



## COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

### Commonwealth Transportation Board

W. Sheppard Miller, III  
Chairperson

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*Agenda item # 15*

### RESOLUTION OF THE COMMONWEALTH TRANSPORTATION BOARD

October 25, 2022

#### MOTION

**Made By:** Mr. Stant **Seconded By:** Mr. Coleman  
**Action:** Motion carried, unanimously

#### **Title: Location Approval for the Bowers Hill Interchange Improvements Study**

**WHEREAS**, on December 7, 2016 the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) passed a resolution identifying the location for the Hampton Roads Crossing Study (HRBT Expansion Project) which included directing the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to begin a separate study of the Bowers Hill Interchange; and

**WHEREAS**, the Bowers Hill Interchange Study, which was identified as regional priority project and funded by the Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission (HRTAC), was first documented in an Environmental Assessment (EA) that was made available to the public in April 2019; and

**WHEREAS**, the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO) updated the scope of the project to include the portion of Interstate 664 (I-664) that extends from the Bowers Hill Interchange to the Monitor Merrimac Memorial Bridge Tunnel and additional environmental review was needed to document analysis of possible impacts that could result from potential improvements; and

**WHEREAS**, in an October 2019 resolution, HRTPO identified I-664 as a component of the Hampton Roads Express Lanes Network; and

**WHEREAS**, the expanded study area led VDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to agree that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was the appropriate level of document to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); and

**WHEREAS**, a Draft EIS that will identify the preferred alternative for the Bowers Hill Interchange Improvements Study is being developed by VDOT and FHWA in close coordination with HRTPO, HRTAC, and federal, state, and local agencies; and

**WHEREAS**, VDOT has held three virtual public meetings, ten community meetings, and four public comment periods throughout the development of the EIS, as well as providing 26 monthly updates to the public; and

**WHEREAS**, in accordance with the statutes of the Commonwealth of Virginia and policies of the CTB, a Location Public Hearing was held in the City of Suffolk at VDOT's Hampton Roads District Office on April 27, 2022 for the purpose of soliciting public input on the recommended preferred alternative (Alternative C); and

**WHEREAS**, proper notice was given in advance, and all those present were given a full opportunity to express their opinions and recommendations on the alternatives under consideration, and their statements have been duly recorded and considered by the CTB; and

**WHEREAS**, the economic, social, and environmental effects of the evaluated alternatives have been examined and given proper consideration and this evidence, along with all other relevant information, has been carefully reviewed; and

**WHEREAS**, on May 19, 2022 the HRTPO voted unanimously to endorse Alternative C as the Preferred Alternative; and

**WHEREAS**, collaboration among VDOT, FHWA, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency resulted in Alternative C being recommended as the Preferred Alternative.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the location of this project be approved as presented under Alternative C at the Location Public Hearing.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that, should FHWA and VDOT receive substantive comments on the Draft EIS that require the CTB to reconsider its action, the CTB would be briefed before VDOT requests FHWA conclude NEPA with a Record of Decision.

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## **Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) Decision Brief**

### **Location Approval for the Bowers Hill Interchange Improvements Study**

**Issue:** The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) seeks from the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) approval of Alternative C as presented relating to the Bowers Hill Interchange Improvements Study as the location for this project pursuant to Virginia Code 33.2-208.

**Facts:** The Bowers Hill Interchange Improvements Study Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was initiated in August 2020 to evaluate potential transportation improvements to the Bowers Hill Interchange in the City of Chesapeake and to I-664 from the Bowers Hill Interchange to near College Drive in the City of Suffolk. The Bowers Hill Interchange includes the junction of Interstate (I-) 664, I-264, I-64, U.S. Route 460, U.S. Route 58, U.S. Route 13, and Virginia (VA-) Route 191 (Jolliff Road).

The Draft EIS that is being developed evaluates alternatives that reduce congestion, improve travel reliability, and provide additional travel choice. The Draft EIS also evaluates the economic, social, and environmental effects of the alternatives.

VDOT held two Citizen Comment Opportunities from September 17, 2020 to October 16, 2020 and from February 12, 2021 to March 25, 2021 for the purpose of sharing information and soliciting public input on the development of key components of the study for incorporation in the Draft EIS. In accordance with the statutes of the Commonwealth of Virginia and policies of the CTB, a Location Public Hearing was held in the City of Suffolk at VDOT's Hampton Roads District Office on April 27, 2022 for the purpose of soliciting public input on the recommended preferred alternative (Alternative C). VDOT has received more than 1,500 public comments throughout the Study to inform the development of the Purpose and Need, Range of Alternatives, and Recommended Preferred Alternative.

The Draft EIS will be approved by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and VDOT and issued for public review in Winter 2022/2023. The public comment period will be open for 45 days. The public will be notified of an additional public hearing to be held during the comment period and review opportunities through press releases, media advertisements, social media, website announcements, and mailings. Per state code, all properties within the study area corridors will receive mailings announcing the document availability and Location Public Hearing 30-days prior to the meeting. Comments received on the Draft EIS will be responded to in the Final EIS.

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### Additional Background on the Study:

- On December 7, 2016, the CTB passed a resolution identifying the location for the Hampton Roads Crossing Study (HRBT Expansion Project), which directed VDOT to advance a separate study of the Bowers Hill Interchange.
- Prior to the initiation of the EIS and development of the Draft EIS, in the fall of 2018, VDOT, in coordination with the FHWA, initiated the environmental review process for the preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate potential transportation improvements at the Bowers Hill Interchange. Following the issuance of the EA in April 2019, the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO), in consultation with the Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission (HRTAC), VDOT, and FHWA, expanded the Study parameters to include a larger Study Area into the City of Suffolk, including approximately seven additional miles north along I-664 to near College Drive (VA-135).
- In October 2019, HRTPO identified I-664 in the Bowers Hill Study Area as part of the Hampton Roads Express Lanes Network (HRELN).
- The Bowers Hill Study has also been identified as a high priority project by the HRTAC and a regional priority project by HRTPO.
- HRTAC's 2045 Long Range Plan of Finance identifies \$2.3 billion in costs for improvements to the Bowers Hill Interchange and widening I-664 to College Drive.

**Recommendations:** Based on the analysis through the development of technical reports, extensive coordination with federal, state, regional, and local agencies, and public input, VDOT recommends that Alternative C be approved as the location of this project. The recommendation considers the following factors:

- Alternative C was unanimously endorsed by HRTPO on May 19, 2022;
- Alternative C best meets the Purpose and Need of the Study and is consistent with local and regional plans, including development of the HRELN;
- Alternative C is the less impactful of the two Build Alternatives retained for further analysis in the Draft EIS; and
- All of the Bowers Hill Interchange Improvements Study's federal Cooperating Agencies (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) concurred to Alternative C being recommended as the preferred alternative to the CTB.

**Action Required by CTB:** The *Code of Virginia* requires the majority vote of the CTB to approve a Resolution accomplishing the following:

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- Adopt a location decision based upon the alternatives advanced for further analysis in the Draft EIS.

**Result, if Approved:** VDOT will proceed with steps necessary for issuance of the Draft EIS, which will identify a Preferred Alternative consistent with the CTB's Location Approval.

**Options:** Approve, Deny, or Defer

**Public Comments/ Reaction:** CTB was briefed during its January 2021 and June 2021 workshops. CTB was briefed on public comments on the recommended preferred alternative on June 21, 2022 and again on the EIS on September 21, 2022. The public also had the opportunity to comment as part of the CTB Action Meeting on October 26, 2022.

- Four public comment periods:
  - September 17, 2020 to October 16, 2020: To inform development of the Purpose and Need. Public identified congestion issues throughout the Study Area.
  - February 12, 2021 to March 25, 2021: To inform development of the range of alternatives, including review of all preliminary concepts. Public indicated a preference for additional lanes to mitigate congestion in the Study Area, with a preference for general purpose lanes over managed lanes.
  - February 18, 2022 to March 21, 2022: In response to FHWA's publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS for Bowers Hill Interchange Improvements Study. Limited comments received.
  - March 25, 2022 to May 7, 2022: To inform identification of a preferred alternative. Majority of public comments agreed that the recommended preferred alternative (Alternative C) addressed the Study's Purpose and Need.
- Three virtual public meetings during the public comment periods, except for the NOI comment period.
- One in-person public hearing:
  - April 27, 2022: To inform identification of a preferred alternative.
- Community office hours and meetings: May 16, 2021; January 18, 2022; February 10, 2022; February 12, 2022; April 19, 2022; and August 3, 9, and 18, 2022.

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- 26 monthly newsletters beginning in August 2020 at the start of the EIS.