

ITEM 3 – Update
June 7, 2024

Visualize 2050: Recap of May Action and Non-Regionally Significant
Project Submissions Due

Update: As noted in the staff remarks during the June 7 TPB Technical Committee meeting, a letter from WMATA to VDOT has been shared with the TPB. The letter with questions about the I-95/I-495 Southside Express Lanes project is attached and will also be shared with the TPB for their June 20 meeting.



May 31, 2024

Mr. Bill Cuttler, P.E.
Northern Virginia District Engineer, VDOT
4975 Alliance Drive
Fairfax, VA 22030

Dear Mr. Cuttler:

I am writing regarding VDOT's interest in including the I-495 Southside Express Lanes Study (I-495 SEL) as a funded project¹ in the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board's (TPB) Constrained Long Range Transportation Plan prior to selecting a locally preferred alternative. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (Metro) has the following questions about the proposed near-term bus service and the future opportunity for high-capacity transit, including bus rapid transit, light rail, or Metrorail, across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge.

The 2000 Wilson Bridge Record of Decision documented the need to preserve the center through lanes for future transit use, including rail transit, which resulted in the center bridge spans being built to accommodate that possibility. As noted previously, Metro strongly supports transit investments in the I-495 corridor, including near term bus service and preserving right-of-way for future high-capacity transit along I-495 and across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. To meet the region's adopted climate mitigation goals of 50 percent greenhouse gas emission reductions below 2005 levels by 2030 and 80 percent reduction by 2050, a future I-495 SEL project must incorporate robust transit and manage congestion.

Providing answers to the questions below will assist Metro and our regional partners to better understand the Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT) and a potential future concessionaire's ability to provide transit in the near-term and preserve the region's future high-capacity transit options. This information will enable a more thorough consideration for the project's inclusion in the Long-Range Transportation Plan. Key open issues include how bus service will be integrated into the project and questions about rail transit preservation and future conversion.

**Washington
Metropolitan Area
Transit Authority**

300 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024
202-962-1234

wmata.com

*A District of Columbia,
Maryland and Virginia
Transit Partnership*

¹ Projects included in TPB's long range plan must have reasonable expectation of funding.

Future Rail Transit Right-of-way Preservation

1. Based on the potential future Metrorail concept alignment and typical section documentation provided to VDOT in February 2024,² please provide documentation that details that sufficient space will exist within the I-495 SEL Beltway corridor to accommodate future rail transit, including access onto the Beltway and across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge.
2. Please describe in detail how VDOT believes future construction and operation of a rail line (light rail or Metrorail) would occur once the current alternative concepts of one or two Express Lanes in each direction are constructed and operational.
3. Please provide the near-term commitments VDOT will make prior to final Commonwealth Transportation Board approval of a I-495 SEL project to ensure future rail transit can be constructed efficiently with no additional cost burden to a future rail project.
4. Is the future conversion of Express Lanes to rail transit use contingent on agreement by a concessionaire in a future solicitation? Can VDOT commit to making this term non-negotiable?
5. If an Express Lane concessionaire is selected to build and operate a future I-495 SEL project, would the concessionaire also be required to provide temporary access to enable adjacent construction of a future rail transit project? Would there be any cost (to the entity requesting access) or penalty (to VDOT in terms of reduced revenue or concessionaire payment or otherwise) for such construction access to be granted?
6. Please provide a construction cost estimate for the conversion of the two I-495 SEL Express Lanes (one in each direction) from operating highway travel lanes to a fully available rail transit right-of-way for future rail construction (not the rail construction itself). Please describe what is included in those costs, and which organization (between VDOT and Metro) would be responsible for which costs.
7. Please provide examples of where a successful conversion from managed highway lanes to rail transit has been completed, including the interplay with a concessionaire.

Near-Term Bus Service

8. How does VDOT plan to integrate bus service into the I-495 SEL Project? At what point in the project development process will bus service planning

² This potential future Metrorail concept is aligned with Metro's Blue, Orange, Silver Study.

- and decision-making begin? When does VDOT expect that bus service funded by the project would begin?
9. Please provide documentation, assumptions, and analysis from the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation study that was completed in 2023 that recommended four new bus routes and estimated 8,000 daily riders.
 10. Assuming buses are integrated into the future I-495 SEL project, would the concessionaire be required to directly fund the full operational cost of new Metrobus service between Virginia and Maryland? Would existing service be eligible for funding? What would the start and end of such an agreement be? Please provide confirmation that no transit provider will be required to pay to use the Express Lanes.
 11. Will the I-495 SEL alternative study concepts include Express Lane access points at Telegraph Road and I-295 in Maryland? Current and future Metrobus service – notably the current NH2 and future P94 route³ – would benefit from direct Express Lane access including to National Harbor.

We look forward to further discussions about how the region can provide near-term and long-term opportunities for transit within the I-495 SEL study area. If you have any questions regarding the study or this memo, please contact Jonathan Parker at jhparker@wmata.com and (202) 962-1040.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Webster
Executive Vice President and
Chief Planning and Performance Officer

cc: Randy Clarke, General Manager & Chief Executive Officer, Metro
WMATA Board of Directors
Kanti Srikanth, TPB Executive Director
Christina Henderson, TPB Chair
Jennifer DeBruhl, Director, DRPT
Allison H. Davis, SVP, Planning and Sustainability, Metro

³ Based on Metro's Proposed 2025 Better Bus Network.