideration for access is based on spacing, geometry, and potential impacts. Access was reviewed for the Telegraph Road interchange and dismissed from further consideration due to its close proximity to Route 1, existing complex CD roads through the interchange, existing flyover ramps/bridge piers, adjacent development and limited right of way.

We look forward to a continued partnership as the 495 Southside Study advances. I hope WMATA will support our efforts to bring near-term solutions to solve the region's complex transportation challenges while maintaining a long-term goal of accommodation of rail transit.

Sincerely,



Bill Cuttler, P.E.
Northern Virginia District Engineer



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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

Stephen C. Brich, P.E.
COMMISSIONER

June 13, 2024

Mr. Floyd E. Holt
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Prince George's County, Maryland
1301 McCormick Drive
Largo, MD 20774

Dear Mr. Holt:

Thank you again for our recent discussion and Prince George's County's continued engagement with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) team working on the Commonwealth's project submissions for the Visualize 2050 Constrained Long Range Plan (CLRP) update. As we discussed and I reiterated on a call with your team on June 7, 2024, the I-495 Southside Express Lanes Project is a regionally significant project intended to address the remaining segment of interstate along the Capital Beltway in Virginia without an Express Lanes component. Inclusion of an Express Lanes component along this critical segment from the Springfield Interchange across the Woodrow Wilson Memorial Bridge (WWMB) to MD 210 in Prince George's County provides a generational opportunity to deliver near-term congestion relief to Virginia and Maryland commuters, create and expand transit connections in the region, and increase travel reliability throughout the National Capital Region.

In 2021, the I-495 Southside Express Lanes study area was identified in the Commonwealth Transportation Board's adopted I-95 Corridor Improvement Plan as an area for additional study. As a result, the study was included in VDOT's Six Year Improvement Program and the National Capital Region's Visualize 2045 CLRP and VDOT is underway with the NEPA analysis to identify a preferred alternative for the corridor. The upcoming action by the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) to include the project in the air quality conformity analysis is a critical next step that is a requirement of the NEPA process. For purposes of this air quality analysis the project is proposed as the addition of two Express Lanes to represent the maximum cross section with potentially the highest impact on air quality. The preferred alternative approved through the NEPA process may or may not match this assumption. Modeling this maximum cross section, or worst-case scenario, ensures the air quality analysis does not underestimate mobile source emissions.

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Importantly, the NEPA process cannot conclude and VDOT cannot receive NEPA approval from the Federal Highway Administration until the project has been included for construction in the CLRP and its approved air quality conformity analysis. VDOT's timeline for the advancement of this critical project is linked to this requirement and any delay of its inclusion in the CLRP will result in a delay of over two years, further delaying the delivery of tangible benefits to the region. In addition to the time delay, a decision to not include the project now will result in the Commonwealth expending additional resources to update analyses that inform the NEPA study to ensure its validity upon its inclusion in the CLRP. In response to the suggestion that the I-495 Southside Express Lanes project is not ready for inclusion in the CLRP, I would point out that it is both appropriate and acceptable for projects included in a CLRP update to have either not begun NEPA or to have the NEPA analysis underway. The projects approved by the TPB in May 2024 evidence this.

As the Commonwealth advances the NEPA study, potential project benefits specifically for needs identified for Prince George's County, along with traffic analysis and resource impacts will be vetted with environmental agencies, the public and key stakeholders. As we advance, we are confident the project will demonstrate a considerable opportunity to unlock congestion and increase transit investments in the corridor. The project provides a foundation to establish robust transit ridership that will serve as a customer base for the future extension of Metrorail across the WWMB. The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) completed the I-495 Southside Transit/Transportation Demand Management Study in April 2023 for the purpose of identifying a range of multimodal solutions in the corridor to inform VDOT's NEPA study. As you are aware, the only transit service between Virginia and Maryland across the WWMB is the Metrobus NH2 route connecting Alexandria and National Harbor, however the current levels of congestion across the bridge result in little to no travel time savings for this service. The DRPT study recommendations include investments for transit service across the bridge such as express bus routes from Prince George's County to Tysons. Should the I-495 Southside Express Lanes project advance under a concessionaire agreement as currently anticipated it could provide a dedicated source of revenue for such investments as well as a dedicated route for buses to take increasing their reliability and ridership. The long-standing practice of the Commonwealth to incorporate on-going transit payments from express lanes projects to enhance multimodal options in the respective corridor clearly demonstrates the importance the Commonwealth places on reliable and robust transit investments. The I-495 Southside Express Lanes project presents the opportunity to deliver on enhanced multimodal options in this critical corridor.

Let me assure you again that VDOT is fully committed to preserving capacity for future rail on the WWMB and has only advanced alternatives that meet this requirement. VDOT is also fully committed to continue pursuing transit investment opportunities as part of our Express Lanes program. These assurances underscore our demonstrated intent to work collaboratively to solve the region's transportation challenges. Simply stated, the Commonwealth cannot and will not advance this project to implementation without the support of Prince George's County and the region. Further delay is not in the best interest of the citizens and visitors that travel the I-495 corridor. The time to act is now.

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I trust the clarifications provided here along with the April 30, 2024, letter provided to TPB Chair Henderson (attached here for your reference) address the questions and concerns of Prince George's County and I ask for your support for the inclusion of the I-495 Southside Express Lanes project in the Air Quality Conformity Analysis project inputs for Visualize 2050.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Stephen C. Brich". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Stephen" being the most prominent part.

Stephen C. Brich, P.E.
Commissioner of Highways

C: Ms. Oluseyi Olugbenie, Deputy Director, Public Works & Transportation,
Prince George's County, Maryland
Mr. Eric Olson, County Council, Prince George's County, Maryland
Ms. Christina Henderson, Chair, National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
Mr. Kanti Srikanth, Executive Director, Transportation Planning Board
Mr. Jeffrey C. McKay, Chairman, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
Ms. Cathy McGhee, P.E., VDOT Chief Deputy Commissioner
Mr. Bill Cuttler, P.E., VDOT Northern Virginia District Engineer
Ms. Angel Deem, VDOT Chief of Policy