

4. PUBLIC SUPPORT

4.1. ECONOMIC BENEFITS

The principal beneficiaries of the VCP proposal will be the citizens, businesses and governments depending daily on what today is an unsafe and overburdened Route 460. These stakeholders would benefit from a safer, more efficient road by which to travel, ship goods, and feed the economic development potential of the region. In addition to these primary beneficiaries, the Commonwealth's transportation system would benefit from a modern alternative to I-64 as well as an additional evacuation route from Hampton Roads in times of emergency. Finally, an improved 460 would benefit the United States by providing for improved ease of transport to and from Southeast Virginia's numerous military installations.

INCREASED SAFETY FOR DRIVERS

Current users of the once rural Route 460 face a harrowing drive on a multi-lane boulevard replete with frequently changing speed limits, unlimited access for cars and trucks entering the right of way, insufficient turn lanes and a near complete lack of shoulder space or median division between lanes. When such deficient road conditions are paired with the sharp increase in traffic experienced by Southeast Virginia in recent years, the result is an outdated road that is a danger to those who drive it and a burden to those who depend on it for business, economic development, and homeland security.

And the problem will only get worse with time. Chesapeake and Suffolk remain among the fastest growing localities in the Commonwealth, and several other jurisdictions along the corridor - notably Isle of Wight and Southampton Counties, are beginning to experience growth pressures and corresponding increases in traffic volumes. For example, annual daily traffic in the small town of Ivor in Southampton County soared 28% in just three years from an estimated 8,600 vehicles-per-day in 2001 to 11,000 vehicles-per-day in 2004. Increased traffic on Route 460 has led to crash rates that are the highest in the state for similarly situated rural roadways.

The cost of doing nothing is substantial. As evidenced by crash statistics, the existing Route 460 corridor will soon be totally unable to safely handle increasing traffic volumes. In addition, without our recommended improvements to Route 460, other roads such as Route 58 and Route 10 may also see large increases in traffic, and congestion would only worsen on I-64 between Norfolk and Richmond. By contrast, former Commissioner of VDOT Phil Shucet argued in 2004 that making U.S. 460 into something approaching an interstate highway would both relieve the traffic load throttling the I-64 corridor on the Peninsula as well as ease - although not remove - the need for a third crossing of Hampton Roads.

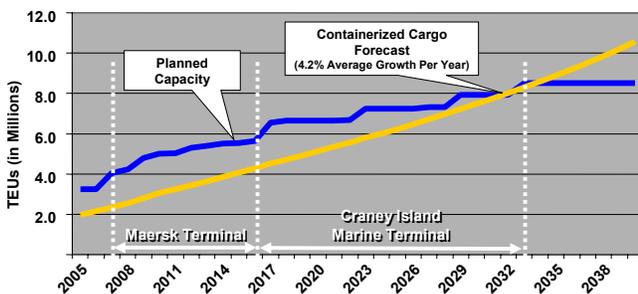
Thus, as use of the road continues to grow over the coming decades - whether as an alternative to the congestion on I-64, as an artery to growing exurban populations in the Tri-Cities and Hampton Roads, or as a result of the anticipated increase in port related traffic discussed below - safety conditions will continue to deteriorate without a comprehensive solution offered like the one offered by VCP.

GREATER EFFICIENCY FOR THE PORTS AND BUSINESS

An improved Route 460 is necessary for the continued growth of the Port of Hampton Roads - an important component of both the regional and state economy.

Today, business is booming at the Port of Hampton Roads, with substantial investments in infrastructure anticipated in the coming years. But while the related growth in warehousing and distribution activities will be good for the Hampton Roads economy, the resulting truck volumes will be more than the existing transportation infrastructure can handle.

Projected Cargo Demand & Planned Capacity



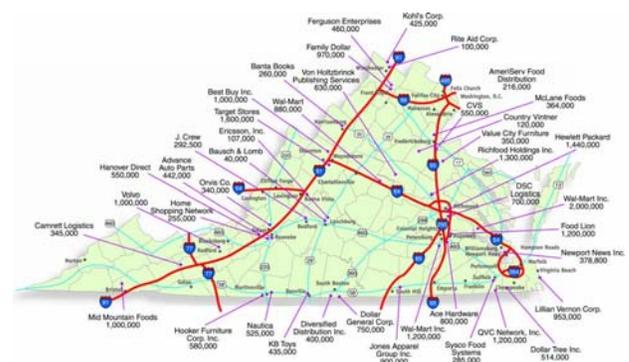
Source: VPA Master Plan. Forecast numbers prepared in 2005 and represent average increase over the forecast period.

By mid-2007, APM Terminals will have developed a new facility in Portsmouth and by 2017 there will be a fourth marine container terminal at Craney Island. As a result, the number of containers expected to be moving through the region will increase five-fold in the next thirty years (see chart above). According to the Virginia Port Authority, port volumes will increase by over 400% between 2006 and 2030.

The increase in port activity doubtless portends an increase in truck traffic in Southeast Virginia. Over the past decade, Virginia has emerged as a significant warehousing and distribution hub

for the East Coast, driven by the growth of the ports and the state's strategic position. As this map shows, these distribution centers are located throughout the state. The planned port improvements have resulted in announcements of even more facilities along the Route 58 and 460 corridors in the greater Hampton Roads region. The Virginia Port Authority projects that increased port volume will result in an increase of almost 7,000 daily trips for commercial truck traffic on the roads of Southeast Virginia by 2030 for the 255 port working days each year.

With such substantial growth projected in port-related traffic in the coming decades, the need for an enhanced 460 has reached a tipping point. Route 460 is already a primary overland shipping route with truck traffic accounting for between 18 and 34% of the vehicular "through" traffic on the length of the road. These represent significantly higher percentages than the national average (10%) for rural roads similarly classified. Further, the DEIS estimates that these numbers would grow to between 30 and 37 percent under a No Build scenario. And while these trucks are crucial to the region's economy, they do not come without cost for the corridor's other travelers - between 1999 and 2001 approximately half of the fatal crashes in the Route 460 corridor involved tractor-trailers



Thus, while the Virginia Port Authority and APM Terminals have done an excellent job planning for development of terminal capacity, Virginia must now do its part to ensure that containers entering Virginia's Ports can move around the state or to destinations beyond while minimizing undue delay and unsafe conditions. Projects such as the Third Crossing, the development of the Heartlands Corridor, and other identified transportation priorities are all important to these efforts, but the construction of Route 460 to interstate standards, as proposed by our team, will be particularly crucial to the growth of the Ports and to the continued safety of the citizens of Southeast Virginia.

IMPROVED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Route 460 is an economic lifeline for the Counties, Cities and Towns lining its track from Hampton Roads through the rural Virginia countryside to Petersburg and Richmond. But according to Arthur L. Collins, the executive director of the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission, companies throughout the region have consistently complained of lost productivity as employees and products idle on the region's gridlocked roads (Traffic Woes Spreading to Smaller Communities, Richmond Times Dispatch, April 10, 2006). If trends continue unchecked, the lack of investment in infrastructure could have real and negative impacts on the future economic development potential of Southeast Virginia.

Local governments throughout the region have consistently identified improvements to Route 460 as critical to the economic future of their respective localities.

The **City of Suffolk** 2018 Comprehensive Plan (1998) calls Route 460 a vital connector for the regional movement of goods to the Eastern portion of Hampton Roads and acknowledges the need for upgrading 460 to a limited access highway.

In 2003, **Isle of Wight County's** Director of Economic Development commented that the Route 460 corridor "represents the short term and the intermediate future of economic development potential for our community. Longer term it represents the key to the diversification of our corporate employment and tax base."

The **Southampton County** Comprehensive Plan Update (2000) cites the need to attract prospective industries with "accessibility to major thoroughfares."

Surry County's Land Development Plan states that the County is committed to intercounty access.

Prince George County's Updated Comprehensive Plan (1999) identifies sites for industrial and commercial use along the 460 corridor and designates the entire corridor within the County, including the I-295/Route 460 interchange, as an Enterprise Zone providing special incentives to industries agreeing to locate there (VDOT, Route 460 Location Study "Purpose and Need Technical Report, page 9). As Prince George County Board of Supervisor's Chairman Joseph A. Leming commented in 2005, improvements to Route 460 are "necessary part[s] of our business infrastructure." Chairman Leming went on to add that a new Route 460 would open up Prince George and surrounding localities to become viable partners with Hampton Roads (Andrew Price, VDOT to Air Options on U.S. 460 at a Meeting in Disputanta, Richmond Times Dispatch, July, 21, 2005).

With nearly every local government along Route 460 viewing the road as crucial to future economic development, it stands to reason that the delays and unsafe conditions on the current roadway will hurt

local government efforts to attract new businesses to the area and to encourage existing businesses to expand. Simply put, without the improvements found in the VCP proposal, Southeast Virginia runs the risk of being stuck in unmanageable gridlock or, alternatively, being left behind by economic investment.

In addition to the impact on local government revenues, the development of 460 offers other economic development opportunities for significant landowners in the corridor. Among the biggest opportunities is 1600 acres owned by Norfolk Southern in Isle of Wight County. This site, originally acquired by the company for a coal storage yard, will be bisected by the CBA 1 Route and is along the Norfolk Southern mainline from Suffolk to Petersburg. In discussions with company officials, it has become evident that their goal is to have the site be developed for a manufacturing facility, not an intermodal yard or a distribution center. As one of the few "mega-sites" in Virginia, and the only one controlled by one landowner, this site is key to the Commonwealth's economic development plans.

INCREASED SECURITY FOR VIRGINIA AND AMERICA

Finally, an improved Route 460 is needed to enhance public safety, particularly in the event of a hurricane or other disaster in the Hampton Roads area. During Hurricane Floyd, many sections of existing Route 460 were closed because of flooding, making this vital escape route unusable. If a hurricane was forecast to make a direct hit on Hampton Roads, nearly 2 million people would have to evacuate on short notice. Unfortunately, the current road infrastructure is woefully inadequate to handle such volumes. VDOT currently estimates that it would take a car between 8 1/2 and 26 3/4 hours clearance time to evacuate Virginia Beach in case of natural disaster due to overburdened evacuation routes. The plan proposed by VCP would render Route 460 resistant to flooding and would allow the citizens of Hampton Roads another viable escape route in the event of natural disaster.

Route 460 is also critical to our national security. An improved Route 460 is needed to support the United States' substantial military infrastructure found in the several installations in the Hampton Roads region as well as Fort Lee in Petersburg. In addition, the United States Department of Defence has designated Route 460 as part of the 61,000 mile Strategic Highway Network (STRAHNET). According to the DEIS, the STRAHNET designation means that Route 460 performs a critical role in preserving the nation's security and military preparedness by connecting the Hampton Roads and Richmond/Petersburg military facilities with the interstate highway system and must therefore follow certain design guidelines based upon its classification as a rural principle arterial highway. Route 460 currently fails to meet these design guidelines and, thus, the improvements proposed by the VCP will help the route meet federal military requirements.

CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS

As with any transportation project, the development of Route 460 is expected to create thousands of construction jobs during its development and will support additional jobs during the operations and maintenance phase. In addition, the construction itself will generate increased tax revenues for the localities in which activity is occurring.

4.2. GOVERNMENT AND GENERAL PUBLIC SUPPORT

Stakeholder support for improvement to Route 460 is overwhelming. As the recently concluded environmental impact statement process made clear, stakeholders at all levels - from citizens to governments and from existing businesses to local economic development officers - have been vocal in their support of the project.

4.2.1. Support from Federal, State and Local Governments

The proposed improvements to Route 460 have found support at every level of government as well as with many regional governmental groups.

There is clear support for the project at the federal level. Congressional action has plainly demonstrated support for study and investment in the Route 460 corridor. By act of Congress, Route 460 has been designated as a "National Highway System high priority corridor" as a part of the "East-West Transamerica Corridor" (Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, Section 1105(c)(3)). This designation includes the Route 460 corridor in the National Highway System and entitles the corridor to federal funding (Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, Section 1105 (b)). Support for the project can also be found among individual members of Congress who have worked to secure federal earmarks for the project.

While some federal agencies, including the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Environmental Protection Agency, expressed initial concern with some of the early proposed routes, it does not appear from the DEIS that these agencies have raised similar objections to the route chosen by Virginia Corridor Partners. VCP will work with VDOT as well as federal agencies and private environmental groups to minimize the impact of the chosen route on nearby wetlands, rivers and endangered species.

Route 460 improvements are similarly supported at the state level. The Resolution of the Commonwealth Transportation Board on November 17, 2005, selecting and adopting Candidate Build Alternative 1 located to the south of the existing Route 460 as the preferred alignment demonstrates strong state support for the project. In addition, there has long been strong state legislative support for the USR 460 project. State legislative support was first evidenced by \$25 million in funding for Route 460 improvements contained in the Virginia Transportation Act of 2000. This action was followed by House Joint Resolution 684 passed during the 2001 General Assembly session creating the Route 460 Communications Committee. That group's mandate has been extended several times, and it has been a potent force both in increasing awareness of the project's necessity as well as encouraging VDOT to solicit PPTA proposals for the project's development.

Local government support for an improved Route 460 has also been consistently strong. In addition to widespread local government recognition of the key role Route 460 plays in economic development for the region (see 4.1. above), many local governments have specifically endorsed all or part of the proposed plan. But while the need for improvement to the current road is nearly unanimous, some local governments disfavor the particular route chosen by the CTB and the VCP. VCP are sensitive to the concerns of local governments and will continue to work with all affected government entities to ensure the success of the USR 460 project.

On August 25, 2003, **Southampton County** passed a resolution endorsing an alignment of Route 460 "in close proximity to the current alignment and existing towns along the Route 460 corridor" and asked that VDOT take into account a range of social, environmental, and economic factors in determining the new alignment. Then on July 25, 2005, the Board of Supervisors resolved to support CBA 1.

On July 20, 2005, the **City of Suffolk** endorsed either CBA 1 or CBA 3 as preferred alignments for the improved Route 460, citing, in part, the critical role the road plays in economic development for the city.

On November 22, 2005, the **City of Chesapeake** passed a resolution requesting that VDOT fund certain improvements to Route 460 as part of the City's six-year plan thus demonstrating support for Route 460 improvements.

On April 13, 2004, the **Town of Windsor** passed a resolution supporting conceptual alignment "A" which eventually became CBA 1 citing the alignment's limits on historical and environmental impact as well as the opportunity for increased commercial, industrial and economic activity for the Town as well as Isle of Wight County and the Commonwealth. In addition, on April 12, 2005, the Town passed a resolution endorsing a left hand turn lane on Route 460 within the Town of Windsor - further evidence of the Town's interest in Route 460 improvement.

Isle of Wight County has been consistent in its support of improvements to the Route 460 corridor. However, like many local governments, the County has taken various positions on the specifics of the project over time. On March 18, 2004, the Board of Supervisors of Isle of Wight County passed a resolution in support of Conceptual Alternative A which became the basis for CBA 1, the selected route. On July 7, 2005, the Board voted to support CBA 1 with the request that VDOT take into consideration future development plans for an industrial park southeast of Windsor. Then, on October 6, 2005, the Board rescinded all previous endorsements and theorized that they would endorse CBA 2 with numerous caveats. On October 20, 2005, the Board of Supervisors generally endorsed improvements to Route 460 as a high priority as a part of its recommendations for the FY2007-2012 Virginia Transportation Improvement Program of the CTB and VDOT. Finally, on March 16, 2006, the Board recanted and endorsed VDOT's chosen route with the request that VDOT try to avoid certain farms in the County. As it stands, Isle of Wight seems to be supportive of the project. Further, the Board directed citizens to voice additional concerns directly to VDOT.

The **Town of Ivor** has taken no official position on the proposal, although the minutes of the July 25, 2005 Southampton County Board of Supervisors meeting suggested that Mayor Joyner believed the Town would favor CBA 1 if ever they chose to take an official position.

Prince George County has not taken an official position regarding the proposed route. However, at their September 13, 2005 meeting, the County Board of Supervisors discussed the three possible routes (CBAs 1, 2, and 3). Without taking a formal vote, the Board came to consensus that CBA 3, the northernmost route, would be the preferred route although CBA 1 would be acceptable as well. The Board agreed that CBA 2 was the worst option for Prince George County. Prince George County has consistently supported improvements to Route 460 as critical to the economic success of the County.

On July 24, 2003, the **Surry County** Board of Supervisors passed a resolution supporting Route 460 improvement "as a new interstate quality roadway...to link Interstate 295 to Interstate 664." The Board also supported the use of tolls to expedite the road's construction. However, the Board went on to

support an alignment to the north of the existing roadway. The Board has taken no further official action on the subject since the CTB endorsement of CBA 1.

In addition to the support of federal, state and numerous local governments, Route 460 improvements are supported by several regional authorities.

On November 14, 2003, Arthur Collins, Executive Director of the **Hampton Roads Planning District Commission**, sent a letter conveying the Commission's support for a limited access road within close proximity, either north or south, to the existing roadway (Virginia Department of Transportation, Route 460 Location Study, Draft Environmental Impact Statement, page 222).

The **Hampton Roads Metropolitan Planning Organization** endorsed using tolls to partially fund Route 460 improvements in its Spring 2006 "Special Report: Hampton Roads Proposed Transportation Toll Projects."

On August 30, 2005, J. Robert Bray, Executive Director for the **Virginia Port Authority**, sent a letter specifically endorsing CBA 1 due to its "close proximity to the existing rail along the entire length of the corridor, which is also highly desirable for [distribution centers] that can benefit from good road and rail access. Previously, on December 1, 2003, Mr. Bray recommended both that a limited access highway be established close to the existing Route 460 and that the study area be expanded to the south.

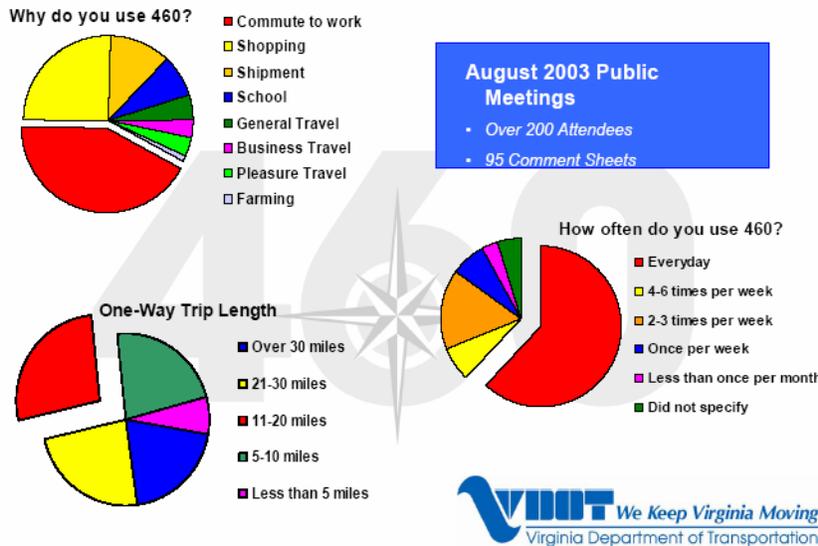
Route 460 improvements are the top priority for the **Crater District Metropolitan Planning Organization**. The Crater District MPO is federally restrained from endorsing plans without concurrently identifying necessary funding and thus currently endorses improving the existing four lane facility. However, they have expressed a willingness to revise their plan if VDOT accepts a PPTA proposal providing the requisite funding for the improvements.

In spite of this overwhelming support for the project, not every local government has endorsed the plan. **Sussex County**, along with two towns within the County, **Wakefield** and **Waverly**, have consistently passed resolutions against the proposed changes because of the negative effect they believe the new route will have on local business and economic development investments. Both the County and the two towns have invested substantial resources in developing the current 460 corridor and are concerned that those "bypassed" areas will falter due to the new Route. In July 2005, Wakefield Mayor Wayne Birdsong effectively summed up the feelings of Sussex County, Wakefield and Waverly when he said: "I can foresee a lot of the towns being desolated after the bypasses are put in because people are not going to leave the interstate to get gas, food, or lodging unless they can see those places at the end of the ramp." As a result, the Sussex County Board passed a resolution opposing the relocation of Route 460 on June 16th, 2005 and another resolution asking that certain changes be made to the relocation proposal on February 16, 2006. The Town of Wakefield passed a resolution opposing the relocation of Route 460 on April 11, 2005. The Town of Waverly passed a resolution opposing the relocation of Route 460 on September 15, 2003.

4.2.2. General public support

4.2.2.1. Support from Citizens

Several thousand residents along the corridor attended public hearings, submitted written comments, attended scoping meetings, and participated in citizen information sessions to provide input or learn more about the proposed improvements to Route 460.



As this chart from VDOT makes clear, Route 460 is a lifeline for the citizens of Southeast Virginia. The road is not simply used for short trips by locals or by through traffic from Hampton Roads or Richmond/Petersburg. Instead, local residents rely heavily on the corridor for commuting, shopping and to get to and from school—all on a daily basis. In addition, survey results showed that the average trip length was quite long—suggesting that commuters and other daily users are well accustomed to the safety concerns of the route. There can

be no doubt from the available data that the vast majority of the citizens within the affected region support a comprehensive improvement to Route 460 akin to the proposal from the VCP.

In spite of wide public support for Route 460 improvements, the plan is not without citizen opposition. Citizen opposition can be seen from directly affected landowners, businesses, and certain environmental concerns.

Judging from published reports, the most vocal opponents to the proposed route seem to be those whose property will be directly affected by the taking. While it is understandable that these citizens would be upset with the road's placement, such consternation is a logical result of any public taking and similar concerns would likely be raised no matter where the new road was aligned.

That said, some directly affected homeowners have voiced concerns about Environmental Justice—suggesting that the route unfairly targets certain homeowners by race or socioeconomic condition, although the clear evidence does not support such a conclusion. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement states that CBA 2 (not selected) would have displaced the highest number of minority and low income persons of the three potential plans. The DEIS goes on to show that the severity of displacement impacting minority and low-income populations in CBA 1 is roughly proportional to the occurrence of the populations throughout the study area. For example, minority residents account for 27 to 38 percent of the total displacements with CBA 1 compared to the study area minority population of 37 percent. In similar fashion, low-income displacements associated with CBA 1 range from 9 to 11

percent compared to a study area percentage of 9 percent. By way of contrast, CBA 2's minority residential displacement of 48 to 53 percent significantly exceeds the study area's 37 percent minority population. Thus, while environmental justice is a real concern, the DEIS clearly shows that the minority and low-income displacement caused by the chosen route is proportional to overall populations.

The DEIS notes that throughout the federal agency partnering process, resource agencies have noted the potential for the new roadway alignment to adversely impact nearby wetlands and streams, specifically the Blackwater River. So too, certain environmental advocates have voiced concern regarding the new route's potentially adverse effect on the Blackwater River. The DEIS makes clear that VDOT is aware of these concerns and will work to mitigate any adverse effects stemming from highway construction on the surrounding waterways. Specifically, the DEIS states that "stormwater management facilities will be designed in accordance with specifications set forth in Section 3.14 of the Virginia Erosion and Sediment Control Handbook (1992) and VDOT's Annual Erosion and Sediment Control and Stormwater Management Standards and Specifications, as approved by VDCR (4-59, DEIS)." VCP will work with VDOT and applicable state agencies to ensure that the state's water resources are protected throughout the construction process.

4.2.2.2. Support from Business

Business interests throughout the corridor have endorsed Route 460 improvements.

Several business groups, particularly in Hampton Roads, have endorsed a limited access, interstate quality highway in the 460 corridor citing the value of such improvements to the region's economy. Supportive groups include the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce, the Portsmouth Partnership, the Greater Norfolk Corporation, the Chesapeake Alliance, Virginia Beach Vision, and Suffolk Tomorrow (letter to Mr. Dennis W. Heuer, P.E., Hampton Roads District Administrator, VDOT dated July 29, 2005).

The plan is not without opposition from the business community, although such opposition is isolated. Some small business owners, particularly those fronting the current Route 460, have complained that the new route will unfairly hurt their businesses by drawing away traffic. Business owners in Sussex County and particularly in the Towns of Wakefield and Waverly have expressed this concern. For example, William Galloway, the co-owner of the Virginia Diner in Wakefield commented in 2005 that the Diner depends on the 800 to 1,000 vehicles per day it draws from the road and that if those cars were to bypass the town, "these little places are going dry right slam up" (Edward Lebow, Public to Hear Road Options, Daily Press, July 16, 2005).

4.3. COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

The development team understands the importance of having a communications plan that will address the needs and concerns of the many stakeholders in the 460 Corridor including the various municipalities, businesses and residents along 460 between Suffolk and Petersburg.

The Public Relations Strategy will focus on clarifying the impact of the project upon local governments and the general public. The plan will include media briefings, and if necessary talking points for all

stakeholders. Targeted efforts will be directed at appropriate local officials, legislators, local government agencies, civic leaders and private commercial real estate industry representatives.

The Communication/Information Plan and Strategy will be a multi-audience plan to ensure that all stakeholders including the general public remain actively involved and informed throughout the term of the project until completion. There will be regular consultations with team members including City, County and State officials. There will be two principal areas for implementation - internal and external communications.

Internal Communications will include regular project team meetings between the development team and public staff members, and may include the creation of a Communications Committee comprised of development team, local and State representatives.

External communications to inform stakeholders and the general public about the progress and development of the project may include feature articles in local newspapers, promoting the Project, providing progress reports and encouraging support in project activities; educational seminars about the overall scope, timing and benefits; participation in state and local government level roundtables and other speaking opportunities or public forums; participation in local and regional public and professional trade group and related organizations; a project website and a project hot line. The website and hotline will focus on the traveling public.