

1. Meeting Materials

Documents:

[012221 00B BOWERS HILL WG AGENDA PAGE.PDF](#)
[012221 04 MINUTES - SEPTEMBER BOWERS HILL WG MEETING.PDF](#)
[012221 00A BOWERS HILL WG FULL AGENDA.PDF](#)

Agenda
HRTPO
Bowers Hill Interchange Study Working Group
January 22, 2021

Pursuant to the declared state of emergency in the Commonwealth of Virginia in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to protect the public health and safety of the working group members, staff, and the general public, the **Bowers Hill Interchange Study Working Group** meeting will be held electronically.

9:30 am

- 1.** Call to Order
- 2.** Approval of Agenda
- 3.** Public Comments
 - Submitted Public Comments
- 4.** Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting ***[Action Requested]***
 - Attachment 4: Minutes of September 25, 2020 Meeting

Recommended Action: Approve the Minutes.
- 5.** General Study Update
 - Study update and study schedule
 - Discuss preliminary range of concepts
 - Introduction of resources within the corridor
- 6.** Next Steps
 - Continue Discussion on Range of Concepts / Study Schedule
 - Finalize Study Schedule
 - Discuss Permitting Assumptions
 - VDOT Public Involvement
 - Concurrence on Range of Alternatives
 - FHWA Notice of Intent (NOI) / NEPA Scoping

ADJOURNMENT

Bowers Hill Interchange Study Working Group Minutes – September 25, 2020

Pursuant to the declared state of emergency in the Commonwealth of Virginia in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to protect the public health and safety of the Working Group members, staff, and the general public, the Bowers Hill Interchange Study Working Group meeting was held electronically via Webex. These electronic meetings are required to complete essential business on behalf of the region. A recording of the meeting is available on the website.

Attendance:

Troy Eisenberger – Chesapeake
Bryan Stilley – Newport News
Rob Brown - Norfolk
Deborah Mangiaracina – Norfolk
Carl Jackson – Portsmouth
Todd Halacy – VDOT
Samba Secka – VDOT
Scott Smizik – VDOT
Eric Stringfield – VDOT
Nina Ullrich – VDOT
Barbara Nelson - VPA
Keith Nichols – HRTPO

The meeting started at 9:35 am.

- Mr. Nichols read through the introduction detailing that this was an electronic meeting.
- Item 2 – Approval of Agenda
 - The agenda was approved by consensus.
- Item 3 – Public Comments
 - No comments from the public were received prior to the meeting.
- Item 4 – Approval of Minutes
 - The minutes of the August 28, 2020 meeting were reviewed. Mr. Brown made a motion to approve the minutes and Mr. Eisenberger seconded. The minutes were approved on a roll call vote.
- Item 5 – Purpose and Need
- Item 6 – General Study Update
- Item 7 – Next Steps
 - Mr. Smizik made a presentation on the Bowers Hill Interchange Study Environmental Impact Statement, which included Items 5-7 on the agenda.

- Mr. Smizik began his presentation by noting that although it says “Environmental Impact Statement” on the title slide, it still has not been officially decided by FHWA that this will be an EIS in this pre-NEPA phase.
- Purpose and Need
 - The Purpose and Need serves as the primary criteria in the alternatives screening process.
 - Purpose and Need is documented in Chapter 1 of the NEPA document.
 - Purpose and Need is one of the concurrence points in the NEPA/404 merged process that guides the conduct of the study.
 - Concurrence is informed through multiple agency meetings and public comment.
- Mr. Smizik added that they are aiming to have the Purpose and Need complete and approved by November, and that these Purpose and Need slides are “potential” at this point.
- Element #1 - Reduce Congestion
 - Will present data in the coming weeks on congestion to determine if this is an appropriate need element.
 - Would be informed by population and employment data and documented traffic volumes.
 - Would include locations in Study Area with existing inadequate capacity and impact on traffic, including freight.
- Mr. Smizik noted that the study area connects to the MMMBT and High Rise Bridge and is important to employers, shoppers, tourist attractions, and is well used by freight to and from the Port of Virginia. This is critical since the MMMBT carries 50% of the freight across the Hampton Roads Harbor, the High Rise Bridge carries approximately 7,400 trucks each weekday, and the City of Suffolk has a high percentage of residents that work in another city (77%) and workers that reside in another city (70%).
- Mr. Smizik added that it is still early in the study process, so the traffic analysis is still ongoing. The full existing analysis will be completed in the coming weeks, which will include a capacity and weaving analysis.
- Mr. Smizik stated that INRIX data is being used for the congestion analysis. The initial analysis shows speeds below the speed limit in both peak periods (AM: 5-9 am, PM: 3-6 pm). The INRIX data shows that the Travel Time Index in the corridor ranges between 1.1-1.4, indicating that there is moderate to severe congestion during both peak periods.
- Mr. Smizik also noted that they will look at crash rates in the analysis, particular rear end crashes due to congestion. The initial analysis indicates that the predominant crashes in the corridor are rear end crashes in good weather during peak periods. The preliminary analysis also indicates that crash rates exceed regional and statewide averages.
- Mr. Smizik added that they will also be looking at future projections using the regional travel demand model as the study progresses.
- Mr. Smizik wrapped up the congestion section by noting that they will rely on historic data for this study since current traffic data is impacted by Covid-19.

- Mr. Eisenberger asked about figures on population growth in Chesapeake, and Mr. Smizik replied that individual figures for each city will be included in the study.
- Element #2 - Improve Travel Reliability
 - Will present data in the coming weeks on travel reliability to determine if this is an appropriate need element.
 - Would consider travel time, travel speeds, crash data, and metrics for measuring travel reliability.
 - Would analyze the need to improve travel reliability for different types of travel demand, including commuter, freight, and emergency evacuation.
- Mr. Smizik stated that travel time reliability will be analyzed using the Planning Time Index. The initial analysis shows that the PTI ranges between 1.07 and 2.32, which indicates that travel is highly variable and unreliable in the corridor.
- Element #3 – Provide Additional Travel Choice
 - Will present data in the coming weeks on travel choice to determine if this is an appropriate need element.
 - Would consider how the study can remain consistent with local plans, including planned and ongoing transportation projects in the region.
 - Would examine how the study area interacts with interchanges, local roads, and “cut-through” traffic.
- Mr. Smizik indicated that this is a broad need element. He added some statistics on job accessibility, the percentage of people driving alone, and the need to provide travel choices to improve reliability.
- Mr. Jackson asked if this Need will address local access and cut-through traffic. Mr. Smizik responded that yes, this will be addressed. Cut-through traffic will likely spread further from I-664 due to a lack of parallel routes.
- Mr. Jackson asked if this Need will address preserving existing local access (i.e. Airline Boulevard.) Mr. Smizik agreed that this will need to be addressed, along with how local access will be impacted by alternatives.
- Mr. Eisenberger asked when will we know if each of these will be added as Need elements. Mr. Smizik replied that they are aiming for the November Agency meeting for concurrence on the Purpose and Need elements.
- Mr. Smizik wrapped up the discussion on Travel Choice by noting that this section must be consistent with local plans and current projects such as the High Rise Bridge widening and Hampton Roads Express Lanes network, and how they will interact with the proposed alternatives.
- Next Steps
 - Conclude Purpose and Need Survey – October
 - Request Concurrence on Purpose and Need – November Agency meeting
 - Initiate discussion of alternative concepts with agencies – Early 2021
 - Public involvement for alternative concepts – Spring 2021
 - Formally initiate NEPA – Spring 2021

- Mr. Smizik noted that VDOT posted a number of updates to the study website last week, including a narrated presentation, downloadable materials, and a description of how we went from the previous study to this one.
- Mr. Smizik added that they are currently conducting a public survey. Nearly 500 responses were received during the first week. VDOT plans to present the interim results at the October Agency meeting, and the survey will close before the November Agency meeting.
- Mr. Smizik noted that although they hope to receive concurrence on the Purpose and Need at the November Agency meeting, this may slip to the December meeting. Once this concurrence is received, we can move to the initial discussion of concepts.
- Mr. Smizik noted that they expect that FHWA will issue the Notice of Intent in Spring 2021. If this study is an EIS it will be subject to the One Federal Decision Policy, which would start a 2-year clock to complete the EIS and issue permits.
- Mr. Eisenberger noted that he has received a request from Chesapeake Council members to provide an update on this study and asked if there is anything prepared that he can share with the Council. Mr. Smizik replied that VDOT would be happy to support the cities in any way they can, although this request should go through the Hampton Roads District.
- Mr. Stringfield asked if VDOT needs to provide additional data on congestion and reliability to the cities for these requests. Mr. Smizik replied that an updated slide deck with more of this analysis should be available by the second week of October.
- Mr. Jackson noted that the Bowers Hill newsletter and general information that is provided on the website can be provided to each city's Council. Mr. Smizik added that newsletter updates will be sent out the third Friday of every month.
- Mr. Secka asked if we will need to have an October Bowers Hill working group meeting. Mr. Smizik replied that he did not think there would be enough new information to necessitate a meeting in October. The data analysis will be sent out to the working group when it is complete, and the next meeting should probably be held in the January/February timeframe to discuss initial possible alternatives.

The meeting adjourned at 10:20 am.

January 15, 2021

Memorandum #2021-11

TO: Bowers Hill Interchange Study Working Group

BY: Pavithra Parthasarathi, Deputy Executive Director

RE: Bowers Hill Interchange Study Working Group Meeting – January 21, 2021

Attached is the agenda for the **Bowers Hill Interchange Study Working Group** meeting scheduled for **Friday, January 22, 2021 at 9:30 a.m.**

Pursuant to the declared state of emergency in the Commonwealth of Virginia in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to protect the public health and safety of the working group members, staff, and the general public, the Bowers Hill Interchange Study Working Group meeting will be held electronically.

Members of the public are invited to address the Bowers Hill Interchange Working Group by submitting comments in advance of the meeting via email to kmiller@hrtpo.org or phone (757) 366-4370. Each oral comment is limited to three minutes. All comments received 48 hours before the meeting will be provided to the Bowers Hill Interchange Working Group Members and included in the official record.

/cm

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