

I-95 Atlantic Gateway gets \$165 million

By **SCOTT SHENK THE FREE LANCE-STAR** | Posted: Tuesday, July 5, 2016 6:15 pm

The state has cashed in on a federal grant that will pump \$165 million into a massive project for road and rail work along the Interstate 95 corridor, including through the Fredericksburg area.

The Atlantic Gateway, as the project is called, includes rail expansion, increased bus service, the extension of the I-95 express lanes and the Rappahannock River Crossing.

According to a Tuesday release from Gov. Terry McAuliffe's office, the FASTLANE grant money increases the combined funding, along with private and public sources, to \$1.4 billion to "address the worst bottlenecks on the I-95 corridor in Northern Virginia, transforming travel along the entire East Coast."

The state will use the federal grant to help "leverage \$565 million in private investment and \$710 million in public funding."

"Our administration worked with federal, state, local and private sector parties to submit a package of transportation improvements that will have far-reaching benefits for everyone who travels the Commonwealth, whether by car, bus or train," McAuliffe said in the release.

On I-95, the southern portion of the Rappahannock River Crossing project will benefit from the grant, which will help pay for the construction of a bridge next to the current spans just north of State Route 3.

Some of the grant money also will go toward the extension of the express lanes on the northern and southern ends.

Up north, the fund will help pay for a seven-mile extension of the lanes.

Locally, the grant will help fund a 10-mile extension of the express lanes from the current terminus near Route 610 in North Stafford, where there have been congestion problems since the electronically tolled lanes opened in December 2014.

Work is already set to start later this month on a two-mile extension of the southern terminus of the toll lanes.

The longer express lane extension will take the toll lanes to the U.S. 17 area in Stafford, which should allow the express lanes to tap into the river crossing's collector-distributor lanes that will run parallel to the main lanes. The feeder roads will run from U.S. 17 to State Route 3.

The grant money will also be used to build 14 miles of new rail, including the expansion of the Long Bridge in Northern Virginia, to help ease rail congestion; invest in expanded bus services in the corridor; add new commuter parking; and build pavement to be used for autonomous vehicle infrastructure.

"This grant will allow the Commonwealth to transform the 95 corridor into a true multimodal corridor that better manages traffic and increases travel choices for people and goods," state Secretary of Transportation

Aubrey Layne said in the release.

Hap Connors, the local representative on the Commonwealth Transportation Board, also lauded the grant award.

“This is a huge win for the Fredericksburg region as it addresses choke points along the 95 corridor that have plagued us for too many years,” he said.

The Atlantic Gateway projects will be built in phases, with some work starting this year.