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BREAKING EDITOR'S PICK

New 'concept' for Rappahannock River crossing project on Interstate 95

By SCOTT SHENK THE FREE LANCE-STAR 17 hrs ago

The massive southbound Rappahannock River crossing project has a new design concept that came about after the Virginia Department of Transportation heard from the public about the original plan.

The change is basic but considerable.

Instead of building the collector-distributor lanes on the outside parallel to Interstate 95's primary lanes, the plan calls for building three new lanes in the median. Those new lanes in the median would serve as the new primary lanes. The existing primary lanes would be converted to carry traffic on the new feeder lanes, with three lanes instead of the two, as the original plan called for.

The new plan also will extend the southernmost merge area about one mile further than originally planned.

The \$125-million crossing project will add feeder lanes along southbound I-95 between U.S. 17 in Stafford County and State Route 3 in Fredericksburg. The project also includes adding lanes to the U.S. 17 southbound exit ramp onto I-95.

There is a companion crossing project for the northbound side of I-95, but it has not yet been approved for funding. There are no plans to move the northbound collector-distributor lanes to the median.

VDOT's Fredericksburg District Administrator Marcie Parker unveiled the new plan Monday night at the monthly meeting for the Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Committee.

Committee members asked questions about the new plans, but seemed open to the new design.

She said public comments on the original plan raised concerns about ramps, merge and sign issues and VDOT decided to look at alternative schemes.

The new design will have no impact on the project's cost, Parker told the FAMPO committee.

"It makes it a lot easier for construction," Parker noted.

During the meeting, Parker called the design a concept, but afterward said VDOT is going to move forward with the new plan.

She said VDOT planned to present the new design to contractors today.

Work on the crossing project is slated to start in late 2018 and be completed in 2022.

Scott Shenk: 540/374-5436

sshenk@freelancestar.com

Scott Shenk

