

Group seeks money for U.S. 1 widening

BY SCOTT SHENK | Posted: Tuesday, July 17, 2012 12:10 am

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At its monthly meeting Monday night, the Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization voted to seek several million dollars for a U.S. 1 widening project in Stafford.

The panel also made some adjustments to future funding for other projects, including removing millions from the controversial Rappahannock River Crossing project.

The board voted unanimously to seek \$3.3 million for the U.S. 1 widening project from a pool of unused federal funds.

The proposed widening of U.S. 1 from Telegraph Road north to the Prince William County line was the only local project that qualified for the unused funds, said FAMPO Administrator Lloyd Robinson.

Such projects have to be in the state's Six-Year Improvement Program and be ready for completion of at least one phase.

The widening project fills those requirements but is in the early stages and has no timeline. The SYIP includes \$869,000 in fiscal year 2014 for preliminary engineering.

The project, along with another one aimed at fixing the Telegraph Road intersection where the highway would be widened, is related to BRAC, the federal government's most recent base realignment and closure program.

The Telegraph Road intersection project has \$4 million in federal funding. There are no designs yet, but construction could start later this year and be finished by late 2013.

The BRAC program already has brought nearly 3,000 new federal workers to the area. They are based at the new Russell-Knox Building off Telegraph Road, on the west side of U.S. 1.

There also are new buildings at the Quantico Corporate Center on U.S. 1 just north of Telegraph Road.

Similar BRAC-related work is nearly completed in the Triangle area, where U.S. 1 is being widened from four lanes to six.

FAMPO also voted unanimously Monday to amend its Transportation Improvement Program to be in accord with the state's Six-Year Improvement Program, approved by the Commonwealth Transportation Board in June.

Millions in funding for numerous approved area projects, such as the Spotsylvania Virginia Railway Express station and commuter lot expansions, were added to the SYIP.

One project lost funding.

The Rappahannock River Crossing had nearly \$11 million in funding erased from in the SYIP.

That controversial project includes plans to improve the U.S. 17 interchange, add feeder roads along Interstate 95 and add a parkway, potentially with a toll, from the Fredericksburg rest area on I-95 to the Gordon Road area of State Route 3.

Spotsylvania supervisors, who oppose the parkway portion of the plans, successfully derailed the River Crossing project. It remains in the state's SYIP but has been shelved, at least temporarily. About \$2 million is still set aside for the project, said Cord Sterling, a representative of the Commonwealth Transportation Board on the planning body.

Stafford County benefited from the Spotsylvania project's downfall, gaining millions in funding for a new State Route 630 interchange at I-95.

Another item at Monday's meeting involved adjustments to funding for the I-95 express lanes (formerly HOT lanes), a nearly \$1 billion project that will add tolled HOV lanes in the median of I-95 to Stafford. The project is getting most of its money from private funding.

Quintin Elliott, the Virginia Department of Transportation's Fredericksburg administrator, said the changes add no public funding to the project.

Also on Monday, the board approved \$664,993 for nine new vehicles for the Rappahannock Area Agency on Aging.

Scott Shenk: 540/374-5436

Email: sshenk@freelancestar.com