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Senate OKs local transportation panel

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RICHMOND--

The state Senate yesterday approved a bill to create a transportation authority to build a toll road around State Route 3.

The bill lets Spotsylvania County and Fredericksburg form the transportation authority, which would be in charge of a proposed toll road off a yet-to-be-built exit on I-95 south near Central Park.

The road would cross through that area to Gordon Road, bypassing Route 3 congestion.

Del. Bobby Orrock, R-Caroline, introduced the bill earlier this session and it flew through the House with no problems.

On the Senate side, it underwent several amendments, because of concerns from state Sen. Edd Houck, D-Spotsylvania.

The bill now limits the authority to the Route 3 corridor, sets the toll on the future road at no more than \$1 without permission from the localities, requires public hearings before road construction, and clarifies that any bonds issued by the transportation authority are not the responsibility of the state.

The Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization is conducting a study of the feasibility of building the road.

That study still needs final cost estimates and information on toll feasibility, as well as locations for the potential exit and road. Also, the Federal Highway Administration must approve all changes to the interstate.

The Senate had no debate on the bill, and the vote was 38-0.

The bill will have to return to the House for final approval of the Senate amendments, but that isn't likely to pose a problem. Gov. Tim Kaine will also have to sign it.

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