

# Officials look at adding lane to Route 3

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BY SCOTT SHENK

State Route 3 could get an additional lane along a stretch regularly jammed with commuter traffic.

The staff of the Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization are crunching the numbers to see if converting a 2-mile stretch of a dedicated right-turn lane to a through-lane would work.

The study comes at the urging of David Ross, Spotsylvania supervisor and member of FAMPO's board who also happens to be a commuter.

"I think it will help traffic flow along Route 3 by adding more volume-carrying capacity and preventing the merge-slowdown effect," Ross said in an email last week.

The turn lane starts at the Interstate 95 ramp that exits onto westbound Route 3 at Central Park in Fredericksburg. Through-traffic can use the lane as far as Bragg Road in Spotsylvania. That's where it becomes a dedicated right-turn lane.

The lane, which serves traffic heading into and out of retail areas in the county, ends just before Chewing Lane, where the Wawa convenience store is.

Traffic modeling work should be completed soon to determine the impact of the proposed change.

"We're in the middle of doing that right now," Lloyd Robinson, FAMPO's administrator, said last week. He said a draft of the modeling results will be sent to the Virginia Department of Transportation and the FAMPO board will likely discuss the findings at its November meeting.

The model is limited in scope, Robinson said. It will show only predicted traffic flow impacts on Route 3 and side roads along the stretch with the turn lane.

A more in-depth corridor study, which would also focus on such things as safety, would have to be done in order to determine whether the change would be worth doing, Robinson said.

That would require funding. Either VDOT or Spotsylvania could do such a study, he said.

It wouldn't be cheap to convert the lane for through-traffic because changes would have to be made. Curbing, for instance, would have to be torn out and moved at Bragg Road and three other intersections.

Ross said the county staff and VDOT told him it could cost an estimated \$1 million to make the necessary changes. County staffers also had told him it would cost about \$400,000 to produce a model, which prompted Ross to ask FAMPO staff to do it.

There is no cost associated with the modeling work FAMPO is doing.

Robinson said he doubts that a more in-depth corridor study would cost \$400,000.

Ross said he's fiscally conservative but believes converting the lane would be worth the \$1 million price tag.

“As someone who drives this every day and seeing the ‘fight’ for traffic that has to merge left into the flow at each of the interchanges (which I feel slows the main traffic flow down) it's just an idea that I had from over six years of driving it daily,” Ross said in an email.

He is part of a four-member majority of Spotsylvania supervisors who took office in January and promptly derailed the Rappahannock River Crossing project that was aimed at improving traffic on U.S. 17 in Stafford, Route 3 in Spotsylvania, as well as along the I-95 corridor in Fredericksburg.

The supervisors objected to the overall cost of the estimated \$300 million project and to the four- to six-lane parkway included in the plans. The parkway, which would carry a toll, would run from the Virginia Welcome Center/rest area on I-95 and connect to Route 3 at Gordon Road.

Though the parkway portion of the plan has been shelved, the other phases of it—U.S. 17 interchange improvements and feeder roads along I-95—are still in the works.

The project has since lost most of the nearly \$15 million set aside for preliminary engineering and studies.

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