New interchange clears hurdle

BY SCOTT SHENK | Posted: Tuesday, May 3, 2011 12:00 am

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An estimated $300 million Interstate 95 interchange and parkway project recently cleared a big hurdle in gaining federal approval to pursue more studies.

It looks like the stars are aligned, Lloyd Robinson said during a George Washington Toll Road Authority meeting Monday night. Robinson, the interim director of the authority, and a few of its board members discussed how to proceed with the project, which aims to put an interchange at State Route 3 at the Welcome Center and rest area in Fredericksburg.

The authority's Interchange Justification Report on the project was approved on April 28 by the Federal Highway Administration.

Still, Robinson said it will take years to perform design work, financial analyses and environmental studies. Then right-of-way would have to be acquired before construction could begin.

The FHA will have the final say in whether the project ever breaks ground.

Were just at the beginning, Robinson said after the meeting.

The next phase of preliminary studies would get $14.8 million in funding through Gov. Bob McDonnells transportation program, according to the draft of the states Six-Year Improvement Program for fiscal years 2012 to 2017.

The governors massive $4 billion program has already been approved by the General Assembly. The Commonwealth Transportation Board will vote on it in June.

For years, the Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization has studied ways to improve traffic in the Fredericksburg region. It determined that one way to do that is to improve access points from I-95.

One such access point would be at the Welcome Center and rest area in Fredericksburg.

The interchange would connect to a new four-lane Rappahannock Parkway, which would run west and tie in to Route 3 at Gordon Road. The parkway and interchange could carry a toll, but also could be free for high-occupancy vehicles.

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