

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: DECEMBER 16, 2015

TO: MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

FROM: CARRIE SANDERS, ACTING DEPUTY DIRECTOR, T&ES

SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM # 4 – I-395 EXPRESS LANES PROJECT

ISSUE: Update on the State of Virginia’s I-395 Express Lanes Project

RECOMMENDATION: That the Transportation Commission (Commission) receive the update on the State of Virginia’s I-395 Express Lanes Project.

BACKGROUND: In 2009, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) began a planning process to develop High Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lanes on I-95/395 . The I-95/395 HOT Lanes project was part of an emerging network of managed lanes in Virginia to enable people in single-occupant vehicles to pay a toll to access express lanes to travel in a corridor faster than the general purpose lanes. The HOT Lanes concept allows the State to leverage private investment to minimize the State’s commitment for initial capital outlay as well as ongoing operational costs.

During this initial project in 2009, both Alexandria and Arlington relayed a number of concerns to VDOT related to traffic impacts on local intersections and roadways, noise, and impacts to pedestrian, bicycle and transit facilities. In 2009, based on the recommendation of the Transportation Commission, the City Council passed a resolution strongly opposing the HOT Lanes project.. The HOT Lanes project was eventually revised to end south of Duke Street. The HOT lane project, ending south of Duke Street, began operation in December 2014.

In September 2015, there were reports in the media of a possible extension of the HOT Lanes into Alexandria, and the City began tracking the potential project (<http://wtop.com/traffic/2015/09/virginia-may-extend-95-express-lanes-395/>).

DISCUSSION: On November 20, 2015 the Virginia Secretary of Transportation sent a letter to the City and other jurisdictions noting the State’s planned action to improve travel along the I-395 Corridor (Attachment 1). The letter noted the State’s intent to initiate an Environmental Assessment to study the conversion / expansion of the existing HOV lanes to dynamically priced Express lanes into Washington D.C. In addition, the state will initiate a transportation demand management study to identify transit, carpool, vanpool and other demand management strategies to improve travel along the corridor. A full description of the project is included in the letter from the State of Virginia in Attachment 1 and in the project brochure in Attachment 2.

The state intends to provide coordination with affected jurisdictions. VDOT is actively reaching out to City civic and community associations. In the meantime, the City of Alexandria has raised a number of questions related to the project, which were included in a letter was sent to the Secretary of Transportation in early December (Attachment 3). The City will work closely with VDOT as well as Arlington and Fairfax counties in the coming months to further explore this proposal and how it differs from previous proposals. The City will actively participate in the environmental assessment to ensure the City's concerns are addressed, and will be asking VDOT to attend a future Transportation Commission meeting to further discuss the project components and issues.

Attachments: 1) Letter from Secretary of Transportation regarding I-395 Express Lanes
2) I-395 Express Lanes project brochure
3) Letter from City to the Secretary of Transportation regarding I-395 Express Lanes