

Bowers Hill Interchange Study Working Group Minutes – September 24, 2021

The meeting was hosted virtually via Webex.

Attendance:

Troy Eisenberger – Chesapeake
Bryan Stilley – Newport News
Deborah Mangiaracina – Norfolk
Carl Jackson – Portsmouth
Scott Smizik – VDOT
Andrew Pike - VDOT
Eric Stringfield – VDOT
Lindsay Denietolis – VDOT
Samba Secka - VDOT
Pavithra Parthasarathi – HRTPO
Keith Nichols – HRTPO

The meeting was started by Chair Stilley at 9:35 am.

- Item 2 – Approval of Agenda
 - The agenda was approved by consensus.
- Item 3 – Approval of Minutes
 - The minutes of the May 21, 2021 meeting were approved by consensus.
- Item 4 – General Study Update and Item 5 – Next Steps
 - Mr. Smizik started the presentation by giving a summary of recent activity, including:
 - Agency concurrence occurred on the two alternatives in May.
 - VDOT has recently distributed a number of technical documents for review. These documents will remain draft until FHWA signs off on them next year.
 - Mr. Smizik highlighted recent coordination efforts. He noted that they're currently in a gray area with changes in federal rules due to updated executive orders from the new administration. These changes include:
 - It is no longer required to get permits as part of NEPA. The permitting process has been paused for this study, since it no longer has a bearing on NEPA.
 - The Interchange Access Report (IAR) no longer needs to be completed as part of NEPA due to updated FHWA guidance. VDOT has paused the IARs with this study and they won't be connected to the NEPA, but they will be resumed at the appropriate time.
 - Mr. Smizik noted that the FAA issued a Determination of No Hazard to Air Navigation. This applies to the infrastructure included in both alternatives but will be revisited when means of construction are known.

- Mr. Smizik added that they are working with FHWA on the Notice of Intent (NOI). It is currently anticipated that the NOI will be issued in Fall 2021.
 - Mr. Smizik noted that VDOT is currently reaching out to Environmental Justice (EJ) communities. Earlier this month VDOT sent out a mailing to EJ communities on what's forthcoming in the study.
 - Mr. Smizik detailed Future Checkpoints in the study. He noted that we will continue to have these meetings on a monthly basis outside of the holidays.
 - Mr. Smizik noted that the next checkpoint will occur later this year when VDOT will make a recommendation on an alternative. There will be a public hearing and 30-day review period once the recommended alternative is presented.
 - Mr. Smizik added that they will seek concurrence with agencies on an alternative early next year, and CTB approval in Spring next year.
 - Mr. Smizik noted that the Draft EIS should come out next August, which will be followed by another public hearing and review in the Fall. He added that prior to releasing the Draft EIS, VDOT will work with HRTPO to make sure we can demonstrate fiscal constraint.
 - Mr. Smizik wrapped up his presentation by sharing the NEPA milestone schedule. He noted that there hasn't been much change in the schedules that were shown previously.
 - Mr. Smizik added that this is expected to be the first combined Final EIS (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) in Virginia, although there is a possibility that the FEIS and ROD will not be combined.
 - Ms. Parthasarathi asked about the timing on sharing this with the TTAC and the TPO Board. Mr. Smizik replied that they would want a resolution from the TPO Board in the January/February timeframe, so the conversation with the TTAC could occur as early as November.
 - Ms. Parthasarathi asked if VDOT is planning to work with the HRTAC Board, and Mr. Smizik responded ideally yes.
 - Mr. Eisenberger asked about the socioeconomic report, and if the city should forward questions that they are getting regarding neighborhood development and similar land uses to VDOT? Mr. Smizik responded that at this stage they will welcome any and all questions and comments.
- Item 6 – Old/New Business
 - No old/new business was brought before the committee.

The meeting adjourned at 9:55 am.