

McLEAN CITIZENS ASSOCIATION RESOLUTION
ON THE I-66 INSIDE THE BELTWAY FEASIBILITY STUDY

May 4, 2005

Whereas, the “I-66 Inside the Beltway Feasibility Study” was recently released by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

Whereas, Congressmen Frank Wolf and Tom Davis have advocated adding one additional westbound lane on I-66 between the Rosslyn tunnel and the Dulles Connector to help relieve traffic gridlock, to get more cars off local streets, provide improved evacuation capability for Washington, and avert the loss of Federal highway dollars resulting from the area’s non-attainment status under the Clean Air Act.

Whereas, their proposal was offered as a compromise of conflicting positions that arose with respect to a 1999 proposal for a two-lane addition that would have required increasing the right of way.

Whereas, Governor Warner welcomed the Federal budget amendment providing funds for study of the proposal and authorized VDOT to work with FHA to analyze the proposal on condition that highway improvements be limited to the existing rights of way and that the study consider transit options and High Occupancy Vehicle/High Occupancy Toll (HOV/HOT) options.

Whereas, the resulting Feasibility Study: (a) *recommends* that the “Roadway Widening” concept with various managed lane types and advanced system management techniques be advanced for further evaluation pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA Environmental Impact Statement); (b) *concludes* that the “Roadway Widening” concept could be accommodated within the existing right-of-way and cost between \$112 and \$233 million, depending on the choice to be made of managed lane alternatives (e.g. HOV, HOT lanes and/or express buses); (c) *envisages* that transit elements that can operate within the managed lane (e.g., express buses) would be included in the more detailed study; and (d) *recognizes* the need for study “by the appropriate state and federal transit agencies” of the more capital-intensive, long-term transit improvements, such as Metrorail expansion, but does not propose to include such alternatives in the NEPA analysis.

Whereas, the preliminary widening concept contemplates 16 or 20 feet of additional pavement and this can generally be accommodated within the existing right of way, although there are a few locations in Arlington where keeping within the existing right of way would require using 11-foot lanes instead of the normal 12-foot lanes, reducing or eliminating the 10-foot shoulders for short lengths and, in a few cases, providing new retaining walls.

Whereas, there was an extensive effort to solicit ideas and involve community stakeholder groups in the Study that was reported in one volume of the Study.

Whereas, a telephone survey of 501 residents of the I-66 corridor showed that 52% supported road widening and 33% supported bus and/or rail transit when asked an open-ended question about what should be done.

Whereas, the same telephone survey showed that 47% rated the bus and/or rail transit their first choice to reduce congestion, 37% rated road widening as their first choice and only 4% chose the alternative of doing nothing, when asked to address the four alternatives presented by Governor Warner (those who live inside the Beltway did not differ significantly from those living outside the Beltway).

Whereas, an alternative strategy for getting more out of managed lanes would place greater emphasis on encouraging more fuel efficient automobiles in addition to the use of traditional occupancy incentives, which affect usage only on the highway selected and generally for a limited number of hours per day. Hybrid automobile technology has now evolved to the point where it can play a greater role. It limits fuel usage all the time and on all the roads in the area. Its utility is not limited to that segment of users who have dependably regular work hours and work in relatively high areas of job concentration.

Whereas, current HOV restrictions are hard to adapt to changing conditions, hard to enforce and can contribute to unnecessary use of other roads both by diverting many cars to local roads and requiring additional driving by eligible users in picking up and dropping of passengers. HOT lanes (such as those now planned for the Capital Beltway) can provide a more flexible and enforceable standard of eligibility, add pricing incentives to optimize efficiency and achieve fine tuning of incentives by differentiated toll rates that reflect the current status of road congestion (referred to as “value pricing,” “dynamic pricing,” or “congestion pricing”). Precise policies can then be adjusted in the future in light of changing traffic levels, such as in the use in San Diego I-15 of a system in which rates can be changed in as little as six-minute intervals in light of current congestion and in Minneapolis I-394, due to start operation May 16, 2005.

Whereas, HOT lanes can promote a higher degree of efficiency: (a) by identifying the transponders issued for specific automobiles with their gas consumption class to permit incentive pricing, e.g. providing in each transponder a marker or additional digit in its ID to identify its fuel efficiency class or by using central databases for correlating ID numbers with the class information; and (b) by making technological provision for accommodating the capability now to incorporate future distinctions for tolls for more gas-efficient classes,

Therefore be it resolved, that the proposed detailed Environmental Impact Study (EIS) be modified to include and emphasize the following factors:

- (1) Detailed quantitative analysis of the Clean Air Act impact of each short-term and long-term alternative and emphasis on Clean Air impact vis-à-vis traditional traffic analysis;
- (2) Use of HOT lanes and variable pricing (in conjunction with HOV and express buses) to provide long-term flexibility in matching use to capacity;
- (3) Use of HOT Lane transponder technology that will assure identification of major classes of energy efficiency in automobiles to enable implementation of toll policies promoting less polluting autos (e.g., hybrid, plug-in hybrid and electric);
- (4) Use of toll receipts to help fund long-term transit improvements for the Corridor; and
- (5) Inclusion of Metrorail expansion among the alternatives to be addressed in the EIS, e.g. an Orange Line third track, extension of the Orange Line to Centreville, Blue Line rerouting, and a new Metro line with a new Potomac crossing.
- (6) Quantification of increased probability of serious accidents resulting from lane narrowing and shoulder elimination.
- (7) Quantification of the change in traffic volume in the I-66 corridor that will result from the extension of Metrorail service to Tysons and Dulles.
- (8) Quantitative analysis of noise impact.

Distribution:

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