

## ***DRAFT MINUTES***

### **Bowers Hill Interchange Working Group**

#### **Meeting of June 11, 2020**

The Regional Board Room, 723 Woodlake Drive, Chesapeake, Virginia

#### **1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by the Chair at approximately 2:15 p.m.

Today's meeting is being held electronically using Webex in response to Governor Northam's Executive Order 53 and Executive Order 61 and to protect the public health and safety of Bowers Hill Interchange Study Working Group members, staff, and the general public. The HRTPO will continue to hold electronic meetings until advised that it is safe to convene meetings in person. These remote meetings are required to complete essential business on behalf of the region.

A recording is being made of today's meeting and will be posted on the HRTPO website.

Attendance was recorded by roll call. (No votes)

#### **2. Actions from TTAC/HRTPO Meetings**

Mr. Tim Haynam provided a summary of recent actions of the TTAC and the HRTPO Board. He mentioned that the TTAC passed a motion in November 2019 to approve redirecting the study, and that the TPO Board endorsed the study and parameters in May 2020. These parameters include:

- Study location/termini
  - I-664 - Up to College Drive interchange
  - I-64 – The first interchange southeast of Bowers Hill (Military Hwy)
  - I-264 – The first interchange east of Bowers Hill (Greenwood Dr)
  - Route 13/58/460 – The Bisco St/Airport Entrance intersection
- Ability to carry Express Lanes through the interchange and up I-664
- Maintain local access/connections, where feasible
- Provide high speed access between all major movements, where feasible
- Evaluate reliability of freight movement
- Evaluate evacuation impacts
- Evaluate resiliency/sea level rise impacts

Mr. Haynam also mentioned that the TPO Board approved project phasing where the Bowers Hill Interchange and the portion of I-664 that is necessary to make the Interchange operate in acceptable conditions would be Phase 1 and the remaining portion of I-664 up to College Drive would be Phase 2.

#### **3. Available Funding for Study and 4. Bowers Hill Interchange Study Path Options**

Mr. Tim Halacy started the item by mentioning that the May TPO Board meeting agenda included a letter from Chris Hall (VDOT District Engineer) to Kevin Page (HRTAC) to redirect funds from the US 460/58/13 Connector study to the expanded Bowers Hill study. A total of \$3.9 million would be redirected, which when combined with the \$2 million left from the original Bowers Hill study would result in a total of \$5.9 million for the expanded study. Mr. Page responded that HRTAC has received

the letter, but that this issue has been delayed due to the delay in finalizing the master tolling agreement. He added that this will likely be on the July HRTAC agenda.

Mr. Haynam made a presentation on the study path options. He noted that there were three options, each with a list of pros and cons:

- Option 1 – Continue NEPA & IMR/Conceptual Design
  - Risks include FHWA may require a NEPA re-evaluation
  - The IMR is only valid for eight years
  - Data used for traffic analyses may become obsolete
  - Design standards used for concepts may change
- Option 2 – Delay NEPA & IMR/Conceptual Design to 2025
  - Risks include cost estimates based on planning level analysis
  - Changes in NEPA policies may impact approvals
  - Inflation costs for NEPA and the IMR/Conceptual Design
- Option 3 – Start the IMR/Conceptual Design in 2020 and delay NEPA to 2025.
  - Risks include concept design developed without consideration of environmental impacts may need to change
  - The IMR is only valid for eight years
  - Data used for traffic analyses may become obsolete
  - Design standards used for concepts may change
  - Changes in NEPA policies may impact approvals
  - Inflation costs for NEPA

Mr. Haynam wrapped up by showing a slide on project funding. He noted that the timeline for project completion has been delayed from 2030 to 2035, and that the funding shown only covers the interchange project, not the remainder of I-664. This assumes that project advertisement would occur in 2030, so some PE funding would be needed earlier to be able to advertise the project, probably in 2028.

Mr. Kevin Page opened the discussion by noting that the HRTAC 2045 Plan of Finance would be approved at their meeting next week. It includes Express Lanes costs and revenues and a COVID-19 stress test. In the Plan of Finance, the Bowers Hill project would be pushed back to 2035.

Mr. Page added that NEPA work has a shelf life, and HRTAC's current set of priorities are building the HRBT and the entire Express Lanes network. The Bowers Hill project is also being delayed by COVID-19 impacts on funding. However, he added that the corollary to this is that pushing ahead on the Bowers Hill study and getting it complete would mean that the project could be ready to go if additional funds become available. Although 2035 is the date today, it may not be in the future. If the study is complete then the project could be ready to go if federal funds become available.

Chair Lewis responded that he agreed with Mr. Page and that we generally don't have a project ready when money suddenly becomes available. It takes effort to keep an EA updated and ready to go, but it's easier than starting an EA from scratch. Mr. Lewis added that we need to keep the study going forward and have HRTAC have some funding available to keep it up to date so that we can finish it quickly if funding opportunities arise.

Mr. Page noted that the next federal transportation bill is on the way and that after the express lanes, there's no other major shovel ready project other than I-64/I-264 Phase 3. He added that we need

to have the project ready to go and he can take request from the committee to the HRTAC Board in July.

Mr. Lewis asked the committee for their opinion on moving forward. Representatives from the Port and each locality supported the approach to continue the study and have a shovel ready project, which is Option 1.

Mr. Lewis noted that this is the first time he remembers moving forward and trying to have a shovel ready project like this. There's going to be a big push forward on building infrastructure on the federal level in the near future.

Mr. Haynam mentioned that they will continue to move forward with the study (Option 1). He then asked if the committee wanted to set up recurring working group meetings. It was determined that this will be revisited once VDOT can provide more information on study milestones.

Mr. Page wrapped up the topic by asking that HRTPO or VDOT produce a letter that requests that the study continue moving forward that he would include with the HRTAC agenda in July. The letter should also include the list of study parameters, which would include Express Lanes through the Interchange, based on the TPO Board action in May.

The meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 3:05 p.m.