

# VDOT details plans to extend I-95 express lanes' terminus two miles farther south

**BY JEFF BRANSCOME/THE FREE LANCE-STAR | Posted: Thursday, February 18, 2016 12:00 am**

During his commute home to North Stafford from Alexandria, Mike Buckley sometimes gets off the Interstate 95 express lanes at Dumfries.

Otherwise, he said, he'd be stuck in traffic approaching exit 143 in Stafford County, where the express lanes and regular lanes merge near Garrisonville Road. "It can be a real mess," he said.

But Buckley said he thinks the Virginia Department of Transportation's plan to extend the express lanes' terminus 2 miles farther south will help commuters like him who live in North Stafford.

"The backup will just be farther" south near Courthouse Road, he said. "But it may allow the Garrisonville people to flee."

Buckley was among 135 residents who attended an informational meeting Wednesday night at H.H. Poole Middle School. VDOT reps outlined plans for the \$50 million extension project, which will be built as one reversible lane splitting into northbound and southbound merge ramps.

Transurban, the company that operates the high-occupancy toll lanes on I-95, has agreed to pay \$25 million toward the project, or half of the estimated cost. The project, which Gov. Terry McAuliffe announced last year, is scheduled to be finished by the summer of 2018.

Construction is expected to begin later this year

VDOT officials say the extension will improve safety because fewer cars will be "weaving to enter or exit the express lanes."

"The traffic that wants to continue southbound will not have to mix with the Garrisonville Road traffic in the evening," said Susan Shaw of VDOT.

The extension will also reduce delays in the morning by taking high-occupancy vehicles off the regular lanes sooner, officials say.

North Stafford resident Bart Randall, who carools to his engineering job at the Coast Guard headquarters in Washington, said he wished the terminus extension was two lanes instead of one. Still, he said he thinks the project will shave at least 20 minutes from his commute when traffic is heaviest.

It can take him 40 minutes to drive 5 miles from the Quantico exit to Garrisonville on Thursdays and

Fridays, he said.

The terminus extension “will help a lot because most of that traffic will all be headed south,” he said.

North Stafford resident Dan Mannis, who commutes to Fort Belvoir, also attended VDOT’s meeting with an optimistic outlook. “I don’t think this is going to fix every problem, but ... if this fixes some of the bigger problems, I think it’s worth the effort,” he said.