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**News**

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*Board encourages rail study, short-term safety improvements, long-term widening*

**Transportation Board Chooses Location for Outer Connector in Fredericksburg  
 Board also approves \$57 million worth of transportation projects statewide**

The Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) approved today the location for a new 12.4-mile, four-lane roadway that will loop around the Fredericksburg area to help reduce congestion and meet the growing traffic volumes near the Northern Virginia region.

The CTB selected the most western corridor, known as 1B, because it would have less impact on homes, businesses and private property as compared with other alternatives.

"There is a great need for additional linkages in the area's road network," said Transportation Secretary Shirley J. Ybarra. "Even with the Outer Connector, continued improvements to existing roads and the expansion of transit will need to be part of this growing area's transportation improvement program."

The next step in the process is for the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to approve the location and issue a Record of Decision. This could take several months. Depending on available funding and if the project is approved by the FHWA, construction could begin by 2006 or 2007. The estimated cost of the project is \$121.7 million in today's dollars.

**Interstate 64 Widening in Williamsburg, James City and York counties**

The Board authorized a \$2.4 million contract for the firm of Johnson, Mirmiran and Thompson to conduct an in-depth and comprehensive study of the I-64 widening in the City of Williamsburg and James City and York counties. The firm will study the feasibility of adding another lane in each direction along 18 miles of I-64. The feasibility study will also examine the effect the widening would have on traffic control devices. The firm will evaluate structures and bridges as well. Another aspect of the study is landscape design. VDOT wants to examine and keep as a viable option the preservation of a scenic, tree-filled gateway to the historic triangle as allowed by wetland impacts, timeliness, cost effectiveness and other factors. It will take two years to complete the study.

**I-66/Linton Hall Road interchange improvements in Prince William County**

The CTB approved the location and design of a project that will reduce congestion and improve safety at the I-66 and Route 29/Linton Hall Road interchange in the Gainesville area of Prince William County. The project is estimated to cost \$97 million in today's dollars. Construction is expected to begin in 2005.

**Route 58 in Wise and Lee counties**

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In other action today, the CTB approved 34 construction and maintenance projects worth \$57.5 million. The largest contract, \$18 million, was awarded to W-L Construction & Paving Inc., of Chilhowie, Virginia to build a new section of Route 58 in Lee and Wise counties. The project will replace an existing two-lane road with a four-lane divided highway. The five-mile section will stretch from east of Route 620 (near the top of the Winding Stairs Community) to the west end of the Big Stone Gap Bypass. The project is scheduled for completion in the summer of 2004. This project is among many to improve the Route 58 corridor across southern Virginia.

#### **I-81 improvements in Salem region**

The board approved a contract that will make further safety improvements to I-81 north of Salem. Allegheny Construction Company, Inc. of Roanoke, was awarded a \$1.5 million contract to extend the length of acceleration and deceleration lanes at three exits (150, 150B, 168 and the truck weigh scales) in Botetourt County. This project will provide a safer merging zone to allow traffic to exit I-81 without causing through traffic to slow down. The project is scheduled for completion in fall 2002.

The 17-member Commonwealth Transportation Board appointed by the Governor meets on the third Thursday of each month. The Board is primarily responsible for locating routes, approving construction contracts, creating traffic regulations, naming highways and administering and allocating the Transportation Trust Fund. Virginia Secretary of Transportation Shirley J. Ybarra is chairperson of the Board.

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