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Ms. Michelle Shropshire
Northern Virginia Megaprojects Director
Virginia Department of Transportation
1401 E. Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Subject: City of Alexandria Comments on the I-495 Southside Express Lanes Project – Range of Alternatives Concurrence Package

Dear Ms. Shropshire:

On behalf of the City of Alexandria, I am writing to provide formal comments on the Range of Alternatives Concurrence Package for the I-495 Southside Express Lanes project, shared with us on June 11 and updated on June 18.

The City appreciates the Commonwealth's ongoing efforts to improve regional mobility and connectivity. We recognize the significance of this project within the broader transportation network and value the opportunity to engage in its planning. However, after careful review, we have identified several areas where further analysis and coordination are necessary to ensure the project reflects the needs and priorities of the Alexandria community.

1. Insufficient Local Traffic Modeling

The modeling included to date is primarily limited to the I-495 corridor and does not adequately assess downstream operational impacts on key local routes such as U.S. Route 1 and South Van Dorn Street. These corridors are critical to Alexandria's network, and a more detailed, corridor- and intersection-level analysis is needed to understand how the proposed alternatives will affect local conditions.

2. Potential Impacts to Local Roads and Quality of Life

Projected increases in corridor throughput—estimated at 600 additional people per hour—raise concerns about increased traffic on local streets without clear mitigation strategies. Without additional analysis, the City is concerned that this may negatively affect neighborhood streets, degrade safety, and diminish quality of life for residents.

3. Safety Assumptions Require Additional Justification

The estimated 17% reduction in crashes under the proposed alternatives lacks supporting detail, especially in light of anticipated increases in overall traffic volumes. Additional modeling and justification are needed, particularly related to severe injuries and fatalities.

4. Lack of Transit Benefit to Alexandria

While we support the regional vision of a direct transit connection between Prince George's County and Tysons Corner, the current proposal does not offer comparable transit benefits to Alexandria. The absence of planned access at Telegraph Road means that services such as the NH2 and proposed NVTa-funded BRT route are not accommodated. This represents a missed opportunity for equitable regional benefit.

5. Limited Environmental Analysis

The environmental review appears narrowly scoped to relocations, wetlands, and historic properties. While the concurrence letter references air quality, no substantive analysis has been provided. Given anticipated truck traffic increases along Route 1 and South Van Dorn Street, modeling of localized air quality impacts is essential—particularly in areas identified as equity emphasis zones.

6. Noise Analysis Requires Greater Scope

The noise analysis does not appear to consider the increase in traffic volumes on local streets outside the immediate corridor. A more comprehensive evaluation of community noise impacts—especially in urban residential areas—will be critical to developing appropriate and context-sensitive mitigation strategies.

7. Uncertain Feasibility of Future Rail on the Wilson Bridge

While the preservation of physical space for potential future Metrorail service is appreciated, the long-term feasibility of such a project remains uncertain. Additional planning detail and clarity on the commitment to preserve this option are necessary to ensure it remains viable.

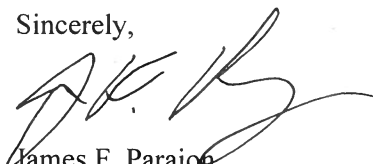
8. Benefits Should Not Be Contingent on Express Lane Construction

Many of the enhancements described—including transit improvements, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and space preservation for rail—are valuable in their own right and could be pursued independently of express lane construction. It is important that these elements not be framed as exclusive benefits of the tolling infrastructure.

These comments reflect and reinforce concerns raised in prior correspondence. Given the potential for significant impacts on Alexandria residents, the City respectfully urges VDOT to take additional time to analyze these concerns and work collaboratively with local partners to refine the project.

At this time, the City is not in a position to provide concurrence. However, we remain committed to a cooperative and solution-oriented approach and look forward to continued engagement with VDOT to ensure this project advances in a way that balances regional mobility goals with the health, equity, and quality of life priorities of the communities it serves.

Sincerely,



James F. Parajon
City Manager