I-95 Richmond Bridge Restorations
Electronic Message Signs
Travel Time FAQs

Upham Brook Bridge Overpass, I-95, Richmond, VA (Photo by VDOT)

1. What are electronic message signs?
They are programmable, electronic highway signs that are controlled by the Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT) Traffic Operations Centers (TOC). They communicate important information to drivers about traffic-related conditions such as accidents, roadway hazards, work zones and congestion.

2. How are traffic times estimated?
VDOT acquires current statewide travel time data from Inrix, a traffic information company. The majority of the data they receive comes from fleet systems that use Global Positioning Satellite Systems (GPS) to monitor vehicle location, speed and route. This data is combined with other sources to show a complete picture of the current traffic flow.

3. What are the benefits of using the message signs to display travel times?
Travel times are currently displayed on message signs in the Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads regions. These have proved successful in providing accurate, real-time travel time information to drivers, allowing them to choose whether to continue on their route or take an alternate. This also reduces trip time-related anxiety and traffic congestion.

4. How many message signs are there throughout the Richmond area?
There are 15 overhead (or permanent) signs. VDOT also uses portable units, but they will not be used initially for travel time messages.

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5. How many of those 15 message signs will display travel times?

The initial phase will focus on commuters to downtown Richmond and include five signs along the I-95 corridor. This phased implementation will allow VDOT to monitor and validate messaging. Commuters are encouraged to provide feedback about the travel time messages through May 20 at **www.surveymonkey.com/s/5MDBNBL.** Future phases will include existing message signs on other routes leading to Richmond as well as the Tri-cities area.

6. What are the locations of the travel time message signs?

All five in the initial phase are oriented toward downtown Richmond inbound traffic:

- Three are located on I-95 southbound: Two at mile markers 94.4 and 88.6 in Hanover County and one at mile marker 81.3 Henrico County.
- Two are located on I-95 northbound in Chesterfield County at mile marker 59.3 and 66.1.

7. Why are they all on I-95 for the initial phase?

VDOT is better able to fine tune the details of this program when a single corridor is used during the testing phase. The goal is to ensure that the information displayed, such as message wording, segment length and destinations are useful and understandable to drivers. I-95 was selected because of the ongoing bridge rehabilitation work through downtown Richmond.

8. When will the message signs display travel times?

I-95 drivers can expect travel times to be regularly displayed during weekday morning and afternoon rush hour (5 a.m.-9 a.m. and 3 p.m.-7 p.m.) as well as weekday afternoons and on weekends when lane closures are in place for the I-95 Richmond Bridge Restorations project. VDOT will fine tune the schedule based on what time of day the message signs will be most useful to drivers.

9. What is the cost?

Minimal. The message signs are already in place, so there is no need to install new signs. The travel time data from Inrix is part of an existing statewide contract. There are minor sign maintenance and electricity costs to operate the signs more frequently than they operated previously.

10. Does VDOT plan to install more permanent message signs in the Richmond area?

VDOT will add more message signs as the budget allows. A new sign typically costs between $150,000-$250,000.

11. Will the message signs still be used to communicate other information about work zones, accidents, etc.?

The TOC will have the ability to override the travel time message and display higher priority information such as accidents and work zones whenever needed. There will also be opportunities to combine the higher priority messages with travel times to give drivers a more accurate picture of the traffic situation through Richmond.