

I-95 express lanes extension to start this summer

SCOTT SHENK/THE FREE LANCE-STAR | Posted: Thursday, May 19, 2016 6:27 pm

A contract has been awarded for the Interstate 95 express lanes merge extension project and work is expected to begin this summer.

The Commonwealth Transportation Board on Wednesday awarded a \$31.1 million contract to Branch Highways Inc. of Roanoke to handle the project.

It calls for extending the merge area around State Route 610 in Garrisonville more than two miles to the south, according to the Virginia Department of Transportation.

“This project is part of a major effort to unlock gridlock in Northern Virginia,” state Secretary of Transportation Aubrey Layne said in a release. “This project has been accelerated and will provide much needed relief to ease the bottleneck at the southern end of the I-95 express lanes.”

The extension, expected to cost a total of \$50 million, is aimed at fixing northbound and southbound traffic issues at the merge.

Northbound traffic will be able to merge onto the express lanes before Route 610, eliminating much of the weaving of cars around the current merge ramp.

The extension will allow southbound express traffic to merge back into the main lanes south of Route 610, which is expected to cut down on the backups where the merge and Garrisonville Road’s exits are now.

While data show the express lanes, which opened in December 2014, have improved travel times along the 29-mile stretch between Stafford and Northern Virginia, since early on there have been congestion problems at the merge and to the south.

VDOT and Transurban, the private company that operates the electronically tolled lanes in the median of the interstate, came up with the proposed changes to address the problem.

Transurban and VDOT will split the cost of the project.

Work on the extension is expected to start this summer. The southbound ramp is expected to be



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completed in late 2017 and the northbound ramp in the summer of 2018.