



**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**

**P.O. Box 178 - City Hall
Alexandria, Virginia 22313**

alexandriava.gov

703.746.4025

October 2, 2023

Nick Nies, AICP
VDOT 495 Southside Express Lanes Study Project Manager
9030 Stony Point Parkway, Suite 220
Richmond, VA 23235

Dear Mr. Nies,

Thank you for the opportunity for the City of Alexandria (City) to be involved in the Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT's) I-495 Southside Express Lane Study by inviting the City to attend the public information meetings and by providing feedback on the information available to date.

As noted in our letter regarding this project last summer, it is of utmost importance to the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES) that the selected alternative minimizes adverse impacts on our residents, businesses, and visitors such as increased noise or cut-through traffic on our local roads. It is T&ES desire that proposed alternatives are consistent with the goals of the City's Alexandria Mobility Plan and Environmental Action Plan 2040 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled in the City.

Based on our community's concerns, the City would like their concerns to be addressed with potential alternatives and to provide additional analysis.

These include the following, but not limited to:

- 1) The criteria provided, including continuity of the Express Lane system, seem to bias the selection of alternatives towards those that include new Express Lanes, rather than those that prioritize transit and transportation demand management measures.
- 2) Additional lanes may lead to additional demand on; therefore, increased traffic on the facility overtime.

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- 3) Reduction in congestion may reduce the number of crashes, but it could cause increased severity of crashes as vehicles are able to travel at higher speeds.
- 4) Express Lane options could add constraints on providing new transit, specifically Metrorail lines on this corridor and across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge in the future.
- 5) New access points from I-495 to and from Alexandria could cause increased traffic on City streets.
- 6) Right-of-way impacts have not yet been identified, and project limits should be minimized to minimize the impacts on adjacent and nearby properties.

With the above-mentioned community concerns in mind, it is noteworthy to highlight that the City anticipates the opportunity for future Metrorail on the bridge preserved. Future Express Lanes should not interfere with the recommendations from the Washington Metro Area Transit Authority's (WMATA) Blue Orange Silver Line Study and should allow future transit improvements to be implemented on the recommended timeline. This would include avoiding requiring fees or negotiations with toll concessionaires. The City is seeking assurances that agreements with toll concessionaires would not impact the City's ability to adjust City roads and facilities near the corridor in the future, including adjustments to road capacity. This is a major concern for the City, as this would impact the ability to address safety, transit, capacity, and other priority issues.

Additionally, VDOT has noted that potential improvements could include new or upgraded pedestrian and bicycle accommodations. Staff are eager to see how VDOT will incorporate those facilities into this project and are supportive of measures that increase multimodal options for people in this area.

The City looks forward to continuing to work with you on this study and providing additional feedback as more analysis on the preferred alternatives become available. The City also requests that VDOT attend an Alexandria Transportation Commission meeting to provide a presentation on next steps at an appropriate time in the process.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at Adriana.castaneda@alexandriava.gov or 703.746.4025.

Sincerely,



Adriana Castaneda (Sep 28, 2023 16:01 EDT)

Adriana Castañeda

Director, Transportation and Environmental Services

cc: James F. Parajon, City Manager
Emily A. Baker, Deputy City Manager
Hillary Orr, Deputy Director, T&ES
Christopher Ziemann, Division Chief, Transportation Planning, T&ES
Megan Oleynik, Long Range Transportation Planner/Engineer, T&ES

I-495 Express Lane Study - 2023

Final Audit Report

2023-09-28

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