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Fairfax eyes more tolls to fund high-speed transit network

By: [Brian Hughes](#)
Examiner Staff Writer
May 6, 2010

Fairfax County officials are examining more tolls on the county's busiest roads.

Though in the preliminary stages, supervisors suggested implementing tolls on some of the county's most congested roads as a way to fund an expansion of public transportation and make people think twice about taking their cars. They didn't specify exactly where new toll stations would be necessary.

With funding in doubt for many of the planned transportation initiatives in the county, supervisors said they would need new ways to fund high-speed buses, streetcars and light rail, among other options being proposed to keep more cars parked.

Some supervisors said that if new transit options help fix the seemingly never-ending nightmare of commuting on the county's roadways, additional tolls would be easier for drivers to swallow.

"We're running out of road space," said Supervisor John Cook, R-Braddock. "And given the choice between getting in your car or getting on the bus in traffic, people are going to get in their car every time."

By obtaining rights of way for new transit projects, though, riders could avoid the clogged roadways and save time. Supervisors said current buses mostly funnel riders into the same gridlock as those driving their cars.

In addition to the congestion, frequent stops cause Fairfax Connector buses, for example, to travel 15 miles per hour on average.

Director of Transportation Kathy Ichter said officials would need \$1.5 million to complete a comprehensive study for new transit options.

However, most of the proposals are long-term solutions, and with tens of thousands of people expected to commute to Fairfax with the military's Base Realignment and Closure program next year -- and massive Tysons Corner growth on the horizon -- critics say Virginia's largest county won't be able to absorb the changes.

Ichter predicted the county would need to spend "twice as much on transportation" if it were to implement the suggested fixes.

Nearly \$10 billion worth of transportation development is already planned for the region during the next decade, according to county officials. Aside from more tolls, it is not clear how Fairfax would pay for bus rapid transit or any additional undertakings.

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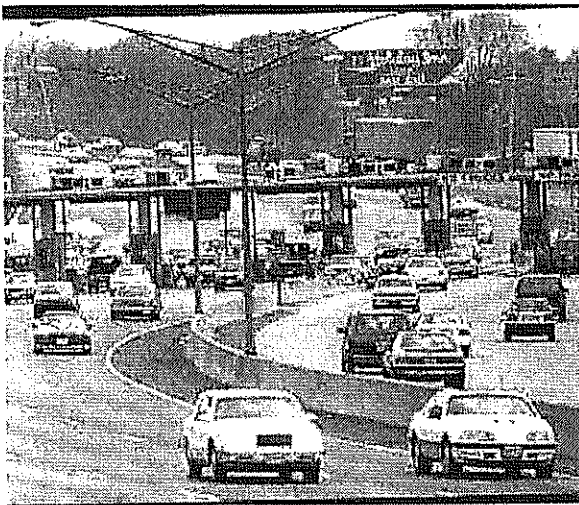
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Monday, May 10, 2010 |

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McDonnell wants to charge toll at N.C. line on I-95



1992, BOB BROWN/TIMES-DISPATCH

Tolls, once a familiar sight in the Richmond area, would be instituted on the North Carolina line if a proposal by Gov. Bob McDonnell is granted.

By Olympia Meola

Published: May 10, 2010

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The McDonnell administration is asking the federal government for permission to put tolls on Interstate 95 near the North Carolina border.

If approved, Virginia's tolls on one of the country's most traveled arteries could cost between \$1 to \$2

per axle, potentially reaping \$30 million to \$60 million a year, according to the administration. The money would have to be used for improvements along the corridor.

Secretary of Transportation Sean T. Connaughton submitted the tolling request under the Interstate System Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Pilot Program. The state currently has approval to toll Interstate 81 under that pilot program and officials want to switch that authority to I-95.

"Such user fees will help the commonwealth generate the revenue necessary to make much-needed infrastructure and safety improvements in the I-95 corridor to better serve the traveling public and increase economic productivity," Gov. Bob McDonnell said in a news release. Virginia would prefer installing electronic monitoring but may need some traditional toll stations.

Interstate tolls on the North Carolina line are one of a dozen mechanisms McDonnell's proposed to fund transportation initiatives.

I-95 runs 177 miles through Virginia, from Washington, D.C., to North Carolina, according to the Virginia Department of Transportation. The highway is the nation's longest north-south interstate, running 1,920 miles from Maine to Florida.

If approved, Virginia would join several neighboring states already tolling along 95 -- Delaware has a \$4 toll for passenger cars and Maryland has two tolls, one at \$5 traveling northbound on the John F. Kennedy Memorial Highway and a \$2 toll at the Fort McHenry Tunnel in both directions.

During his gubernatorial campaign, McDonnell said that he wants to toll along 95 and 85. He said at the time that the I-95 toll proceeds would be used to fund improvements along the transportation corridor and that the I-85 toll would help expand Route 460 by integrating it with the highway system.

A news release today from the governor's office indicates that revenues from I-95 tolling would first be directed toward safety improvements and then improvements to the pavement conditions and infrastructure. Then, the state could begin making capacity improvements.

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HOT lanes: Designs, financing almost in place for I-95

May 12, 2010 - 6:36am

WASHINGTON - Engineering designs and financing for the High Occupancy Toll lanes project along the Interstate 95/395 corridor from Massaponax to the 14th Street Bridge could be in place in the next few weeks.

The economy and design changes stalled the long planned HOT lanes.

"We would still have to resolve the issue involving the lawsuit," says Virginia Transportation Secretary Sean T. Connaughton.

A lawsuit filed by Arlington County is making its way through the courts. The suit seeks to halt the entire project along I-95/395. Arlington believes the state's environmental study was inadequate and that low-income and minority residents along the corridor would be harmed by new air pollution.

Connaughton says Virginia would like to the 14 miles of HOT lanes being built along the Capital Beltway extend into Maryland.

"In the long term, we would like to see Maryland pursue either HOT lanes or HOV (High Occupancy Vehicle) lanes on the Beltway that would simply connect right up there," Connaughton says.

He says the state could have an agreement within the next few weeks to extend the HOT lanes 1.5 miles closer to the Maryland border. The project would end at the American Legion Bridge, rather than just north of the Dulles Toll Road.

The extension would be paid for by Fluor-Transurban, the consortium of two private firms that partnered with the Virginia Department of Transportation to build the lanes. The state and civic groups would need to approve the project.

WTOP's Hank Silverberg contributed to this report.

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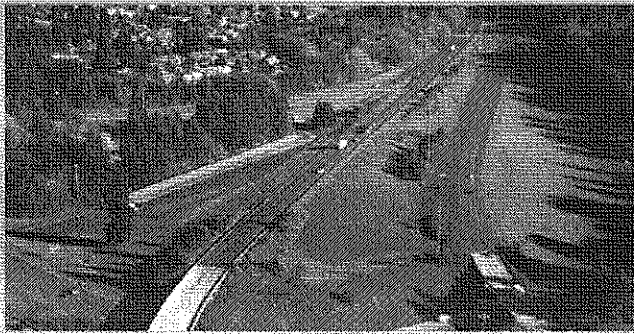
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Study shows public transit requires additional funds to serve older Americans May 12, 2010

To serve the rapidly growing portion of Americans older than 65, public transportation will incur increased operating and capital costs on the order of another \$3.9 billion annually by 2030, according to a new study conducted for the American Public Transportation Association (APTA).

APTA released the study in recognition of May as Older Americans Month, which is designated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration on Aging. Local public transit systems nationwide are also highlighting their service to seniors during this month.

The study highlights the need for increased operational needs to address the growing senior population. This includes more bus operator training, incorporating travel needs of older people in route planning and stop placement, and coordination with other agencies and transportation providers. Increased capital needs include more low-floor and kneeling buses, improved interior circulation, additional stanchions and grab bars, and other accessibility features, according to the study, *Funding the Public Transportation Needs of an Aging Population*.

The study was conducted for APTA by Nelson/Nygaard Consulting and with additional guidance from a working group that includes the Community Transportation Association of America, Easter Seals and AARP.

"This study shows that for public transportation systems to improve providing an indispensable service to older Americans, they will require significantly greater public investment," said William Millar, president of APTA. "For millions of Americans older than 65, public transportation is critical to maintaining independence and quality of life. Our investment in public transit must grow as the number of older Americans we serve dramatically increases."

In addition, to help older people take advantage of existing services, public transportation systems will need to expand flexible route and community transportation services, Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit, demand-response service, taxi subsidy programs, and volunteer driver programs. Public transit systems will also need to make information more accessible, as well as expand assistance, outreach, and staff training programs.

The number of Americans over age 65 will grow by 79 percent in the next 20 years, according to the study. In addition, the number of Americans between ages 85 and 74 will nearly double in this period, from just over 20 million in 2010 to nearly 40 million in 2030.

This month local public transit systems nationwide will highlight specific services such as "how to ride the bus" classes, "Seniors Ride Free" passes and reduced fares for older riders. Transit systems will also conduct health fairs, promote senior mentor programs for first time riders and many public transit systems across the country will be encouraging seniors to increase their mobility options by using the local fixed route transit service.

To read the full study and to see examples of local systems' May activities in recognition of Older Americans Month, please visit www.apta.com.

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Climate bill to offer some money for transportation improvements

More than \$6 billion will be divided three ways; AASHTO argues all money should be deposited into Highway Trust Fund
May 12, 2010

The Senate Climate Bill, which was introduced on May 12 by Sens. John Kerry (D-Mass.) and Joe Lieberman (I-Conn.), received some praises by those in the transportation industry, while others raised concerns.

Transportation is expected to receive more than \$6 billion of the revenue produced by selling carbon emissions to fuel providers. The money will be divided three ways:

* One-third will go to the Highway Trust Fund, but the money must be used towards projects that will reduce greenhouse-gas emissions;

* One-third will go towards federal grants like the Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) program; and

* One-third will be used for CLEAN TEA planning.

The climate bill also calls for the U.S. DOT and the Environmental Protection Agency to propose national transportation-related greenhouse-gas goals within one year. Standards for local and city areas also must be established. State and local planners would have an additional two years to formulate emission-reduction strategies. Those who do not come up with the required framework will not be eligible for CLEAN TEA funding.

"The authors deserve high praise for ensuring that revenues generated from the transportation sector go in part toward meeting the growing demand for more, better and cleaner travel options," Geoff Anderson, co-chairman of Transportation for America, said in a statement.

The American Association of State Highway & Transportation Officials, however, believe all the money generated from a "pollution tax" should go into the Highway Trust Fund.

"The Highway Trust Fund has been a reliable source of revenue for more than 50 years," said John Horsley, AASHTO executive director, in a statement. "Today, however, the Highway Trust Fund is in trouble. Three transfers from the general fund have had to be made to the Highway Trust Fund over the past 18 months to keep it solvent. Meanwhile, the need for additional revenues to maintain and modernize our nation's highways, bridges and transit systems keeps growing.

"The evidence is clear; Congress can ill afford to consider any legislation that preempts funding from the Highway Trust Fund which supports the vital transportation systems every American relies on."

Many in Congress do not believe the bill, in its current form, has a chance of reaching the President's desk. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) doubts the measure will reach a vote in his chamber before the year is out.

Source: *Streetsblog Capitol Hill* May 12, 2010

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Va. toll plan sees early opposition

By: William C. Flook
Examiner Staff Writer
May 13, 2010

The McDonnell administration's plan to place tolls on Interstate 95 at the North Carolina border would divert truck traffic onto local roads and pass increased shipping costs on to businesses, the head of the state's trucking association said Wednesday.

P. Dale Bennett, president and chief executive officer of the Virginia Trucking Association, said truck drivers are already mapping out how to skirt the proposal tolls, which still need federal approval. One idea: briefly leaving the interstate to cross the border on Route 301.

"People have already started thinking how they're going to get around it," Bennett said.

The McDonnell administration said this week that placing a toll of \$1 or \$2 per axle in both directions of I-95 could raise as much as \$60 million a year to maintain the busy north-south artery. An 18-wheeler would have to pay as much as \$10 to cross the border each way.

Bennett said his group is meeting with Virginia Transportation Secretary Sean Connaughton in the next two weeks to convey its concerns. He also plans to lobby the federal government to oppose the new tolls.

Revenues from tolls initially would go to road maintenance outside the D.C. suburbs, according to the McDonnell administration's pitch to federal officials.

In a letter last month to the Federal Highway Administration asking for permission to install tolls at the North Carolina border, Connaughton said the commonwealth would first use the proceeds on projects between that border and Spotsylvania County.

That stretch of the I-95 corridor contains 514 lane miles in need of \$156 million worth of maintenance, Connaughton wrote. Of those, 238 miles are "in need of structural improvement."

The funding would exclude Northern Virginia at first because the state already has federal approval for tolls on I-95/395 through the high-occupancy toll lanes project, according to the transportation secretary. That northern stretch of the interstate was left out to prevent overlap that may have complicated the application for border tolls, Connaughton told *The Examiner*. Eventually, "it's our intention to

potentially use the money for the entire corridor," he said.

McDonnell predicted the approval process will take months. Part of that lag stems from the requirement to complete a lengthy environmental study.

"It is agonizing how slow our government works," the governor said.

wflook@washingtonexaminer.com

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Thursday, May 20, 2010 |

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Funding remains flat for Virginia transportation projects

By [Peter Bacque](#)

Published: May 20, 2010

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Money for Virginia's proposed 2011-16 transportation improvement program will be flat, state road and public transit officials said yesterday.

"This is really the plan you agreed to last year," state Transportation Secretary Sean T. Connaughton told the Commonwealth Transportation Board.

"Given where the revenues are," Connaughton said, "there really aren't many opportunities for changes."

The recession-battered, six-year transportation program calls for spending \$7.7 billion on road, rail and transit work during 2011-16.

Of that total, \$5.6 billion will pay for highway projects and \$2.1 billion for rail and public transportation efforts, said Reta R. Busher, the Virginia Department of Transportation's chief financial officer.

While the state transportation plan shows an increase over the current \$7.6 billion program, that growth is not expected to match inflation during the six-year period.

Even using hundreds of millions of dollars from state highway construction revenues to bolster road repair work, the condition of Virginia's 57,867 miles of state-maintained highways gradually has been deteriorating while the number of vehicles on the roads has grown and demand for transit service has increased.

The six-year program retains full funding for several key highway projects for the Richmond metropolitan region:

- Huguenot Bridge replacement in Richmond and Henrico County;