

**Long Term Improvements Environmental Assessment Discussion Meeting
August 2, 2011 - Meeting Notes**

A draft agenda was distributed, along with a summary of the scope of work and the draft purpose and needs statement. The meeting began with introductions of the participants. Present were: Mayor Bill Euille, Vice-Mayor Kerry Donley, Deputy City Manager Mark Jinks, David Dexter (Advisory Group Chair), Geoff Goodale (Advisory Group vice-Chair), Tom Fahrney (VDOT), John Muse (VDOT), Robert Iosco (VDOT), Rich Baier (TES), Abi Lerner (TES), and David Grover (TES). The discussion began with Mayor Euille saying that while this meeting is necessary, it is not particularly sitting well with some residents who believe they should be present and participating. Rich Baier commented that this meeting is preliminary to the September 21 Advisory Group meeting where VDOT will address residents and be available to answer questions.

1. Robert Iosco then began a description of the Environmental Assessment (EA) process by saying it is strictly in accordance with the Federal NEPA requirements as delegated to VDOT, and that VDOT is not treating this project any differently than other projects they take through the NEPA process. FHWA has made the determination with respect to the appropriateness of the EA based on inclusion of alternatives being considered. Those initial alternatives are no-build, full service ramp and limited service ramp (with no right movement onto Seminary). No-build alternatives are evaluated for impacts just as are any other alternatives; no-build alternatives may or may not have greater negative impacts than the build alternatives. Other alternatives may be also considered that are consistent with the purpose and needs statement.

2. The discussion turned to scoping. Mr. Iosco described the scoping process. He noted that the purpose of the scoping process is to solicit information from stakeholders (largely public agencies) to make VDOT aware of issues they may not have considered so they may be included in the EA. VDOT and their consultant have developed scoping letters and those will be going out to stakeholders no later than August 18, 2011. VDOT will forward a draft list of stakeholders to the City for review and suggested additions. Localities are generally responsible for soliciting and including input from their constituents at this stage. VDOT usually sets an expectation for turn around on scoping letter responses of 14 to 30 days, but this can be extended to some degree as it is not a regulatory time requirement. It was noted that the schedule for the EA was a 'best case' scenario and could be affected by a wide variety of factors. Tom Fahrney noted that the 30% design has commenced because of the very tight schedule for this project, and it is VDOT's plan that the design public hearing and the EA hearing to be held concurrently.

3. With respect to public participation in the process, at this point the schedule indicates a public hearing date on December 15, 2011. The public hearing is a formal hearing with a court recorder present to make a record of all verbal comments. Written comments are also accepted. It was noted that the purpose and needs statement is subject to potential amendment based on comments received in the public comment process. In addition, the BRAC-133 Advisory Group will offer a venue for public input. VDOT staff would be present at the Advisory Group meetings to provide informational updates. Once the City receives the VDOT scoping letter, the City will craft a letter to be sent out to residents soliciting comments. Resident comments would be received through the Advisory Group and the Chair of that group will review and provide a summary to staff for use in preparing the City's response to the VDOT scoping request. T&ES will solicit and collect comments from other City agencies. It was suggested that the City should develop a standard response to inquiries and comments so that responses are consistent. Tom Fahrney said City staff will be invited to participate in technical review committees to offer their expertise in subjects such as traffic forecasting and traffic operations.
4. The alternatives to be considered were described, as was the study area for the EA. The study area was generally described as extending from King Street at I-39 to Duke Street at I-395 and including local streets from Seminary Road and Dawes Streets (near the Fairfax County Line) to Seminary and Howard Streets. The study area was discussed in light of some residents' thoughts that with a study area extending from King Street to Duke Street, some build alternatives for those interchanges should be included in the EA. John Muse clarified that the study area is for assessment of the environmental impacts of the alternatives located at the Seminary Road/I-395 Interchange only, not for consideration of construction of ramps at either Duke or King Streets. It was also explained that the 'study area' may also expand or contract based on the respective issue being analyzed, i.e. air quality, noise, cultural resources, etc., and the above described study area is related to traffic impacts primarily.
5. The relationship of the HOT Lanes EA, i.e. the HOT lanes project from Fredericksburg to Edsall Road, was then raised. It had been mentioned in the Advisory Group meeting in July that the EA would be using the HOT Lane Models, and there is a concern that that entails using outdated data. Robert Iosco and John Muse made it clear that FHWA would not allow the use of outdated information, and the Seminary Road/I-395 EA model will use HOT Lanes model information currently being developed. VDOT said they have received some comments supporting location of the HOT lanes terminus at the Seminary Road interchange. Rich Baier noted that the City Council had already expressed opposition to the terminus moving to within the City's boundaries. VDOT staff said that the City of Alexandria should provide comments on the HOT lanes EA with respect to the location of the terminus for the HOT Lanes EA Public Hearing. *TES staff will prepare a letter consistent with the City's existing position for the Mayor's signature dated to coincide with the HOT Lanes September public hearing.*

6. The regularly scheduled BRAC-133 Advisory Group meeting occurring on September 21 falls late with respect to garnering timely public input for the EA scoping process, so it was suggested that a special BRAC-133 Advisory Group meeting be considered for the first week of September with this as the single agenda item on the agenda. VDOT will attend to provide a presentation on the EA process and schedule. This creates three public input opportunities, when including the September 21 meeting and the VDOT Public Hearing in December 2011. TES staff will make arrangements for the venue and logistics related to this meeting for September 7.
7. Rich Baier asked about the use of the HOV/Transit Ramp funds for transit. Tom Fahrney responded that half of the Seminary ramp funds are interstate funds for maintenance, and that they have strict limitations on their use. They can be used for construction of HOV facilities, but not transit. He also noted that the funds are 80% Federal with a 20% match from Virginia. In addition, all members at the meeting were asked if they had any additional questions or issues on behalf of any group that they wanted to raise at this meeting.
8. Vice-Mayor Donley summarized what the discussion had covered and points for agreement:
 - We agreed to expand the recipient list of the scoping letter via the Advisory Group
 - We agreed to expand the time for receipt of responses by holding a special BRAC-133 Advisory Group meeting earlier than initially planned.
 - We are agreeing to expand opportunities for public comment and participation vis-à-vis the above.
 - We have clarified the relationship of this project with the HOT Lanes Project.
9. Action Items:
 - VDOT
 - Send a draft list of stakeholders to the City for review and suggested additions.
 - Send out scoping letters before August 18, 2011.
 - Give a presentation at the next BRAC Advisory Group meeting.
 - Attend all BRAC Advisory Group meetings until the EA project is completed.
 - TES
 - Prepare a letter for the Mayor's signature for the HOT Lanes EA Public Hearing re-stating the City's opposition to moving the HOT Lanes terminus within the boundaries of the City.

- Organize a special meeting of the BRAC Advisory to discuss the EA on September 7, 2011.
- Prepare a summary of the points of agreement from this meeting.
- Prepare a summary of the EA process and post this information on the City Website.