



Citizen Information Meeting

I-95 Access Study Environmental Assessment Spotsylvania and Stafford Counties and City of Fredericksburg

Thursday, December 15, 2011, 5 - 7 p.m.
Salem Church Library, Room A
2607 Salem Church Road
Fredericksburg, VA 22407

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

State Project: 0095-111-259, P101
Federal Project: IM-5111(235), UPC 101595

What is a location study?

A location study consists of environmental, traffic, and engineering studies, as well as public involvement and outreach efforts. An important element of this location study involves preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA) to meet requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other related laws.

What is the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)?

Congress enacted NEPA in December 1969, and President Nixon signed it into law on January 1, 1970. NEPA was the first major environmental law in the United States and established this country's national environmental policies. To implement these policies, NEPA requires federal agencies to undertake an assessment of the environmental effects of their proposed actions prior to making decisions. Following this environmental review process leads to better informed decisions and increased citizen involvement.

What is an EA and what will it include?

The EA will examine potential environmental impacts based on detailed studies, field reviews, and resource agency input. The resources to be studied include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Air Quality
- Parks & Recreation Areas
- Cultural/Historic Properties
- Social & Economic Considerations
- Farmlands
- Threatened/Endangered Species
- Hazardous Materials
- Wetlands & Waters of the U.S.
- Noise Impacts

How long will it take to conduct the study?

The study began in September 2011 and is scheduled to end in November 2012.

When would anything approved in this study actually be built?

The environmental process has to be completed before any construction can occur. If a build alternative is selected, design and construction documents must be prepared and the right of way acquired. The entire process will take several years, assuming funding availability.

Why does it take VDOT so long to plan a highway?

VDOT must follow many required laws and regulations, collect substantial amounts of information, carefully consider all relevant factors, consult with citizens and elected officials, coordinate with other government agencies, develop and consider a range of alternatives, and fully document all of these efforts. In short, highway planning in this day and age is a complex process that takes time to complete.

How much will the entire project cost?

It depends entirely on the alternative decided upon by the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) and approved by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The CTB is comprised of citizens appointed by the Governor. If a build alternative is selected, costs will depend on the type of facility (e.g., type of access control, interchange vs. intersection), the number of access points, and the number of lanes. The EA will include planning-level cost estimates.

Where will the road improvements be located?

VDOT compiles factual information to meet NEPA requirements for impartial review of all alternatives, including the No-Build Alternative. The CTB makes the ultimate decisions regarding the implementation of any build alternative. This decision is made following the completion of the EA and the Location Public Hearing.

Is there funding to construct?

As of today, there is no funding for construction of any improvements. Once an alternative is selected, VDOT and the George Washington Toll Road Authority (GWTRA) will examine possible funding sources. Allocations of funding for construction are made annually with the update of the Six-Year Improvement Program.

In 2009, the Virginia General Assembly created the GWTRA for the purpose of supplementing public finances to fund the improvements recommended in this study.

What is the No-Build Alternative?

The No-Build Alternative is to take no action other than what is already scheduled in VDOT's Six-Year Improvement Program. Also, in metropolitan areas, the No-Build Alternative assumes implementation of other committed projects, including the Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPOs) long-range transportation plan.

What is a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)?

MPOs are established by agreement of the Governor and the local governments for each urbanized area with a population greater than 50,000. The MPOs are responsible for a regionally coordinated continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning and programming process. The Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (FAMPO) was designated after the 1990 Census. FAMPO is part of the George Washington Regional Commission (GWRC) and was established in 1993 to carry out the regional transportation planning process.

The FAMPO planning area includes the City of Fredericksburg and the counties of Spotsylvania and Stafford. FAMPO is currently governed by an 11-member Policy Committee, which is a voting board that includes three members from Stafford County, three from Spotsylvania County, three from the City of Fredericksburg, one from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), and one from the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC). Non-voting members include one each from Caroline County, King George County, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT).

When will the public have an opportunity to participate in the study?

There will be numerous opportunities for public participation in the study, including this public meeting and the Location Public Hearing, which will be held after the completion of the EA to review and comment on the environmental document the location of the improvements. Throughout the process, additional information and updates can be found on the study website:

http://www.virginiadot.org/projects/fredericksburg/interstate_95_access_study.asp.