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Courthouse bypass road project may get VDOT funding

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By KELLY HANNON

Driving to Lake Anna would be faster and more direct if Virginia decides to apply federal stimulus money to the Spotsylvania Courthouse Bypass project.

The \$27.2 million, 5-mile project is on a list of road work candidates that Virginia may choose to receive part of the state's share of highway stimulus funds, said VDOT spokeswoman Tina Bundy. The list has not been finalized yet, she cautioned.

But local transportation and elected officials received word that the project was being considered.

"We're keeping our fingers crossed," said Hap Connors, chairman of the Spotsylvania Board of Supervisors.

The Commonwealth Transportation Board could vote on the next round of stimulus package-funded projects as soon as May 21.

The Fredericksburg area received \$25.2 million to widen State Route 3 in Spotsylvania during the first round of stimulus project funding in April. The Commonwealth Transportation Board also approved \$13 million for Interstate 95 paving locally.

The first half of the Spotsylvania Courthouse Bypass was completed last September for \$13.5 million.

The new four-lane highway routes traffic away from the old T intersection near Spotsylvania's government buildings.

The old intersection where Brock Road and State Route 208 converged was becoming a daily traffic problem.

About 20,000 vehicles a day were traveling through the intersection in 2007. By 2029, the number would have grown to 49,000 vehicles a day.

The second phase will complete the bypass. It will end near the Ta River beyond Post Oak, and reconnect with State Route 208. It is the more expensive half since the project requires the construction of two bridges.

Shifting traffic to the bypass should encourage more pedestrian traffic around the courthouse, Connors said.

"The bypass is a project that's very much overdue and it'll help revitalize the courthouse area by bypassing traffic around it," Connors said. Plus, "it makes it easier for residents and visitors to get down to Lake Anna," he said.

The bypass was originally funded in Virginia's six-year transportation budget. But that money was cut in February when lower-than-expected revenue projections forced the Commonwealth Transportation Board to cut \$2 billion in road construction projects statewide. Stimulus funding could restore that money.

The Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization was notified that it would have to amend a document that lists all federally funded projects in the event the Spotsylvania Courthouse Bypass is funded. If this occurs, FAMPO could amend this document in May or June, allowing construction on the project to move forward, said Andy Waple, a senior regional planner for the committee.

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