

FAMPO to study I-95 corridor

BY SCOTT SHENK/THE FREE LANCE-STAR | Posted: Sunday, November 22, 2015 12:00 am

In a fix to find ways to deal with Interstate 95 congestion and the impact on the area, local transportation officials have decided to launch a detailed study.

The Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization administrator told the Policy Committee on Monday that data for most recent studies of the corridor date to the early 2000s and that past studies have been done “piecemeal.”

Paul Agnello told the committee that the scope of the study would cover some 20 miles from the northern tip of Stafford County to the southern end of Spotsylvania County and include updated traffic data.

The board voted to approve the \$280,000 study, with Stafford representative Laura Sellers voting against it. She was skeptical of the expense and said the interstate shouldn't be the responsibility of the localities.

The study will be done in phases, with the first one to focus on ways to fix the growing congestion problems on the interstate, according to a FAMPO report. The second phase will be done later, and will include data on multi-modal options such as mass transit.

One of the issues the FAMPO report cites for immediate attention is the I-95 express lanes merge area in North Stafford. The Virginia Department of Transportation and Transurban, the toll-lane operator, are developing a plan to extend the merge area just more than two miles south.

The study will look at immediate and long-term fixes for the express lanes merge problem, such as the extension of the toll lanes into Spotsylvania. The study also will be aimed at identifying other possible interstate issues and ways to fix them.

The scope of the first phase will assume some projects have been completed: the express lanes merge area extension; the reconstruction of the interchange at Courthouse Road in Stafford; and the southbound collector-distributor lanes between U.S. 17 and State Route 3, part of the Rappahannock River Crossing project.

According to the FAMPO report, a comprehensive study on the I-95 corridor hasn't been done since the 1960s.