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COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Sean T. Connaughton
Secretary of Transportation

July 11, 2011

The Honorable William D. Euille
Mayor City of Alexandria
Alexandria City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Subject: I-395/Seminary Road HOV/Transit Ramp

Dear Mayor Euille:

Thank you for your March 21, 2011 letter regarding the I-395/Seminary Road HOV/Transit ramp. I am also in receipt of the City's BRAC-133 Advisory Group's March 21, 2011 letter to you on the same subject. I apologize for the delay in responding.

On April 7, 2011 the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) announced that an Environmental Assessment (EA) would be required for the ramp project. Since FHWA's decision, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and FHWA met to discuss and determine the requirements of the EA. Based upon those discussions, the attached NEPA Documentation Concurrence Form and Purpose and Need were approved by FHWA.

VDOT and FHWA agreed the EA will study alternatives that concentrate on addressing forecasted severe traffic congestion and delays at the following locations:

- The on-ramp merge from Seminary Road to southbound I-395 general purpose lanes (PM Peak)
- The off-ramp diverge from northbound I-395 to Seminary Road (AM Peak)

Further, FHWA and VDOT agreed the following alternatives will be considered to address the traffic congestion and delay issues cited above:

- No-build;
- I-395 HOV/Transit Ramp with left and right-turn options onto Seminary Road;

- I-395 HOV/Transit Ramp with a restricted left-turn only onto Seminary Road.

As you know, many transit/transportation demand management (TDM) studies have been performed on the I-95/I-395 corridor over the past few years. These studies include: the I-95/I-395 Bus Rapid Transit study (April 2010), the Army Transportation Management Plan for Mark Center (July 2010) and the I-95/I-395 Transit/TDM Study (February 2008). Additionally, the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation recently began an update of the I-95 Transit and TDM Study. These studies represent a comprehensive effort by the Commonwealth to study the effectiveness and benefit of transit and TDM alternatives in the I-95/I-395 corridor and will be referenced in the I-395 HOV/Transit Ramp EA.

In your April 8, 2010 letter to me, you pledged the City's utmost cooperation to work with VDOT to determine the best interchange alternative. We appreciate the City's support of VDOT's request of the Regional Transportation Planning Board to amend the 2010 Constrained Long Range Plan to include the I-395 HOV/Transit ramp in the recent air quality conformity analyses.

However, in order for this project to be successful, I am requesting a City Council resolution stating your support of the NEPA approach agreed upon by VDOT and FHWA as outlined in this letter and attachments. City Council support of and commitment to this approach to design and construct the I-395 HOV/Transit ramp, including resisting requests to continually perform costly and time consuming studies, is paramount. Additional delay caused by unnecessary and continued study will not only delay implementation of a solution to the traffic issues caused by the BRAC development, but may also jeopardize the funding that is currently available.

We look forward to continuing to work with the City on this very important improvement.

Sincerely,



Sean T. Connaughton

Attachments (2)

SC:tf

cc: The Honorable Robert F. McDonnell
Gregory Whirley, VDOT Commissioner

NEPA Documentation Concurrence Form

Project Information

Project Name:	I-395 HOV Ramp @ Seminary Road	Federal Project#:	NH-000S(218)
Project Number:	0095-100-722, P101	Project Type:	Construction
UPC:	96261	Charge Number:	UPC 96261 Act. 605
Route Number:	95	Route Type:	Interstate
Project Limit-From:	Seminary Road Interchange	To:	Seminary Road Interchange
Additional Project Description:	I-395 HOV Ramp at Seminary Road - Reversible ramp will provide direct I-395 access for HOV and bus transit to and from the planned new Washington Headquarters Services (WHS) site in the southwest quadrant of the existing interchange.		
District:	City/County:	Residency:	
Northern Virginia	Alexandria	Fairfax	

Suggested Level of NEPA Document: EA

Section 6002 of SAFETEA-LU may apply to EAs on a case by case basis. The default assumption is that it will not apply to this EA. FHWA concurrence infers agreement with the default assumption.

Comments:

The project will be constructed largely within the existing right-of-way; no significant environmental impacts are anticipated. Project level air and noise studies will be conducted. There is a high level of public interest in this project and its NEPA class of action. Public concerns include consideration of alternatives and the impacts on travel patterns in the area, and these issues will need to be evaluated in detail. An Environmental Assessment is the appropriate vehicle for considering multiple project alternatives and soliciting and addressing public comments. The three alternatives that will be considered include the no-build alternative; a left- and right-turn option onto Seminary Road from the ramp; and a restricted left-turn only. Previously studied transit alternatives and studies will be incorporated into the document by reference.

We concur with the suggested level of NEPA document.



John Dimkins

5/17/11

FHWA Approval

Date

FHWA comment: We agree with the preparation of an Environmental Assessment. In accordance with section II.C of FHWA's "Guidance for Preparing and Processing Environmental and Section 4(f) Documents," it is acceptable to evaluate in detail two build alternatives and the no-build alternative. However, FHWA and VDOT will need to agree on the project's purpose and need before deciding on the specific alternatives to be evaluated in detail.

