

Plans to redo I-95 interchange at Route 3 have changed

BY SCOTT SHENK/THE FREE LANCE-STAR | Posted: Tuesday, March 22, 2016 12:00 am

Proposed changes aimed at improving the Interstate 95 interchange on State Route 3 have morphed. Most facets of the original plan, announced in June, would remain.

But there is a big change with the northbound cloverleaf ramp from eastbound Route 3 to northbound I-95: It would be eliminated and replaced with turn lanes on Route 3, according to Marcie Parker, Fredericksburg District administrator with the Virginia Department of Transportation.

She presented the plan at the Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization meeting Monday night.

VDOT would replace the entrance ramp with three left-turn lanes on Route 3 on the east side of the I-95 overpass. That traffic would turn onto a new ramp next to the current one for exiting westbound Route 3 traffic.

A red-light signal would manage traffic accessing the interstate from the left-turn lanes.

“Operationally it’s the preferred alternative,” Parker said of replacing the loop with the left-turn lanes.

The merging traffic from the current ramp onto northbound I-95 often leads to backups. The change should eliminate that, Parker said.

Another change to the plan would eliminate the addition of a southbound I-95 lane from the U.S. 17 exit in Stafford to Route 3.

Parker said that lane would have to be torn up eventually for the planned Rappahannock River Crossing project, which will add collector-distributor lanes along the interstate between U.S. 17 and Route 3.

“I like it,” said David Ross, one of Spotsylvania’s FAMPO representatives, adding that the area of Route 3 is “the most dangerous” in the area.

The changes to the federally funded project would increase the cost from \$18 million to \$21 million.

The rest of the original Route 3 interchange plan remains the same.

The plan calls for extending and widening the southbound I-95 ramp to Route 3 and separating Central Park traffic from westbound Route 3 traffic.

Traffic headed to the Central Park would use a “slip ramp” to go straight to the commercial area.

Traffic exiting onto westbound Route 3 would have three turn lanes to use from the ramp. At the end of the ramp, a red-light signal would be installed.

A curb would separate the westbound Route 3 traffic from the Central Park traffic, on the ramp and Route 3.

The plans also call for the extension of both the entry ramp and acceleration lane onto northbound I-95 for traffic exiting westbound Route 3.

Public hearings are expected to be held by sometime this summer.

Parker said VDOT plans to advertise the project in September, with work possibly beginning about a year later.

Also on Monday, the FAMPO Policy Committee voted to see if federal funds from a new program could be gained for the northern portion of the Rappahannock River Crossing project.

The estimated \$115 million southbound side of the crossing project is expected to be funded through the state’s new prioritization program.

The northbound side, with an estimated cost of \$152 million, will not be funded in the first round of the prioritization program, which scores transportation projects statewide.

The hope, according to FAMPO Administrator Paul Agnello, is that if some federal funds can be earmarked for the northbound crossing it will score better in next year’s prioritization program.