COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Sean T. Connaughton
Secretary of Transportation

February 2, 2011

The Honorable Sharon Bulova, Chairman
Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
12000 Government Center Parkway,
Suite 530
Fairfax, Virginia 22035-0071

The Honorable William Euille, Mayor
City of Alexandria
301 King Street, Room 2300
Alexandria. Virginia 22314

The Honorable Chris Zimmerman, Chairman
Arlington County Board,
Suite 300
2100 Clarendon Boulevard
Arlington, Virginia, 22201

The Honorable Corey A. Stewart, Chairman
Prince William County Board of Supervisors
1 County Complex Court
Prince William, VA 22192

The Honorable L. Mark Dudenhefer, Chairman
Stafford County Board of Supervisors
3 Legal Court
Stafford, Virginia 22554

The Honorable Benjamin T. Pitts, Chairman
Spotsylvania Board of Supervisors
PO Box 99
Spotsylvania, VA 22553

The Honorable Thomas Tomzak, M.D., Mayor
City of Fredericksburg
PO Box 7447
Fredericksburg, VA 22404

Subject: Advancing New I-95 HOV/HOT Lanes Project, HOV/transit ramp at Mark Center

Dear Chairman Bulova, Mayor Euille, Chairman Zimmerman, Chairman Stewart, Chairman Dudenhefer, Chairman Pitts, and Mayor Tomzak:

Traffic congestion in the I-95/395 corridor is negatively impacting the economy and quality of life of the citizens of your localities. Growing employment at military sites affected by the Base Realignment and Closure Act (BRAC) is bringing new quality jobs to the region, but we are currently unequipped to meet the resulting transportation needs.

Upgrades to this critical corridor have been delayed for too long. The Commonwealth is taking immediate action to advance a package of improvements to address these critical needs and bring congestion relief and new travel choices to the region.

(1) VDOT is initiating a new I-95 HOV/HOT Lanes Project and beginning the environmental review process to enable the project to move forward to create an HOV/HOT Lanes network on I-95 from Garrisonville Road in Stafford County to Edsall Road in Fairfax County, as well as link the lanes directly to the new I-495 Capital Beltway HOT Lanes and into Tysons Corner.

(2) VDOT is advancing plans to construct a direct ramp from the existing HOV lanes on I-395 to Seminary Road which will connect the growing Mark Center site to this expanded regional transit and HOV network. The ramp will be restricted to transit and HOV use only.

(3) The Commonwealth is working with affected localities to develop and fund Park & Ride expansions and transit service to help maximize this new HOV/HOT network.

VDOT previously developed the I-95/395 HOV/HOT Lanes project to expand highway capacity, enhance carpooling opportunities, and fund transit in the corridor. Unfortunately, the project has been severely delayed due to a lawsuit filed by Arlington County. The delay has had a detrimental impact on the timing, scope and private finances of the project as originally envisioned.

The Commonwealth has worked for more than 18 months to resolve Arlington County's lawsuit against the project and individuals involved in the project. Despite efforts on both sides of the dispute, we have been unable to reach a settlement agreement.

VDOT has initiated a new HOV/HOT Lanes project so that we can move forward and deliver critical improvements to the region quickly. VDOT will undertake an environmental review process for the project that will extend and add capacity to the HOV lanes on I-95 to create an HOV/HOT Lanes network from the vicinity of Edsall Road in Fairfax County to Garrisonville Road in Stafford County. The project will also add new access points and connect directly to the I-495 Capital Beltway HOT Lanes, currently under construction.

The new HOT Lanes project will not include originally planned construction of six miles of HOV/HOT Lanes on I-395 in Alexandria or Arlington County or upgrades to key interchanges at Shirlington and Eads Street in Arlington County. Those lanes will continue to be restricted to HOV, transit, eligible hybrids, and motorcycles during rush hours.

The new I-95 HOV/HOT Lanes project will also relieve one of the worst traffic bottlenecks in the region where the existing HOV lanes currently end at Dumfries. Active management and dynamic tolling will be used to manage traffic across the HOV/HOT network, enhance incident response, provide reliable travel times, and reduce violators. Carpools with three or more people, vanpools and transit vehicles will have free access to the HOV/HOT Lanes network.

The new project will create a seamless, regional network of managed lanes connecting the I-95 and Capital Beltway corridors and serve Virginia's growing employment centers and military sites, including Tysons Corner, Ft. Belvoir, and Quantico. The network will create a free-flowing path for transit and provide the region's travelers new options, including first-time opportunities for carpooling and transit in many locations.

The Commonwealth will work with local jurisdictions in the geographical area of the new project to finalize and fund Park & Ride expansions and transit improvements to be delivered in parallel with the HOV/HOT Lanes project.

Concurrently, VDOT will proceed with plans to construct a new single-lane, reversible ramp to connect the existing HOV lanes on I-395 to Seminary Road. This ramp will provide direct HOV and transit access to Seminary Road to address the anticipated impact of the opening of the BRAC facility at the Mark Center. The ramp will be open only to HOV and transit.

We are committed to working collaboratively with local jurisdictions on the new I-95 HOV/HOT Lanes project scope and Seminary Road HOV/transit ramp to ensure we address the needs of adjacent communities and all travelers, including carpoolers, sluggers, and transit operators.

VDOT will submit these improvements as two separate amendments to this year's National Capital Region Financially Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan. We will soon commence a series of technical sessions with local jurisdiction staff and other stakeholders to provide more detail on the design and operations issues we know are important to you and your constituents. These priorities include, but are not limited to, issues such as access points, traffic operations, interfaces with adjacent roadways, noise abatement, safety and incident management, stormwater management, the efficient movement of transit vehicles, and long-term service quality on the HOV/HOT network.

VDOT and its partners have launched a renewed communications and outreach program to keep residents and travelers informed as the new I-95 HOV/HOT project and Seminary Road HOV/transit ramp proceed. VDOT will host citizen information meetings as part of the environmental review process for the improvements, currently anticipated to be held in late 2011.

VDOT expects to complete federal environmental review requirements for the new HOV/HOT Lanes and to be prepared to begin construction by the 2012 construction season. Environmental reviews are expected to begin for the new HOV/transit ramp at Seminary Road in 2011, with construction commencing as early as 2012.

The Commonwealth will provide funding to support the improvements, along with a substantial equity commitment from the private sector for the HOV/HOT Lanes project.

Together, these improvements will be critical first steps in VDOT's effort to ultimately extend the HOV/HOT Lanes network to Spotsylvania County.

Now is the time to address the urgent transportation needs in the I-95 corridor – it is critical to the quality of life of our citizens and to our economic prosperity. We look forward to working collaboratively with you to advance this important package of improvements.

Sincerely,

Sean T. Connaughton

SC:ja

Cc: Members, Alexandria City Council
Members, Arlington County Board
Members, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
Members, Prince William County Board of Supervisors
Members, Stafford County Board of Supervisors
Members, Spotsylvania County Board of Supervisors
Members, Fredericksburg City Council
The Honorable Gregory A. Whirley, Commissioner, Virginia Department of Transportation
Mr. Mal Kerley, Chief Engineer, Virginia Department of Transportation