

Evaluating Significant Projects that Can Ease Congestion in Northern Virginia - Interim Progress Report #1, January 2013

Chapters 768 and 825 of the 2012 Acts of Assembly amended the *Code of Virginia* by adding § 33.1-13.03:1, which directs the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to work with the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB), the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), and the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) to evaluate and rate all significant transportation projects in and near the Northern Virginia Transportation District (NOVA District), to the extent that funds are available. Each transportation project's evaluation and rating are to be based primarily on the project's expected impact on reducing congestion. To the extent possible, the evaluation and ratings should also be based on the project's expected improvement in mobility during a homeland security emergency.

VDOT shall publicize the quantitative ratings determined for each project on its website and complete the evaluation at least once every four years, with interim progress reports provided on the website at least once every six months starting January 1, 2013. This report is published pursuant to *Code of Virginia* § 33.1-13.03:1. The full text of *Code of Virginia* § 33.1-13.03:1 can be found at <https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?000+cod+33.1-13.03C1>.

VDOT's Northern Virginia District office is leading this effort and the first set of transportation project evaluations and ratings are anticipated to be completed in December 2014. An implementation plan has been proposed and work has begun on the following four activities.

1. Secure Federal Authorization
2. Develop Structure for Project Management and Oversight
3. Develop Request for Proposals (RFP) and Scope of Work
4. Initiate Preliminary Research and Congestion Assessment

This report summarizes the progress on these activities.

Secure Federal Authorization

VDOT has identified potential partial funding by reprogramming federal funds within the district's currently approved 2013 budget. To utilize those funds the following steps must be completed:

- The Commonwealth Transportation Board must approve the funding transfer.
 - **Status:** Completed in December 2012.
- Secure Federal Highway Administration authorization to use the federal funds.
 - **Status:** Expected completion in January 2013.

- Amend the Regional and State Transportation Improvement Programs to add the study to those programs.¹
 - **Status:** Expected completion in January 2013.

Develop Structure for Project Management and Oversight

A multilayered management and oversight structure is being proposed, comprised of the following four main components.

1. This effort will be led by the VDOT NOVA District Planning and Investment Management (PIM) unit with consultant assistance.
2. An executive team composed of senior managers at VDOT and DRPT will serve as liaison to the General Assembly, the CTB and the NVTA.
3. A technical team with expertise in transportation planning, modeling and project prioritization will provide input for the development of project parameters, review technical products and assist in public outreach.
4. A Peer Review Group consisting of independent subject matter experts will review the technical methods, providing input to the consultant and the technical team. The Peer Review Group will be coordinated by the Virginia Center for Transportation Innovation and Research.

Develop Request for Proposals (RFP) and Scope of Work

After meeting with Delegate LeMunyon and Senator Marsden in the fall of 2012 to further refine the work elements, a scope of work and schedule have been drafted and are currently under internal review.

NOVA District PIM also met with staff of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG), staff to the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) encompassing northern Virginia, to discuss the evaluation approach and how the MPO staff can assist VDOT with this effort. The MWCOG staff has agreed to be part of the technical team and also to perform preliminary / preparatory analysis, providing an assessment of congestion in the northern Virginia region that will prove helpful in moving the project ahead.

The RFP for consultant assistance is scheduled for completion in January 2013. The RFP will be issued once federal authorization is received.

Initiate Preliminary Research and Congestion Assessment

Currently, the NOVA district is researching approaches used by other states in transportation project priority setting.

¹ Title 23 section 134 of the federal code requires all projects and studies using federal funds that are located in an urban area with population of 50,000 or more to be included in a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) developed by the urban area's Metropolitan Planning Organization. These are the regional TIPs. Similarly, Title 23 section 135 requires all federally supported surface transportation expenditures to be included in a statewide TIP.

MWCOG and NOVA District staffs are currently working to develop the scope of work for the congestion assessment. MWCOG staff will develop a congestion assessment based on existing conditions and the Constrained Long Range Plan forecast. The congestion assessment will be completed before projects are requested for evaluation.

Next Steps

The following represents the next key steps and the anticipated schedule:

- Finalize work scope and RFP – January 2013
- Obtain Federal funding authorization – February 2013
- Advertise RFP – February/March 2013
- MPO begins work on current/future congestion assessment – January 2013
- Meet with Technical Team – January 2013
- Select Peer Review Group members – March 2013
- Procure consultant – June 2013
- Next Progress Report – July 2013