

Evaluating Significant Projects that May Ease Congestion in Northern Virginia - Interim Progress Report #2

July 1, 2013

Chapters 768 and 825 of the 2012 Acts of Assembly amended the *Code of Virginia* by adding § 33.1-13.03:1, directing the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) in ongoing coordination with the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB), the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), and the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) to evaluate and develop a quantitative rating system for all significant transportation projects in and near the Northern Virginia Transportation District to the extent funds are available for such purpose. The enacting legislation directs that project evaluation and rating be based on the project's expected effectiveness at easing congestion and, to the extent possible, the rating should also be based on the project's expected improvement in regional mobility in the event of a homeland security emergency. The evaluation and ratings are to be completed and published on VDOT's website every four years. Interim progress reports are to be published on VDOT's website every six months starting January 1, 2013.

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>.

This is the second interim progress report. The first interim report was posted on VDOT's website on January 1, 2013 and may be found at the following internet address:
http://www.virginiadot.org/projects/resources/Chapter_768_825_Status_Report_No_1_Jan_2013_2.pdf

VDOT's Northern Virginia District office (NOVA) is leading this effort. VDOT is working with DRPT and a representative of Fairfax County, a member county of the NVTA, to select a consultant to conduct the study. The consultant will develop the rating system, evaluate candidate projects' ability to reduce congestion and improve mobility during a homeland security emergency and assign the ratings. A Peer Review Group (PRG) consisting of individuals with expertise in transportation planning, highway project, transit, and ITS systems evaluation will review the technical methods, providing input to the consultant. The make-up of the PRG will be coordinated by the Virginia Center for Transportation Innovation and Research (VCTIR).

The region's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is developing a baseline congestion assessment for the study.

VDOT has also provided periodic updates on the preparatory and administrative tasks underway to the Northern Virginia representatives of the CTB and the NVTA's Jurisdiction and Agency Coordination Committee and Project Implementation Working Group.

The first set of transportation project evaluations and ratings are anticipated to be completed in December 2014. The following tasks were outlined in the January 2013 report and are now either complete or in progress.

Update on tasks noted in Interim Progress Report No. 1

1. **Secure Federal Authorization:** This task is now complete. VDOT developed a funding plan and secured allocations for the study, and the regional and State Transportation Improvement Programs have been amended to reflect those allocations.¹ In March 2013, VDOT received authorization from the Federal Highway Administration to use the identified federal funds for the study. The funding obligations were subsequently finalized and are reflected in VDOT's FY 2014-2019 Six Year Improvement Program.
2. **Develop Structure for Project Management And Oversight:** The following components comprise the proposed project management and oversight structure.
 - This effort will be led by the VDOT NOVA District Planning and Investment Management (PIM) unit with consultant assistance.
 - An executive team composed of senior managers at VDOT and DRPT will serve as liaison to the General Assembly, the CTB and the NVTA.

Status - Selection of members for the executive team is ongoing.

- A Peer Review Group (PRG) consisting of independent subject matter experts will review the technical methods.

Status - With the advice and assistance of the VCTIR, VDOT has selected candidates to serve as members of the PRG. VDOT expects to finalize negotiations regarding the scope and fees for their services and have the PRG team on board by August of 2013.

3. **Develop Request for Proposal (RFP) and Scope of Work:** The RFP for the study was advertised in April 2013. The procurement process is on-going with an expected notice to proceed date in August 2013.
4. **Initiate Preliminary Research and Congestion Assessment:** The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB), the region's MPO, is performing a congestion assessment for the study based on existing conditions and the Constrained Long Range Plan forecasts. The congestion assessment will be completed in late summer 2013, and will serve as a baseline for the study. Results of the assessment will be available prior to projects being solicited for evaluation.

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.

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Next Steps

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

- Procure consultant – July/August 2013
- Finalize selection of PRG members – July 2013
- Study kick-off- August 2013
- TPB staff completes work on current/future congestion assessment – summer/fall 2013
- Share current/future congestion assessment with stakeholders – fall 2013
- Finalize project selection criteria and measures of effectiveness (MOE's) for evaluating congestion impacts of projects – late fall/winter 2013/2014
- Solicit and identify projects for evaluation and rating – winter 2013/2014
- Next Progress Report – January 2014

Potential Scheduling Issue

As noted above, VDOT is conducting this study for compliance with Chapters 768 and 825 of the 2012 Acts of Assembly which amended the *Code of Virginia* by adding § 33.1-13.03:1. This past session the Virginia General Assembly enacted House Bill 2313 that requires that the NVTA's allocation of the "regional share" of revenues dedicated to the Northern Virginia Transportation Fund in FY 2015 and thereafter, be limited to those projects that have been evaluated and rated by this study (pursuant to § 33.1-13.03:1) or that increase transit capacity. Given that the study and project ratings dictated by § 33.1-13.03:1 will not be completed by the time the NVTA will engage in the process for allocating the NVTA Fund revenues received in FY 2015, the disparity in these timelines will need to be examined further and may need to be addressed legislatively or otherwise.