

FAMPO REGIONAL SMART SCALE WORKSHOP
May 14, 2018

A regional Smart Scale workshop was held from 6-8 p.m. at the VDOT Fredericksburg District Auditorium.

Attendees:

City of Fredericksburg:

Mr. Erik Nelson, Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

Mr. Dave McLaughlin, Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC)

County of Spotsylvania:

Mr. Doug Morgan, TAC

Mr. Stan Huie, CTAC

County of Stafford:

Ms. Meg Bohmke, Stafford County Board of Supervisors

Ms. Cindy Shelton, Stafford County Board of Supervisors

Mr. Joey Hess, TAC

Mr. Melvin Allen, CTAC

Mr. Morgan Burch, CTAC

Mr. Dave Swan, CTAC

Mr. Jason Towery, Public Works Department

VDOT District Office:

Ms. Susan Gardner

Mr. Stephen Haynes

Mr. Mohammad Khalid

Ms. Marcie Parker

Ms. Michelle Shropshire

Secretary of Transportation's Office:

Mr. Chad Tucker

Fredericksburg Regional Chamber of Commerce:

Mr. Kyle Allwine

Citizen:

Mr. Gordon Silver

Staff:

Mr. Paul Agnello

Ms. Marti Donley

Mr. Nick Quint

Ms. Kari Barber

Mr. John Bentley

Mr. Colin Cate

Ms. JoAnna Roberson

Welcome:

Mr. Paul Agnello welcomed everyone in attendance and thanked them for their participation. Mr. Agnello also expressed thanks to VDOT District for providing the venue for tonight's meeting.

Smart Scale Presentation:

******(Mr. Tucker had a family medical emergency and was not available at the start of the meeting – Mr. Agnello provided a re-cap of Mr. Tucker’s PowerPoint presentation)

Mr. Agnello advised that the current amount of funding available for Round 3 of the Smart Scale process has been updated. Mr. Agnello stated the current amount expected to be available is slightly less than what had been originally cited. Previously, the funding was expected to be \$940 million (evenly split between the Statewide High Priority and District Grant programs). Mr. Agnello relayed that the current allocation is approximately \$850 million.

Mr. Agnello stated the funding allocated to the Fredericksburg District, which includes the Fredericksburg Region, Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula, is now estimated to be about \$30 million.

Mr. Agnello relayed that in Round 1 of the Smart Scale process, the FAMPO Region did very well with nine projects awarded and only two projects that did not receive funding. Mr. Agnello stated the total for the nine projects was \$216,609,546 with \$170,285,863 being awarded from Smart Scale.

Mr. Agnello advised that the State also secured a FASTLANE grant for the which resulted in the Atlantic Gateway project receiving \$165 million out of a total of \$800 million available nationwide.

For Round 2 of the Smart Scale process, Mr. Agnello stated the process was more competitive with an increase in applications and a decrease in funding. In Round 2, five projects were awarded funding with a total cost of \$82,586,320 and Smart Scale allocations at \$42,225,525.

Mr. Agnello relayed that since Round 2 of the Smart Scale process, the Commonwealth secured a deal with Transurban for the Fred Ex project that includes funding for the NB Rappahannock River Crossing project and for additional I-95 upgrades and improvements within the FAMPO and NoVA regions.

Mr. Agnello advised that the Commonwealth’s new overview process is for entities to submit good and sound-based performance-based projects and to re-think how to solve an area’s transportation problems and needs.

Mr. Agnello stated performance-based programming performance measures are driving the project selection and funding allocation process in all 3 funding sources that includes: Smart Scale, SGR and HSIP. Mr. Agnello stated project cost is an important variable and submitting projects that have leveraged funding established are bonus points within the project selection process. Mr. Agnello stated the scoring and project selection will be based on metrics that looks at asset condition and the expected benefits the project will produce (i.e. reduction in crashes, repair vs. replacement, reduction in traffic delays, etc.).

Mr. Agnello stated the performance-based planning concept includes the following points:

- If it’s not broke – don’t fix it (establish a need/problem)
- If you can prevent breakage from occurring (preserve/protect the current assets)
- If it is broke – fix what you have & maximize projects (utilize operational improvements, consider innovative intersection improvements/modifications & implement TDM techniques)

Mr. Agnello stated that after all the above have been exhausted and these still do not fulfill the need, then at this point consideration of building a new road should come into play.

Mr. Agnello stated the approach the Commonwealth has taken to generate stronger Smart Scale projects is to rethink how we can solve the transportation problems. Mr. Agnello stated the common thread has been to focus on cost-effective solutions, and this is being addressed by the VDOT STARS program, the Smart Scale program, common sense engineering, and studies for Arterial Preservation & Innovative Intersection improvements where applicable.

Mr. Agnello advised the cost of projects carries significant weight in whether a project is approved. For example, Mr. Agnello stated if the objective is to reduce congestion and improve safety along a corridor that has 10 signalized intersections, you could consider two strategies: Strategy 1 – widen the entire corridor by one additional lane in each direction at a cost of \$90 million; or Strategy 2 – convert the corridor to a superstreet and install adaptive signal controls and transit signal priorities – this would still resolve the issues but would cost approximately \$30 million.

Mr. Agnello stated the Commonwealth is looking at ways to expand the existing toolbox by looking for innovative solutions that get away from the focus of a “one size fits all” thought process. The current toolbox includes: traffic signalization, major capacity increase on existing facilities, or building new facilities. Mr. Agnello stated the toolbox of solutions can be expanded to include: access management/signal reduction to improve safety and traffic flow; implement adaptive controllers; travel demand management; and innovative intersections that improve capacity and safety.

Mr. Agnello stated that some examples of innovative intersections are: divergent diamond interchanges; displaced left turn intersections; restricted crossing U-turn intersections; and quadrant roadway intersections.

Mr. Agnello stated innovative intersection options have been proven to reduce conflict points and signal phases; result in fewer conflict points; result in significant crash reductions; reduce delays/congestion; result in less right-of-way needing to be obtained with lower construction costs; and allow for a quicker project completion timeframe.

Mr. Agnello stated that innovative intersections are not magic and will not solve every transportation problem. There will still be times when spending money on a large regional project will be the biggest/best solution to resolve a large ongoing problem.

Mr. Tucker advised that performance-based planning is the message the Commonwealth is trying to get out to localities, MPOs, etc. Mr. Tucker relayed that project cost is a huge factor for consideration and a need could be rectified with smaller projects being submitted for approval in either/or the State of Good repair or Smart Scale programs. Mr. Tucker relayed that innovative intersections have to be strategically planned and placed because if they are installed in the wrong areas the plan will fail.

Mr. Tucker stated that for innovative solutions to be submitted and funded, it requires regional and local decision-makers to see the value in a performance-based system for planning and developing innovative solutions. Without the support, public buy-in is difficult.

Regional Candidate Statewide High Priority Projects:

Mr. Agnello advised that two primary sources for regional candidate projects are: FAMPO studies (2045 LRTP & I-95 Phase 2 corridor study) & VDOT studies (STARS, Fred Ex IMR & River Crossing IMR's).

Mr. Agnello stated that staff is looking to finalize the eight regional Smart Scale candidate projects that will be submitted by FAMPO or GWRC (each entity can submit up to four projects). Mr. Agnello relayed that staff is continuing to gather input on potential changes to the draft projects and determine which projects have regional support so the list of eight projects can be finalized and endorsed. Mr. Agnello relayed that the FAMPO/GWRC boards will be asked to take action on the regional projects at the upcoming May 21 meeting. Mr. Agnello stated staff will be submitting the final supported projects by the June 1 deadline, and in the months of June/July, staff will be making updates and taking action on project changes (should any be necessary). Mr. Agnello relayed staff will be submitting final regional project applications before the August 1 deadline date.

Mr. Agnello advised that included in tonight's presentation packet, is the Smart Scale project applications that are being considered for submission from FAMPO/GWRC localities, as well as transit agencies. Mr. Agnello stated that currently the City of Fredericksburg, King George County, Spotsylvania County, Stafford County and FRED are

submitting four projects each. Caroline County is submitting two. Mr. Agnello relayed that the total funding request from the FAMPO/GWRC localities to the Fredericksburg District Grant program funding equals \$177 million (four projects do not have cost estimates at this time). Mr. Agnello stated that the District Grant funding for the Fredericksburg District will be about \$30 million, and these projects do not include projects being submitted for consideration from the other areas in the eastern part of the Fredericksburg District. Mr. Agnello relayed that the FRED projects will be competing against the projects submitted by FAMPO/GWRC localities as well as competing statewide. Mr. Agnello relayed that some projects are eligible for consideration from both the District Grant and Statewide High Priority programs. Mr. Agnello stated that when both options are available for consideration, funding is first used from the District Grant program.

Mr. Agnello advised that FAMPO/GWRC currently have eight projects to be submitted, with the possibility of receiving two more projects for consideration after existing studies within the region are completed. Mr. Agnello also relayed that staff is working with VDOT to determine if projects being considered can be bundled with other projects, so the region can receive the most benefit. Mr. Agnello stated that not every project has bundling options, but projects that offer multimodal enhancements are those where bundling could occur. This includes Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), bike/ped, TDM, and transit.

Mr. Agnello stated the eight FAMPO/GWRC projects include:

- Project A – I-95 sb widening to 4 lanes from mpt 128.7 to Exit 126, with a 5th auxiliary off-ramp lane added at Exit 126 (Mr. Agnello advised this is the number one regional project)
- Project B – Exit 126 improvements as result of STARS study by VDOT
- Project C – I-95 sb widening to 4 lanes from mpt. 128.7 to Exit 126 with nb widening to 4 lanes from Exit 126 to Exit 130 & including STARS study improvements at Exit 126
- Project D – US17 business STARS study improvements and park & ride lot improvements
- Project E – Exit 136 ramp improvements & Enon Road improvements
- Project F – Route 3 STARS study improvements & I-95 NB to Rte 3 eb ramp improvements
- Project G – Route 3 STARS study improvements, I-95 nb to Rte 3 eb improvements & Gateway Boulevard extension from Rte 3 to Cowan Boulevard (this project is a larger version of Project F)
- Project H – se Stafford County park & ride lot improvements

Mr. Agnello relayed that VRE is further along than the region is on implementing a parking demand management system for their lots. Mr. Agnello stated that VRE is implementing a system for all of their lots system-wide. Mr. Agnello stated that FAMPO is addressing needs for non-VRE commuter lots. Mr. Agnello stated that during the work week, a lot of the existing park & ride lots in the region are full by 6:30 a.m. Mr. Agnello stated that FAMPO is considering an enhancement of camera technology that may not give a specific number of available parking spaces in a lot but will indicate whether a park & ride lot is full or has remaining spots available.

Mr. Agnello stated that some potential transit/TDM enhancements at the park & ride lots could include bus shelters, bike lockers/covered bike racks, sheltered slug line island, electric charging stations, bike/ped paths and sidewalks.

Mr. Agnello stated that Project A (I-95 SB widening from mpt 128.7 to Exit 126) is still seen as the biggest need in the region. Mr. Agnello stated that the current cost estimate is \$25 million with no leveraged funding. This is a project that is needed by 2030. Mr. Agnello stated the 4th lane widening project is estimated to cost \$15 million & the 5th auxiliary lane at the off-ramp would be \$10 million. Mr. Agnello stated that if the 5th auxiliary lane is not included, a new choke point will occur at Exit 126.

Mr. Agnello stated that Project B (Exit 126 interchange improvements) is a project that came from the VDOT STARS Study. Mr. Agnello stated that the current cost estimate is \$20 million with no leveraged funding. This is a project that is needed by 2030. Mr. Agnello advised Project B is not as large of a need as Project A; however, it will provide benefit to the region at a lesser project cost, so it is one that is expected to score well within the Smart Scale scoring process.

Mr. Agnello stated that Project C (Widen I-95 to 8 lanes from Exit 130 to Exit 126 and Exit 126 STARS Study improvements) has a cost estimate of \$70 million with no leveraged funding. This is a project that is needed by 2030. Mr. Agnello stated that even though the cost estimate is higher and no leveraged funds are available, these improvements represent the true needs between the two exits and it would be more cost effective to make all the improvements at once. This project includes all improvements in Projects A and B, and it adds a new 4th NB along I-95 from Exit 126 to Exit 130. Mr. Agnello stated that data shows the need already exists on the weekends for 2030 and will be needed for weekday traffic by 2045.

Ms. Shropshire asked Mr. Tucker if the traffic counts for 2030 include weekend data, and if not, would submitting this project hurt the region instead of helping it. Mr. Tucker stated that weekend data is not considered. Mr. Tucker relayed that seasonal traffic data is looked at and averaged into the daily traffic counts. Smart Scale will then look at the k factors that should be reflected in the TDM plan. Mr. Tucker advised the INRIX data that is already in use in this region would help in the project's evaluation process. Mr. Tucker stated the State is aware and conscious of both the weekday and weekend traffic congestion that occurs within the region. Mr. Tucker stated I-95 would not be the only recipient if a larger project was approved as this same type of traffic concerns is currently on-going on both I-64 and I-81.

Mr. Agnello stated that possibly some multimodal enhancements could be bundled with these projects (ITS, parking demand management, bike/ped improvements to the future Commonwealth Drive park & ride lot or to the existing Route 208 park & ride lot, park & ride lot improvements, marketing of TDM/transit, and potential new FRED service from Caroline County to the Spotsylvania VRE station.

Mr. Agnello stated that Project D (US 17 Business Improvements & Park & Ride Lot) is a project that came from the VDOT STARS Study & I-95 Phase 2 Study. Mr. Agnello stated the current cost estimate for completion of the project is \$3 million for the highway improvements. The park & ride lot cost is still under development. There is no leveraged funding, and this project is needed by 2030.

Mr. Agnello relayed the possible components of this project could include: parking demand management, signal coordination and an additional park & ride lot(s) in the southeastern part of Stafford County. Mr. Agnello advised that the current park & ride lot on US 17 has 500 spaces and is 54% utilized. Mr. Agnello stated that with the region's population expecting to double by 2045, the existing lot will begin to fill up.

Mr. Agnello stated that Project E (Exit 136 Interchange & Enon Road improvements) is a project that was recommended from the I-95 Phase 2 Study. Mr. Agnello stated the current cost estimate for completion of the project is \$23 million. There is \$6 million in leveraged funding for this project, and it is needed by 2030.

Mr. Agnello stated that Project F (Route 3 STARS study & NB I-95 off-ramp improvements). Mr. Agnello stated the current cost estimate for completion of this project is approximately \$6-12 million, with leveraged funding of \$1 million. This is a project that is needed by 2030.

Mr. Tucker stated that as this project has leveraged funding that the Rte 3 STARS improvement project is one that would have a good chance of being approved for funding. Mr. Tucker stated the project could be bundled and at least get a portion of the project built. Mr. Agnello stated that from the City of Fredericksburg's perspective, their portion of the NB off-ramp improvement project is one that needs to coincide with Project G.

Mr. Nelson asked Mr. Tucker if the same components with multiple projects are submitted what are the impacts to one portion of a project over another. Mr. Tucker stated with leveraged funding available, that potentially both projects could be approved for complete funding. Mr. Tucker stated if the City's portion of the project was not approved with the larger Rte 3 STARS improvement project, that possibly this project the City could consider submitting for Smart Scale approval independently. Mr. Agnello stated that it is necessary that Project F coincides with Project G.

Mr. Agnello stated that Project G (Route 3 STARS Study & Gateway Boulevard Extended) is a project recommended from a VDOT STARS Study. Mr. Agnello stated the current cost estimate for completion of this project is \$30-36 million. The project has \$11.5 million in leveraged funds. This is a project that shows needed improvements by 2030.

Mr. Tucker stated that if the Gateway Boulevard Extension was submitted as a stand-alone project, with a leverage of \$11.5 million, it would likely score high enough to be funded. Mr. Tucker stated that possibly the remainder of the project could be phased in and funded with Round 4 of the Smart Scale process. Mr. Agnello stated these improvements are for a new arterial road to Route 3 from Gateway Boulevard and the City's portion of the project needs to be submitted together which is where the leveraged funding arrives from. Mr. Agnello stated that just the improvements for Gateway Boulevard Extension are approximately \$27.3 million, and the Fredericksburg District Grant total funding is only approximately \$30 million. Mr. Tucker stated that if the \$11.5 million was applied to the Route 3 STARS portion of the project, possibly the City could consider submitting an independent application for the rest.

Mr. Nelson concurred with Ms. Shropshire's comment earlier that in the past, the Smart Scale application process has not looked highly on projects with large cost estimates, and he feels that potentially submitting these projects with a bundled effect, even with leveraged funding assigned to one portion of the project, could hurt the region rather than help it. Mr. Tucker stated that even if submitted collectively as one project that has an estimated cost total of \$30-36 million, with leveraged funding of \$11.5 million, it is possible that both projects could be approved.

Mr. Agnello stated that Project H (SE Stafford Park & Ride Lot Improvements) is a project that has been recommended by FAMPO as a result of direction from FHWA. Mr. Agnello stated that currently there is no park & ride lot in eastern Stafford County. Due to Dahlgren commuters, there is a need for a permanent park & ride lot in this area of Stafford County. As this is a new project, there currently are no cost estimates available. Mr. Agnello stated that potentially this is also a project that could be bundled with Project D.

Mr. Agnello advised that two sites on Route 3 have been studied. The first site would be a 150-space lot in front of the Walmart. Mr. Agnello stated there is already a demand for parking in this area since the Walmart parking lot has been utilized as a park & ride lot in the past.

Mr. Agnello advised a second site on the northside of the Chatham Bridge has been studied which would provide 20-100 spaces. Mr. Agnello relayed that if only 20 spaces are available, the project will likely not be worthwhile; however, if 100 spaces are available then it could be a viable option. Mr. Agnello stated that this lot could also provide parking for the Belmont-Ferry Farm Trail. Mr. Agnello stated that this project was submitted in Round 2 of the Smart Scale process; however, the application was not approved due to it being outside of the urbanized area.

Mr. Agnello advised that currently \$18k/year in CMAQ funding is being used to lease spaces in this vicinity at the Washington Square location and an additional \$12k annually in CMAQ is being used to lease spaces in the Chatham Heights area. Mr. Agnello stated that FHWA is okay with the existing lease agreements between GWRideConnect and the property owners; however, they have reiterated that leasing spaces is only a temporary solution and efforts need to be made for a permanent arrangement.

Input from Policy Board Members, Elected Officials and Public:

Mr. Allen asked VDOT for completion dates on the following three projects: Interchange project at Courthouse; US 1 and Courthouse Road improvements; and Courthouse Road widening. Ms. Shropshire advised that both the interchange project and the widening project are being completed by VDOT and the completion date for these projects is the summer of 2020. Ms. Shropshire also relayed the Rte 1/Courthouse road improvement project is a project being administered by the County of Stafford and currently it is in the right-of-way stage of development.

Mr. Tucker asked VDOT District staff if there is a possibility of the light on US 1 in Stafford County being eliminated. Ms. Shropshire stated that a reduction of movement is planned for the signal which will result in improvements; however, the signal will not be removed.

Mr. Allen stated that he also represents the NAACP and asked if VDOT staff would be willing to come to one of their meetings to explain the process and update the public. Mr. Allen stated he felt this would be beneficial in citizens being better able to understand the process. Ms. Parker stated that VDOT staff is always willing to come and speak to groups and organizations and for Mr. Allen to coordinate his request to her.

Ms. Parker advised that over the next 4-5 years I-95 is going to get worse before it gets better and the public needs to be made aware of this. Ms. Parker stated that the projects approved by VDOT, Fred Ex, and Smart Scale will be going to construction at the same time.

Mr. Swan asked VDOT if any traffic studies have been completed or are planned to be completed on the Centreport Parkway area in Stafford County. Mr. Swan stated there are plans for improvements to the airport that are approved and forthcoming and that he consistently sees more traffic exiting at Centreport Parkway now. Mr. Swan stated that he is concerned that the arterial roadways that connect to US 1 will become severely impacted. Mr. Swan asked if there are any planned improvements being made to Centreport Parkway. Ms. Parker stated that at this time, there are no VDOT studies underway and/or improvements planned for Centreport Parkway.

Ms. Bohmke asked Mr. Tucker what the overall feelings are at the State level regarding tolls on the interstate. Ms. Bohmke stated that nationwide the logic is "if you use it, you pay for it." Ms. Bohmke asked if this discussion is occurring at the State level. Mr. Tucker stated that it is a discussion item; however, no action has been taken. Mr. Tucker stated that the pay-as-you-go concept comes into play more frequently as the State has been hampered by the recent dip in gasoline prices. Mr. Tucker stated the State's investments have been discussed in the General Assembly, and there are efforts being taken by specific legislators to have the General Assembly look at expansion of express lanes on commuting corridors.

Mr. Swan asked Mr. Tucker if the federal transportation agency has acknowledged that this region is the most congested one in the nation and if so, what is being done about correcting it. Mr. Tucker stated that both the State and Federal agencies/representatives are aware of the transportation needs within this region. Mr. Tucker stated the State has put forward the Atlantic Gateway Initiative, which was an unexpected bonus. Mr. Tucker stated there is strong conversation but no strong financial strategies at this time.

Mr. Agnello advised that even though the region still has many needs and less funding, Mr. Tucker was one of the key staff members who developed the successful FASTLANE grant application that was awarded to the area.

Ms. Bohmke asked Mr. Tucker what is being used for the modeling data when the State makes decisions on which projects are approved and funded. Mr. Tucker stated the modeling traffic data counts are utilizing weekday traffic counts. Ms. Bohmke stated that as an elected official, it is important for her to tell constituents that the methodology of the most accurate traffic data is being utilized.

Mr. Tucker stated that some seasonal data is being captured within the TDM models. Mr. Tucker stated that TDM models make a pipe bigger; however, they do not necessarily address the pipe joints so you do not get the same benefits. Mr. Tucker stated that as models are continually tweaked, more data will be included. Ms. Bohmke stated that the projects this region submitted for Round 2 of Smart Scale did not score as well. Ms. Bohmke stated that she realizes there were a lot more projects submitted, so the process was more competitive; however, because the arterial roads and traffic counts for all seven days were not accounted for, she feels the State needs a better way of capturing and utilizing data.

Mr. Burch asked Mr. Agnello what the process was for determining which regional projects would be submitted for Smart Scale. Mr. Agnello stated staff compiled the project listing based on FAMPO's LRTP; recommendations

from the Phase 2 I-95 highway study, the TDM component that determines transit needs, the STARS study conducted by VDOT, and recommendations from locality representatives for projects in respective comprehensive plans.

Mr. Burch stated he also had some questions/concerns about the existing park & ride lot on US 17. Previously staff advised this lot was going to go away & a new lot was being planned further down US 17 at Olde Forge Drive. Mr. Agnello stated that initially due to some restrictions with the landowner adjacent to the existing park & ride lot site on US 17, it was recommended that it would be cheaper to close the existing lot and build a new lot close by. However, the request was made by Stafford County to have both – keep the old lot and build a new lot on the other side of I-95.

Ms. Bohmke advised that even though not released for public information at this time, there is the potential for additional economic development opportunities around the existing lot. Ms. Bohmke stated that with the population expected to double by 2030 and with the potential new commercial sites coming to US 17, it is felt that the existing lot and the potential new lot will be well utilized.

Mr. Burch asked Mr. Tucker who is involved in getting projects approved and if the review process is open to the public during the Smart Scale pre-screening process and the June 1st to August 1st deadlines. Mr. Tucker stated public meetings have occurred statewide for Round 3 of the Smart Scale process; however, no public meetings will be scheduled for the application review process period. Mr. Tucker stated all applications submitted statewide are reviewed and certified by VDOT, DRPT, FHWA and the CTB.

Mr. Burch asked if the Smart Scale pre-screening process means that if a project is not eligible, needs to be bundled with another project, or does not have a chance of approval regardless, that entities who submitted the project will be notified earlier rather than later that the application has some flaws. Mr. Tucker stated that the Smart Scale review team will review every project beginning on June 1st and recommendations/input will be forwarded to the MPOs, localities, etc. by July 1st so there will still be time for submissions to be amended. Mr. Tucker stated that applications will not be accepted for review/consideration after the August 1st deadline, and no new projects can be added after June 1st.

Next Steps and Adjourn:

Mr. Agnello thanked everyone for attending and asked if there are additional comments or questions to please contact FAMPO staff as soon as possible. The Smart Scale workshop meeting adjourned at 7:54 p.m.