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Toll-road study plan OK'd by area panel

June 9, 2011 12:15 am

BY SCOTT SHENK

The George Washington Toll Road Authority on Monday agreed on the language of a request for proposals for contractors to oversee the next round of preliminary studies on Fredericksburg's proposed Interstate 95 interchange and parkway project.

The Virginia Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration must approve the request for proposals, or RFP.

Lloyd Robinson, Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization director of transportation planning, hopes the RFP will be approved in early July.

VDOT also will conduct an environmental analysis, which the highway administration must approve, as well, Robinson said.

If the project is approved, the interchange could connect to a proposed four-lane Rappahannock Parkway, which would run west between State Route 3 and Rappahannock River 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.

Plans for the new parkway include a diamond intersection connecting to the Celebrate Virginia South development's road system near the site where the Celebrate Virginia Live concert series is held. Celebrate Virginia is just behind the rest area.

The authority's Interchange Justification Report on the project was approved on April 28 by the highway administration.

The next phase of preliminary studies would get \$14.8 million in funding through Gov. Bob McDonnell's transportation program, according to the draft of the state's six-year improvement program for fiscal 2012-17.

The governor's massive, \$4 billion program already has been approved by the General Assembly. The Commonwealth Transportation Board will vote on it next week.

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