

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

INTERSTATE 64 PENINSULA STUDY SECTION 2

FROM EXIT 247 TO EXIT 242 CITY OF NEWPORT NEWS, VIRGINIA YORK COUNTY, VIRGINIA

RECORD OF DECISION

This document is the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Record of Decision (ROD) for roadway improvements to Interstate 64 from approximately Exit 247 in the east to approximately Exit 242 in the west, a distance of approximately seven miles (referred herein as Section 2). This ROD is the decision document that concludes the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for Section 2 of the Interstate 64 Peninsula Study. This project is the second phase of Alternative 1, which was identified as the preferred alternative in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). Future phases of Alternative 1 will all have separate decision documents issued by the FHWA.

DECISION

The alternative selected by the FHWA for Section 2 calls for the addition of one general purpose lane in each direction within the highway median without modifying the existing interchanges (Exit 247, 243, and 242) within the project limits. This alternative was selected because it will contribute to meeting the Purpose and Need as identified in the FEIS, and it reduces environmental and property impacts as compared to constructing lanes to the outside of the existing lanes.

PHASED IMPLEMENTATION

The approximately 75-mile preferred alternative identified in the FEIS will be constructed in phases as funding becomes available and identified. Appendix L of the FEIS describes the phased implementation approach and it allows for two different types of phasing. The first type involves constructing individual lengths of roadway within the overall limits of the preferred alternative. An example of this type would be constructing an additional lane in each direction for the first eight miles, and then constructing the next eight miles of lanes as part of a separate project. The second type of phasing involves initially constructing less than the full number of lanes associated with the preferred alternative. For example, if the preferred alternative calls for constructing two additional lanes in each direction in a particular area, this type of phasing involves initially constructing only one lane in each direction. For Section 1, FHWA issued a ROD on April 21, 2014. That ROD approved the addition of one general purpose lane in each direction within the highway median from Exit 255 to Exit 247. This ROD for Section 2 approves a project to continue widening I-64 westward.

Appendix L of the FEIS describes the steps that need to be followed, particularly updating the environmental analysis and identifying funding in the planning documents, prior to the FHWA issuing a ROD for an operationally independent section. The Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT) letter dated May 8, 2015 updates the environmental analysis for a project to add one lane in each direction from approximately Exit 247 in the east to approximately Exit 242 in the west. The VDOT's letter also demonstrates that funding has been identified for the project and requests a ROD for the project.¹

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The alternatives development process for the Environmental Impact Statement began with the identification of the Purpose and Need determined by the FHWA and the VDOT as the lead agencies for NEPA, and the establishment of design criteria, which were then utilized in developing a reasonable range of alternatives. The goals of the alternatives development process were to develop solutions that would meet the Purpose and Need and design criteria while avoiding and minimizing impacts to the environment. The alternatives that were considered included the No Build Alternative, a Transportation Systems Management/Travel Demand Management Alternative, an analysis of future freight/light rail, and a range of highway alternatives. The alternatives that were retained for detailed analysis in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement included a No Build Alternative² and the following five highway build alternatives:

- Alternative 1A – adding general purpose lanes to the outside of the existing lanes;
- Alternative 1B – adding general purpose lanes in the median;
- Alternative 2A – adding lanes to the outside of the existing lanes and tolling all lanes;
- Alternative 2B – adding lanes to the median and tolling all lanes; and
- Alternative 3 – adding managed lanes to the median.

For Section 2, VDOT evaluated adding one general purpose lane to the outside of the existing lanes or inside the median for the preferred alternative.

PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

Public. The FEIS was signed on November 26, 2013 and made available for public review and comment at several locations including libraries, government offices, and VDOT offices. The FHWA and the VDOT requested comments on the FEIS as well as the phased approach for implementing the preferred alternative. The Notice of

¹ The project is funded for construction in the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization's (TPO) Long Range Transportation Plan, and the subsequent phase of the project is funded in the TPO's Transportation Improvement Program.

² The No-Build Alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative in accordance with 40 CFR 1505.2(b). However, FHWA is not selecting the No-Build Alternative for this project because it would not address the transportation needs.

Availability for the FEIS was published in the Federal Register on December 13, 2013, and comments on the document and the phased approach were due on January 27, 2014. Two public comments were received on the FEIS, and neither of them was substantive. No negative comments were received on the phased implementation approach. A design public hearing for section 1 was held on April 30, 2014 and VDOT's Request for ROD was made available for public review at the hearing. A design public hearing for section 2 was held on April 30, 2015 and VDOT's Request for ROD was made available for public review at the hearing. One public comment focused on the need to use median stormwater treatment Best Management Practices (BMPs) to further minimize the ROW acquisition. In response, VDOT indicated they will utilize the median for BMPs to the best extent possible. There were no other substantive environmental comments made at the public hearing. The majority of the comments supported the proposed project.

Agencies. The FEIS was transmitted to 39 federal, state, and local agencies for review and comment. Comments were received from five agencies, and the VDOT fully and adequately addressed all of the substantive comments in their request for a ROD. In addition, Section 2 was discussed at a partnering meeting among several federal agencies including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. None of the agencies entered any objections to the project, and there are no unresolved interagency disagreements. Based on the agency coordination, there is a reasonable expectation that a Clean Water Act Section 404 permit will be obtained. In addition, the City of Newport News and York County supports the project.

MONITORING OR ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM

A formal monitoring program is not proposed. Rather, the FHWA will ensure that environmental commitments are accomplished by reviewing the NEPA reevaluation documents and the Environmental Certification/Commitments Checklist prior to construction, and by complying with the applicable provisions of 23 CFR 771.109(b). In addition, permit conditions and coordination with permitting agencies during design development, right-of-way acquisition, and construction will ensure consistency with applicable environmental laws and regulations.

MEASURES TO AVOID OR MINIMIZE ENVIRONMENTAL HARM

All practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm at this stage of project development have been adopted.

Property Acquisition

Within the proposed section, the FEIS identified one rural parcel (VDOT storage facility), seven residential parcels, and six business parcels that could be impacted by the proposed section. These impacts are conservative and anticipated to change upon the development of detailed project design. If project design advances, and the right-of-way impacts are better understood, VDOT will develop a detailed relocation plan for all displaced resident, businesses, and non-profit organizations. All relocations and real

property acquisition will be in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended. Displaced property owners would be provided relocation assistance advisory services together with the assurance of the availability of decent, safe, and sanitary housing. Relocation resources would be made available to all displaced property owners without discrimination.

Environmental Justice

As noted in the FEIS, the proposed general purpose lanes would be constructed along an existing corridor and, as such, improvements are not expected to have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on minority or low-income populations. By widening to the inside of the existing median, impacts on environmental justice populations are further reduced. The minority and low-income populations adjacent to the proposed section were provided opportunities to review and comment on the study and design materials. None of the comments received during these events expressed concern over environmental justice populations within or adjacent to the proposed section. The potential property impacts described above, as well as the construction impacts, would impact environmental justice populations; however, these impacts would not be disproportionately high or adverse to minority and low-income populations.

Cultural Resources

An archaeological survey was conducted and no archaeological sites potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places would be impacted by the project. The only historic property that would be affected by the project is the Yorktown Battlefield. However, the Virginia State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) concurred that the battlefield would not be adversely affected by the roadway improvements identified in the FEIS. Therefore, no minimization measures are necessary for the battlefield.

Noise

The FEIS and the Noise Technical Memorandum describe and depict potential feasible and reasonable barriers along the entire corridor, including the section encompassed by Section 2. The noise analysis is considered preliminary and mitigation decisions will be formally made during the design phase when more precise geometric data is available. It is noted that noise barriers that are found to be feasible and reasonable during the preliminary noise analysis may not be found to be feasible and reasonable during the final design noise analysis. Similarly, noise barriers that were not considered feasible and reasonable may be found to meet established criteria and be recommended for construction. Noise barriers determined to be feasible and reasonable in final design must be approved by FHWA; in addition, the affected public will be given an opportunity to decide whether they are in favor of construction of the noise barrier.

Wetlands

The mitigation measures for wetland impacts would be identified during the permitting phase of the project. These measures would include avoidance and minimization efforts to the greatest extent practicable. Some measures which may be considered are: the use and appropriate placement of erosion and sediment control measures and best management practices; the use of upgraded erosion and sediment controls in

environmentally sensitive areas; bridging or spanning of streams and wetlands; alignment shifts around specific systems; the use of cofferdams; steepening of slopes and the use of retaining walls on steeper slopes; properly countersunk culverts; stream relocation to improve skew angle and shorten culverts if new culverts are necessary; and ensuring groundwater recharge or wetland hydrology maintenance through the location of outfalls and infiltration trenches. In addition, the compensatory mitigation requirements for wetlands would be determined during the permitting phase. The current compensatory mitigation to impact ratios for non-tidal forested, scrub-shrub, and emergent wetlands are 2:1, 1.5:1, and 1:1, respectively. The typical compensatory mitigation to impact ratio for tidal emergent wetlands is 2:1. The approved assessment methodology to determine the required stream compensation would be completed as part of the compensatory mitigation plan. At the time of this ROD, the approved assessment methodology is the Unified Stream Methodology.

Water Quality

The project will include stormwater management plans designed specifically to address the on-site conditions. During construction, all appropriate erosion and sediment control measures will be employed in accordance with the VDOT's Road and Bridge Specifications and state and local regulations. Following construction, stormwater will be treated through improved stormwater management facilities. The potential for impacts to the Skiffes Creek Reservoir would be minimized through strict adherence to the appropriate erosion and sediment control practices, which include best management practices such as silt fence, straw bales, check dams, sediment basins and other methods to capture potential sediment from exposed soils. In addition, the amount of clearing of existing vegetation would be minimized to the greatest extent possible and areas of exposed soils would be stabilized as soon as possible to prevent additional erosion.

Hazardous Waste Sites

Any additional hazardous materials discovered during construction of the project or during demolition of existing structures will be removed and disposed of in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local regulations. All necessary remediation would be conducted in compliance with environmental laws and would be coordinated with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, and other federal or state agencies as necessary.

Measures During Construction

Air Quality

The temporary air quality impacts from construction consist primarily of emissions produced by heavy equipment and vehicle travel to and from the site. Earthmoving and ground-disturbing operations would also generate airborne dust. Construction emissions are short-term or temporary in nature. In order to mitigate these emissions, construction activities would be conducted in accordance with Section 107.16(b)(2) of the VDOT's Road and Bridge Specifications.

Noise

The following provisions are in place to minimize potential construction-related noise impacts:

- The VDOT may monitor construction-related noise. If construction noise levels exceed 80 decibels during noise sensitive activities, the Contractor shall take corrective action before proceeding with operations. The Contractor shall be responsible for costs associated with the abatement of construction noise and the delay of operations attributable to noncompliance with these requirements.
- The VDOT may prohibit or restrict certain work activities that produce objectionable noise so that they would not occur between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. If other hours are established by local ordinance, the local ordinance shall govern.
- Equipment shall in no way be altered so as to result in noise levels that are greater than those produced by the original equipment.
- When feasible, the Contractor shall establish haul routes that direct his vehicles away from developed areas and ensure that noise from hauling operations is kept to a minimum.³

These requirements would not be applicable if the noise produced by sources other than the Contractor's operation at the point of reception is greater than the noise from the Contractor's operation at the same point.

Waters of the United States and Water Quality

Strict adherence to erosion and sediment control measures and plans would be required throughout all construction practices. The erosion and sediment control plans would address potential issues resulting from ground disturbance, including erosion control, sediment control, stormwater management, dust control, and in-stream work at stream crossings. Best management practices which may be employed include silt fence, straw bales, check dams, sediment basins and other methods to capture potential sediment from exposed soils.

During construction, there is also the potential for nonpoint source pollutants to enter surface waters. To minimize this potential, best management practices for equipment, and materials operation and storage would be followed. The erosion and sediment control measures would also assist in minimizing any potential impacts to waters of the United States and water quality. In the event of accidental spills, the Contractor is required to immediately notify all appropriate local, state, and federal agencies and to take immediate action to contain and remove the contaminant. A Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan will be prepared and the Virginia Stormwater Management Program Permit will be acquired from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. A Clean Water Act Section 404 permit will likely be required for impacts to waters of the United States. All permit conditions will be followed during construction. The project is likely to be implemented via a design-build contract, and the design-builder may be required to obtain the project permits.

³ A discussion of the VDOT's construction noise policy can be viewed in Section 107.16(b)3 "Noise" of the VDOT's Road and Bridge Specifications.

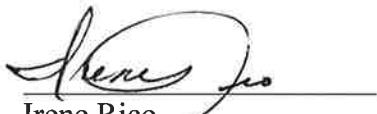
SECTION 4(f) FINDINGS

The two Section 4(f) properties that would be used by the project is the Newport News Park and the Battle of Yorktown. The City of Newport News is the official with jurisdiction over the Newport News Park. The VDOT coordinated with the City of Newport News during development of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, the FEIS, and the Request for ROD. The City of Newport News concurred that the impacts to Newport News Park from this project would be de minimis. The FHWA hereby formally makes a finding of de minimis impact for Newport News Park.

The Battle of Yorktown borders the eastern edge of the proposed section. As documented in the FEIS, DHR concurred that the improvements would have no adverse effect to this resource. DHR also concurred with the potential de minimis impact finding under Section 4(f). DHR confirmed its position that the impact would be de minimis on March 27, 2015. Pursuant to 23 CFR 774.9 as design advances, any modifications that increase impacts to the Newport News Park or Battle of Yorktown must be coordinated with FHWA.

CONCLUSION

The FHWA has considered the information contained in the FEIS as well as the updated environmental analysis and public comments for Section 2. The FHWA determines and finds that there are no significant impacts that were not considered in the FEIS. In addition, based on the above information, as well as the input received from other agencies and the public, the FHWA hereby selects the addition of one general purpose lane in each direction in the median for Section 2 of the Interstate 64 Peninsula Study.


Irene Rico
Division Administrator
FHWA – Virginia Division


Date

