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## Spotsy paving way for tolls?

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By KELLY HANNON

Before cars can ever escape State Route 3 traffic in Spotsylvania County by turning onto a toll road, the project must appear in the county's Comprehensive Plan.

To potentially start down that path, the county is holding an informational meeting on amending the plan, even though an exact route for the envisioned toll road isn't known yet.

The meeting is from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. tomorrow at Mount Hope Baptist Church at 6823 Harrison Road in Spotsylvania. A PowerPoint presentation will be given at 6:45 p.m.

Also, the Spotsylvania Planning Commission will hold a public hearing in early 2011 to consider adding the road to the plan, according to Kathy Smith, Spotsylvania spokeswoman.

The county describes the possible toll road as extending "southwest from a new Interstate 95 interchange in Fredericksburg, through the City of Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County, tying down with a grade separated interchange at Route 3, Plank Road, and Route 627, Gordon Road," according to the meeting notice.

Tomorrow's meeting is part of the planning for a new Interstate 95 interchange between the Virginia Welcome Center and the Rappahannock River.

Plans so far indicate the new interchange would connect to a tolled, four-lane or six-lane divided highway with a design speed of 60 mph, intersecting with Route 3 at Gordon Road.

But years of design and federally required environmental work remain to be done, and there is still time for the plan, and the road's alignment, to change.

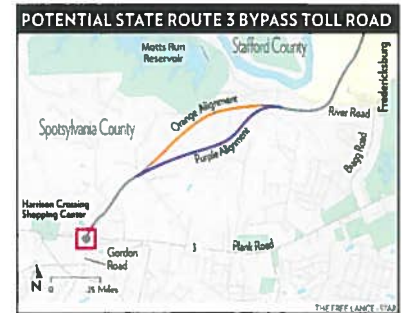
Residents who own property near where the toll road could be built have been calling and e-mailing the George Washington Regional Toll Road Authority's interim director, Lloyd Robinson, asking how the project would impact their land.

A map distributed by Spotsylvania for the meeting shows an "orange" and a "purple" alignment for the toll road, but those paths could change after design and environmental planning work is performed, Robinson said.

"We don't know where it's going to go exactly," he said. "That's why we have to go through the next phase of this project."

The environmental review of the project is expected to begin in spring 2011, and could take 12 to 18 months, Smith wrote in an e-mail.

Currently, the project is managed by the George Washington Toll Road Authority, a group created by the Virginia General Assembly in 2009 and activated in fall 2010 after four public hearings. Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania are the



only members, and three representatives from each locality sit on the board, along with a Virginia Department of Transportation representative. The authority has the power to build highway projects only in the State Route 3 corridor and can collect tolls to drive on them.

The toll road authority's board is expected to ultimately choose the alignment for the toll road.

Also, the board will have to decide whether it wants the interchange exit to be tolled, Robinson said.

This fall, an Interchange Justification Report on the I-95 interchange was submitted to VDOT, which submits it to the Federal Highway Administration.

The federal government is interested to see how building a new interchange would affect traffic on I-95.

The project is years away from carrying traffic. A draft schedule shows preliminary design work could stretch into 2014.

Robinson said that is a conservative schedule, and depending on funding, the authority is prepared to work as quickly as it can.

Stafford's membership in the toll road authority will be discussed at a board meeting later this week.

The Stafford Board of Supervisors passed a resolution in November asking the General Assembly to alter the state law that created the authority, clearing the way for the county to join and build and fund highway projects in Stafford.

Comments on amending Spotsylvania's Comprehensive Plan to reflect the toll road can be e-mailed to [planning@spotsylvania.va.us](mailto:planning@spotsylvania.va.us).

Comments can also be mailed to 9019 Old Battlefield Boulevard, Suite 320, Spotsylvania, Va. 22553.

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