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County joins toll board

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By DAN TELVOCK
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Spotsylvania County became a member of the George Washington Toll Authority last week.

The authority could end up designing and constructing up to \$250 million in transportation improvements, including a State Route 3 Bypass that connects with Gordon Road.

The project also involves a new Interstate 95 interchange near the Virginia Welcome Center that would connect to the toll road and bypass the most congested section of Route 3.

Supervisor Gary Jackson asked other supervisors to hold off on creating the authority until they all know what the toll charge would be and how many vehicles per day might use the road.

Jackson said this road project has been studied for three years and Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization officials didn't have much to show for their work during the meeting. Jackson asked why the authority had to be created before he and other board members could see a study showing the project is financially feasible.

Robinson said a "thousand-page book" with additional details on the project will be completed in a few months. But Robinson said there wouldn't be an "investment-grade analysis" of the project until the design phase. He said the Board of Supervisors has a better chance of getting partial funding from the federal and state governments for the project if it shows it can generate money to pay for the road through tolls.

"This process is to satisfy [that] there is worth to this project and that it is feasible from a transportation standpoint," Robinson said.

The city of Fredericksburg, which needs to hold one more public hearing, is expected to join the authority. Stafford County officials declined to hold public hearings.

Supervisor Hap Connors said Spotsylvania officials have to be proactive because state road funding is rapidly declining. He said creating and joining the authority does not bind the Board of Supervisors to anything, but it does let the Federal Highway Administration know that local officials are serious about this project.

"Unless we elect a wholesale new General Assembly next year, I don't see much changing," Connors said. "I don't think waiting is going to be to our advantage."

Jackson said he didn't want supervisors to rush into the toll road business. He said it is "fascinating" that he has not seen a single study of this project.

"If this doesn't bind us to anything then why do we have to act?" Jackson said. "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread."

Supervisors voted 5-2 to create the authority. Supervisors Connors, Jerry Logan and Benjamin Pitts will serve on the authority.

Supervisor T.C. Waddy and Jackson voted against creating the authority.

Dan Telvock: 540/374-5438

Email: dtelvock@freelancestar.com

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