

Stafford picks projects for statewide prioritization program

BY SCOTT SHENK/THE FREE LANCE-STAR | Posted: Saturday, September 19, 2015 12:00 am

Reducing traffic on Interstate 95 and U.S. 17, improving intersections on U.S. 1, building a new commuter lot and expanding VRE platforms at two stations top Stafford County's wish list for transportation funding.

The Stafford Board of Supervisors this week voted on the projects it wants to submit for consideration under the state's new transportation prioritization program.

The list includes several smaller road projects, along with massive Interstate 95 proposals considered to be some of the most important for the region. The latter includes adding another lane in each direction in the busy North Stafford area.

The transportation prioritization program, also known as HB2, removed \$416 million in funding from more than 60 projects statewide. But there will be \$1 billion up for grabs for prioritization projects in the state's 2017–23 six-year plan.

The program will score projects according to set criteria, something officials say will help fund the best projects, improve transparency and take some of the political gamesmanship out of the process.

The Stafford board wants the Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization to submit two major I–95 projects to be scored by the state.

One project is the Rappahannock River Crossing, which tops the FAMPO list of priority projects. The crossing project would add collector-distributor lanes along the interstate, from the U.S. 17 interchange in Stafford to State Route 3's exit. The project also would upgrade both interchanges.

Adding the C-D lanes on each side of the interstate would cost an estimated \$265.2 million.

The board also wants FAMPO to endorse projects that would add a fourth lane on each side of I–95 between State Route 610 and Stafford's Courthouse Road. The project previously had some funding, but it was cut.

The estimated cost to add the fourth lanes is \$130 million.

Commuter Projects

The board's resolution asks that the George Washington Regional Commission submit three commuter-based projects to be ranked in the prioritization program.

One would add a second commuter lot on Courthouse Road. The estimated cost is \$6 million.

Original plans for the I-95 interchange project on Courthouse Road included replacing the existing commuter lot with two new ones. After the state cut \$35 million from the project, a revised plan included only one commuter lot.

The other two projects would extend the platforms at the Leeland and Brooke Virginia Railway Express stations. The combined estimated cost of those projects is \$10.1 million.

SMALLER ROAD PROJECTS

One of the three smaller projects the board wants to compete for HB2 funding would upgrade the U.S. 1 and Hope Road intersection—along with a portion of U.S. 1—just north of the county courthouse.

It would be the second phase of the estimated \$11.2-million project. The second phase has an estimated \$2.6-million price tag.

The project would be aimed at improving traffic flow and upgrading sidewalks and crosswalks. Left- and right-turn lanes would be added at the Hope Road intersection and the signals also would be synchronized.

The estimated \$8.6-million first phase, which is fully funded, will upgrade the Courthouse Road intersection, add turn lanes, widen U.S. 1, and add a concrete median to the highway.

The other two projects are also focused on U.S. 1 intersections. One is at Woodstock Lane in North Stafford, which has heavy commuter and school traffic, according to the county. The project would be aimed at improving safety around the intersection.

Left- and right-turn lanes would be added, Woodstock Lane would be widened and a traffic light would be installed on U.S. 1. The estimated cost is \$4.7 million.

The other would focus on the southbound U.S. 1 left-turn lane at Potomac Creek Drive in the Stafford Airport area because of a problem with rear-end crashes. The project's estimated cost is \$1.46 million.

The state plans to release prioritization project scores in January.