

Print this Page

[Return to story](#)

STAFFORD MAY JOIN AUTHORITY

January 30, 2011 12:35 am

BY CHELYEN DAVIS and KELLY HANNON

Stafford County is interested in joining the George Washington Toll Road Authority.

The authority, which currently has only Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania as members, was created by the Virginia General Assembly in 2009.

In that bill, the authority was restricted to building projects only in the State Route 3 corridor. Each locality is represented by three elected officials on the toll road authority. One representative is appointed by the Virginia Department of Transportation.

Amendments to the law are needed for Stafford to join.

Sen. Richard Stuart, R-Stafford, has introduced a bill authorizing Stafford's inclusion in the toll road authority. It passed in the Senate this week without opposition. The bill eliminates the provision that projects be built only in the Route 3 corridor.

"We hope that that will allow us to make certain improvements to the I-95 corridor," Stuart said.

The toll road authority is studying a new I-95 interchange near the rest area in Fredericksburg that would connect to a parkway from I-95 to Gordon Road in Spotsylvania.

A federally required report on the project's impact on surrounding roads is currently being reviewed by the Federal Highway Administration.

A formal project design, preliminary engineering, financial analysis and environmental review all still need to be done before the highway could be built.

The project as envisioned would include two new bridge spans alongside the existing Rappahannock River bridges on Interstate 95.

A two-lane southbound and a two-lane northbound span would connect the new interchange with U.S. 17 in Stafford, letting drivers cross the river without using I-95 or U.S. 1.

They would require Stafford's involvement in the toll road authority.

"Stafford had a need to be involved at that point," said Mark Dudenhefer, chairman of the Stafford Board of Supervisors.

Stafford is also interested in pursuing potential projects within the county's boundaries, such as a parkway connecting the Centreport Parkway with U.S. 17 near the Stafford Lakes Parkway. That project is now included in the county's Comprehensive Plan.

"This is an organization that will take us into the future," Dudenhefer said of the authority.

Legislation submitted by Stuart maintains a \$1 cap on toll rates that could be set in the future by the authority.

To set toll rates above \$1, the authority would need a vote from the governing bodies of all its members: Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania, and Stafford once it is included in the authority.

Kelly Hannon: 540/374-5436

Email: khannon@freelancestar.com

Copyright 2012 The Free Lance-Star Publishing Company.