

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20002-4290 (202)962-3310 Fax: (202) 962-3202 TDD: (202) 962-3213

Item #5

MEMORANDUM

December 21, 2005

TO: Transportation Planning Board

FROM: Ronald F. Kirby *RFK*
Director, Department of
Transportation Planning

RE: Additional Letters Sent/Received

The attached additional letters sent/received will be reviewed along with other letters sent/received under item #5 of the December 21st TPB agenda.

Attachments

Westwind Homeowners Association
1106 N. George Mason Drive
Arlington, VA 22205
Phone and Fax: 703-465-1245
December 15, 2005

The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairman
National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
777 North Capitol St NE, Suite 300
Washington DC 20002-4226

Re: Proposed VDOT Study of I-66 "Spot Improvements" in Arlington County

Dear Chairman Mendelson:

I am writing on behalf of the Westwind Homeowners Association to express our deep concern about two amendments to the TPB's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for so-called "spot improvements" to I-66 in Arlington County that the TPB Steering Committee approved on December 2 at the request of the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). "Westwind" is a townhouse community located adjacent to I-66 at the westbound entrance ramp from Fairfax Drive. Therefore, we are intensely interested in this matter.

Our deep concern about these amendments to the TIP arises from our belief that the term "spot improvements" is being used as part of a strategy for "de facto" widening of I-66 and possibly for trying to avoid subjecting such widening to a full Environmental Impact Statement. Certainly, the stretches contemplated for "spot improvements" through lane additions add up to a substantial portion of I-66 inside the beltway. Therefore, we believe that arguments opposing widening are germane here.

Our Westwind Board of Directors voted unanimously in the spring of 2005 to oppose the widening of I-66 inside the beltway. The reasons for our opposition were set forth in detail in a letter dated April 28, 2005 to Theresa Defore, the Idea-66 Study Project Manager, with copies to Governor Warner and the Commonwealth Transportation Board. In the letter, we pointed out that the study's recommendation supporting widening was not warranted based on a review of the study data. Widening the highway could very well negatively affect future needed public transit developments, could reduce shoulder widths and hamper emergency operations, and could increase noise and pollution levels, destroy land cover and trees, and negatively affect the Custis bicycle and pedestrian trail. In addition, certain non-widening options such as adding reverse-commute HOV are superior to or as good as options involving widening and can be achieved at far less expense, a conclusion that that Idea-66 data supports. By adopting this amendment, you are continuing to move forward an unwarranted recommendation from a flawed study.

Therefore, we respectfully request the Transportation Planning Board not to approve the two TIP amendments in their present form and/or intent. Furthermore, the TPB should direct VDOT to substantially modify its scope of work to focus on the following:

- 1) Study and implement relatively low-cost traffic-operation solutions to I-66 congestion that do not involve any significant roadway widening and have already been found superior overall to adding a third westbound travel lane.
- 2) Analyze long-range public transportation needs, VDOT right-of-way boundaries, and incident response and emergency evacuation strategies for the I-66 multimodal corridor.
- 3) Establish a new and effective long-range management plan for both highway and Metrorail operations in the I-66 multimodal corridor.

On behalf of the Westwind Homeowners Association, thank you for giving our views your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Nancy H. Morgan
President
Westwind Homeowners Association



THE REGION'S CHAMBER
PRINCE WILLIAM REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

4320 Ridgewood Center Drive, Prince William, Virginia 22192 • Tel. (703) 590-5000 • Fax (703) 590-9815
email: pwrcc@RegionalChamber.org • Internet: www.RegionalChamber.org

December 15, 2005

The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairman
National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Chairman Mendelson:

The Prince William Regional Chamber of Commerce, an organization of more than 1,000 businesses, views a well-connected regional transportation network as essential to Prince William County's and the metropolitan Washington area's economic prosperity.

Years of under-investment and failure to heed the advice of planners to build adequate capacity decades ago have created the nation's third most congested highway network and threaten our region's competitiveness.

The Region's Chamber urges the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board to amend the FY 2005-2010 Transportation Improvement Program to include federal funds targeted for spot improvements and other short-term solutions in the I-66 corridor inside the Capital Beltway.

More study is not required to know that I-66 inside (and outside) the Beltway is becoming more congested and less reliable. Construction of one additional new lane in each direction is part of an obvious strategy to address an obvious problem.

Thank you for your attention to our request.

Sincerely,

Ken Solem
Chairman of the Board

Laurie C. Wieder
President



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

GREGORY A. WHIRLEY
ACTING COMMISSIONER

14685 Avion Parkway
Chantilly, VA 20151
(703) 383-VDOT (8368)

December 20, 2005

The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairman
National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
777 North Capitol St. NE, Suite 300
Washington DC 20002-4226

RE: I-66 Spot Improvements Inside the Beltway

Dear Chairman Mendelson:

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has reviewed the public comments on the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) Steering Committee's approval of Resolution TPB SR9-2006, in particular comments pertaining to the two amendment line items on continued funding for a study of the I-66 corridor (inside the Capital Beltway). I am writing, on behalf of the agency, to reiterate the scope and purpose of the amendment and respond to the primary concerns of the various comments.

The proposed study, that was amended into the FY 05-10 TIP earlier this month, is the continuation of the earlier feasibility study of improvements to the I 66 corridor called Idea 66. The full report of the Idea 66 study has been published and is available on VDOT website (<http://www.virginiadot.org/projects/idea66/about/feasibilitystudy.htm>). The overview of the project and the recommendations from this phase of the study are attached (attachment pages 1-1 to 1-3) for your reference. Consistent with the analysis and recommendation of this study (attachment, pages 6-35 and 7-1) and the actions of the Commonwealth of Virginia's Transportation Board, the agency intends to undertake further feasibility studies, community outreach activities and environmental review of the various spot improvements proposed in the earlier phase of the Idea 66 study.

The amendment approved by the Steering Committee allows the agency to access federal funds set aside for this next phase of the Idea 66 study. The purpose of this phase of Idea 66 is limited to further examination of spot improvements. The recommended spot improvements are targeted to address existing safety and operational concerns in the westbound direction of I-66 in a relatively low cost manner. This study will develop engineering details and assess the effects of various spot improvements (e.g., Traffic Management Systems strategies, enforcement areas, ramp metering, ramp merge/diverge areas,

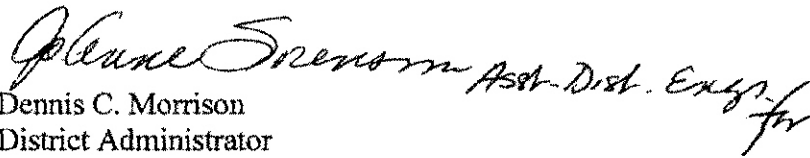
Honorable Phil Mendelson
December 20, 2005
Page Two

etc). The study will include stakeholder participation and review by various state and federal agencies.

Potential long term improvements for the entire corridor are not part of this study, but would be addressed in a separate effort as part of a major NEPA document. The Commonwealth Transportation Board is yet to make a decision about such a study. The TPB and all stakeholders will be informed when such a study is proposed and will have many opportunities to contribute to the development of a long term improvement plan for the important regional corridor.

I trust the above clarifies the scope of the study in the amendment and addresses any comments made regarding the longer term improvements in the corridor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dennis C. Morrison". To the right of the signature, there is a handwritten note in a similar script that says "Asst. Dist. Engr. for".

Dennis C. Morrison
District Administrator

Northern Virginia District



Imagine the Possibilities

I-66 INSIDE THE BELTWAY FEASIBILITY STUDY

Prepared for the
Virginia Department of Transportation
and
Federal Highway Administration

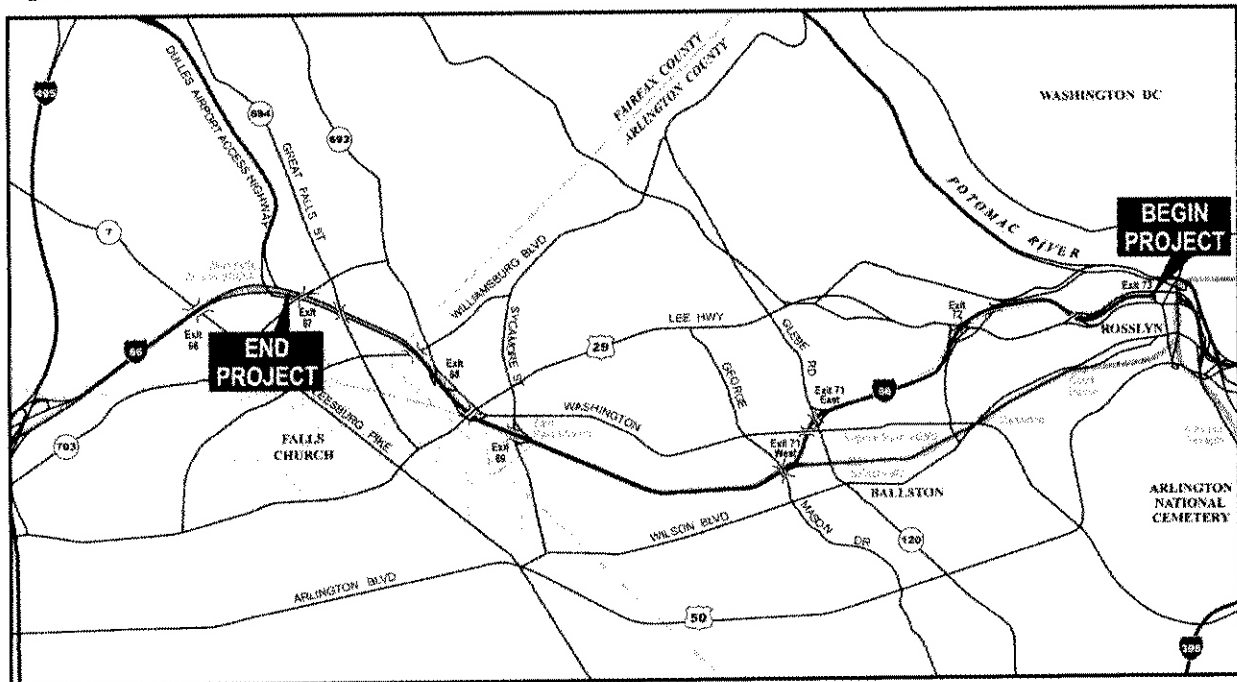
MARCH 2005

1 OVERVIEW

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) in cooperation with the Virginia Division of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is reviewing I-66 westbound between the Rosslyn Tunnel and the Dulles Airport Access Highway (see Figure 1-1). This action is in response to Congressional and State concerns over growing congestion in the I-66 corridor and the impact of such congestion on the corridor's ability to serve as an evacuation route in response to a natural disaster or terrorist incident.

The study utilizes a "context sensitive solutions" approach to inventory improvement concepts and to broadly evaluate each concept, based on criteria identified by various stakeholders within the corridor; including people who reside, work, and /or travel I-66 as well as representatives of transit providers, jurisdictions, government agencies, and special interest groups. This collaborative, interdisciplinary approach allows for a better understanding and appreciation of community values, and provides a means to incorporate and address these values as part of the feasibility study. The use of this innovative approach to transportation planning is captured in the study's title: *Idea 66 – Imagine the Possibilities*.

Figure 1-1. Study Area



1.1 PROJECT HISTORY

The history of I-66 goes back to 1959 when the corridor was included on the original National Interstate Map (**Appendix A**). In many respects, the planning for I-66 has always been conducted in a “context sensitive” manner. The original Coleman Decision in 1977, which approved the project, included several elements, such as the limitation on the number of lanes, banning of truck traffic, and the adoption of HOV requirements, that were specifically designed to help better integrate the facility into the surrounding community, while still providing mobility benefits to the region. The removal of some of the requirements of the Coleman Decision in 1999 and the subsequent request to widen I-66 has caused much concern in the community, which is why a context sensitive solutions approach is being incorporated into this feasibility study. This approach is being used so that the concepts not only respond to the changing context of travel needs within the I-66 corridor, but also respond to the continuing concerns of the stakeholders involved in this study and is in keeping with the history of the I-66 corridor.

1.2 PROJECT TEAM

To carry out this open, inclusive planning process, a diverse project team was assembled. Public outreach specialists were utilized to ensure involvement from a broad array of the local communities and stakeholders. Stakeholders included the regional transportation authority, civic and business associations, and citizens who live along I-66 as well those who travel the corridor. A technical team consisting of engineering, environmental, and transportation planning specialists was assembled to develop feasible solutions, based on the public’s recommendations, and to address the wide variety of issues associated with the project. This team of technical and public outreach specialists was managed by senior staff from VDOT’s Northern Virginia District and the Virginia Division of FHWA. Final decisions on the study’s recommendations will be made by the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB). An organization chart illustrating the project team is presented in **Appendix B**.

1.3 PUBLIC INPUT

Stakeholder input was solicited through a series of comprehensive community dialogues, public workshops, and an open house. This public outreach process resulted in more than 1,500 comments and recommendations regarding the project’s need, possible solutions, and criteria to measure the solutions. Updated study information was provided through the project Web site and information hotline as well as two issues of project newsletters which were both sent to more than 42,000 area residents.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The initial elements of the problem statement for this study came from a June 2003 letter from Congressmen Frank Wolf and Tom Davis, which encouraged Virginia Governor Mark Warner to move forward with plans to improve westbound operations on I-66 between the Rosslyn Tunnel and the Dulles Airport Access Highway. Five key elements were noted in the letter that supported the need for improvements. This list of needs included:

- Ease congestion on I-66 westbound;
- Reduce congestion on parallel local roadways;
- Improve access to regional activity centers;
- Improve economic vitality of activity centers; and
- Provide quicker emergency evacuations from Washington, DC.

1.5 CONCEPTS

Four general categories of improvement concepts were considered: No-Build, High Occupancy Vehicle / High Occupancy Toll (HOV/HOT) Managed Lanes, Roadway Widening, and Transit improvements. More than 200 initial concepts, as identified in the context sensitive solutions dialogues, were considered by the study's technical staff and screened down to the 38 most feasible. This screening was accomplished through the application of a series of general evaluation criteria which were developed to measure the operational benefits, environmental effects, and costs of the concepts at a feasibility level of detail.

1.6 TECHNICAL ANALYSIS

The effectiveness of each concept was compared to the No-Build condition, also referred to as the 2030 CLRP baseline. The No-Build condition consisted of those transportation improvements approved by the National Capital Area Transportation Planning Board and contained in the most current Constrained Long Range Plan (CLRP) for 2030, which serves as the design year for this project. The most significant improvements included in the regionally adopted CLRP in the I-66 corridor are changing the HOV occupancy levels from HOV-2 to HOV-3 and implementing the Dulles Rail Extension. As a result, the No-Build concept (i.e., not implementing any of the concepts in this study) showed an improvement to operations on I-66 westbound in the study area relative to current 2005 conditions. The most feasible and effective concept considered for improvements to the 6.5-mile segment of I-66 westbound was the Roadway Widening concept with the addition of a managed lane. The new managed lane could be used for HOV, HOT lanes, and/or an express busway. In addition to the flexibility afforded by the managed lane, the additional capacity also improved safety, enforcement, and evacuation capabilities. The analysis also indicated that a significant investment in Metrorail transit would also provide mobility benefits in the corridor. However, more detailed analyses are required to determine the most beneficial combination of managed lanes and transit, as well as to determine the exact length of the segment to be widened. The results of the technical evaluations are presented in Chapter 6 of this report.

1.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Roadway Widening concept with various managed lane types and advanced system management techniques be advanced for further detailed evaluation as part of a Location Study in accordance with VDOT guidelines and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Transit elements that can operate within the managed lane (e.g., express bus) should also be evaluated as part of the NEPA study. Additional study by the appropriate state and federal transit agencies of the more capital-intensive, long-term transit improvements, such as Metrorail expansion, is also warranted, based on the potential benefits to the regional transportation system and the high level of additional multimodal capacity provided by a new transit investment.

It is further recommended that public involvement efforts continue to bridge the gap between the present Idea-66 Study and subsequent NEPA and project development activities. The Idea-66 Study Report should be circulated to the public through the Web site, CDs, or hardcopy, and meetings should be held with stakeholders to explain the report. Comments should be sent to the CTB and recorded and retained for consideration in moving forward to further detailed planning and environmental studies.



7 RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

As part of the development of context-sensitive solutions, input from the general public, special interest groups, governmental agencies, and other stakeholders during the public involvement phase of the study suggested that to “do nothing” was not a feasible option for I-66. Instead, a wide range of multimodal options should be considered. The technical evaluation included in Chapter 6 of this report indicated that no one concept alone would provide complete relief to the congestion problems within the I-66 corridor inside the Beltway, due to the growth in demand that is projected at all regional activity centers served by the corridor. However, in combination, there are feasible improvements that could help meet the problems identified during this feasibility study. The concept that was demonstrated to be the most responsive to the needs contained in the study’s problem statement was actually a combination of Roadway Widening with a new managed lane. The new managed lane could be used for HOV, HOT lanes, and/or express buses. This concept could be accommodated within the existing right-of-way and, with an estimated construction cost of \$112 to \$233 million (depending on the managed lane), is felt not to be cost prohibitive.

In addition to the recommended concepts for additional study, the interim improvements that can occur with minimal impact are also recommended for evaluation to address spot problems and geometric deficiencies. These interim improvements, which would involve less capital expenditures, may include improvements to existing signing, review of Transportation Management System (TMS) locations and messages, review and implementation of enforcement areas on I-66 westbound, review of horizontal and vertical alignments to improve safety, optimization of signalization of parallel routes, evaluation of existing ramp metering, and provision of a continuous 12-foot shoulder to be used only in the event of an emergency evacuation. Capital costs for these types of interim improvements are estimated to range from \$2 million for improved signage to approximately \$45 million for the continuous shoulder.

Additional studies will need to be conducted to further define the concepts. Detailed modeling will be required to determine which combination of managed lanes as well as the length of widening and which spot improvements are most beneficial. Detailed simulations can also help determine the effectiveness of TMS improvements such as signing and variable message signs as part of any managed lane concept. Regardless of these later decisions, the flexibility and additional westbound capacity afforded by the additional lane would provide for improved mobility to activity centers, safety, enforcement, and emergency response. Therefore, this general concept should be advanced for further detailed study as part of a Location Study in accordance with VDOT guidelines and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The detailed modeling (i.e., traffic simulation for the 6.5-mile segment) should be conducted as part of the NEPA study.

Additional coordination should be conducted with emergency response and emergency preparedness agencies to determine the most effective use of the facility for evacuation purposes. Additional capacity provided by the third lane will result in a positive benefit only if properly utilized during emergency situations.

The various transit concepts demonstrated improvements particularly at the regional level. Transit elements that can be incorporated as part of the recommended highway improvement, such as express bus service, dedicated busway, and BRT, should be considered as part of the highway NEPA study. The more capital-intensive transit improvements, such as Metrorail expansion, need to be investigated by the appropriate state and federal transit agencies.

Public involvement should continue to bridge the gap between the present Idea-66 Study and a possible environmental study. The Idea-66 Study Report should be circulated to the public through the project Web site, CDs, or hardcopy, and meetings held with stakeholders to explain the report. Any written comments received, either by mail or electronically, will be recorded and retained for consideration in moving forward to an environmental study.