

ITEM 9
December 6, 2018
PRTC Regular Meeting

PRTC Executive Director's Time

- A. INFO Follow-Up from Prior Meeting**
- B. INFO Executive Director's Report**
 - **Updated Tax Floor Revenue Projections**
 - **Agreement with NVTC for I-395 Express Lanes Project**
 - **Industry Article – Impact of Bus Stop Improvements**



December 6, 2018

TO: Madam Chair Anderson and Commissioners

FROM: Robert A. Schneider, PhD.
Executive Director

SUBJECT: I-395 Express Lane Annual Transit Payment

At the December meeting, the Commission will be briefed on key elements related to the I-395 Express Lane annual transit payment in anticipation of entering into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) on the administration of the funds. This MOA would establish a new Commuter Choice program that serves commuters along the I-95/I-395 corridor.

It is anticipated that the first annual transit payment of \$15 million would be available to the Commissions at the commencement of tolling on the I-395 Express Lanes in late 2019. As such, the Commission will be presented the I-395 Annual Transit Payment MOA for approval at the January meeting so that the plans for the initial program of projects can commence.

A. Overview of the I-395 Express Lanes Project

At a future Commission meeting, staff from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) will provide the Commission with an update on construction and the project schedule of the extension of high occupancy toll (HOT) lanes along the I-395 Express Lanes. This presentation will be followed by an update from the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) on the recently-completed I-395/95 Transit / Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Study. DRPT's effort will help inform the potential projects that could apply for funding under the annual transit payment.

Background

In June 2017, VDOT entered into an agreement with 95 Express Lanes, LLC, for



Source: Virginia Department of Transportation

the extension of approximately eight miles of HOT lanes between Turkeycock Run (near Edsall Road) and the vicinity of Eads Street in Arlington. Under this project, the two existing High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes are being converted to express lanes and a third lane is being added, providing three reversible express lanes. As a part of the agreement, 95 Express Lanes LLC agreed to provide the Commonwealth with an annual payment for transit services of \$15 million per year, escalating by 2.5 percent per year, beginning on the commencement of tolling through the life of the 70-year agreement. Once the project is completed, vehicles with three or more people will be able to use the express lanes for free while vehicles with fewer than three people have the choice to pay a variable toll and use the express lanes. Construction began in August 2017, with the new extended lanes opening in Fall 2019 and the entire project set for completion in Summer 2020.

To align with the opening of the new HOT lanes, DRPT conducted a study to identify a comprehensive set of transit and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) investments on which future toll revenues from the I-395 Express Lanes may be spent. The study identified potential projects such as new and expanded bus and rail transit services, transit capital projects, commuter parking facilities, TDM program enhancements, and technology improvements that support transit and TDM – all with the intent of maximizing person throughput along the corridor. Many of these projects may be strong candidates for funding under the annual transit payment.

B. Memorandum of Agreement Between PRTC and NVTC for the Distribution and Allocation of I-395 Annual Transit Investment Funds

The Commission will be briefed on the proposed approach for the joint administration of a new Commuter Choice program that would serve I-95/I-395 Express Lane commuters. At the January meeting the Commission will be asked to approve a Memorandum of Understanding (MOA) with NVTC that outlines the distribution and allocation of the annual transit payment under the I-395 Express Lane project. This agreement would allow for the annual transit investment (ATI) funds to be administered under a joint arrangement, reducing program administration costs and facilitating greater regional cooperation in the selection of projects.

Through a separate Memorandum of Agreement between the Commonwealth (CTB, VDOT, DRPT) and PRTC and NVTC, the Commonwealth agreed to provide \$15 million/year plus escalation to PRTC and NVTC to administer a program that funds multimodal projects along the I-395/95 Express Lanes corridor. The agreement includes the opportunity for PRTC and NVTC to mutually agree on a joint approach for selecting projects. The proposed MOA between PRTC and NVTC would allow the Commissions to collectively select projects, subject to the approval of the Commonwealth Transportation Board.

Background

As a part of the agreement between VDOT and 95 Express Lanes, LLC, the Commonwealth secured an annual payment for transit services of \$15 million per year, escalating by 2.5 percent per year, beginning on the commencement of tolling through the life of the 70-year agreement. Tolling commencement is expected in late 2019.

Approved by the CTB at their December 2017 meeting, the MOA with PRTC and NVTC allocates \$15 million/year plus escalation to PRTC and NVTC to fund multimodal projects along the I-395/95 Express Lane Corridor. The agreement proposes an allocation approach that would proportion annual funding based upon the populations of jurisdictions along the corridor. For PRTC, the population calculation is proposed to include the Counties of Prince William, Stafford, and Spotsylvania and the City of Fredericksburg; for NVTC, the population calculation is proposed to include the Counties of Fairfax and Arlington and the City of Alexandria. The agreement does permit PRTC and NVTC to develop an alternate funding approach, subject to approval by the Commonwealth.

Eligible applicants include all PRTC and NVTC jurisdictions and any public transit providers that serve those jurisdictions. Similar to the [Transform I-66 agreement](#) between NVTC and the Commonwealth, eligible projects would include transit capital and operations, park and ride lots, Transportation Demand Management (i.e., carpool/vanpool, transit incentives), and roadway operational improvements. Metrorail, Metrobus, and the Virginia Railway Express operations and capital are specifically called out as eligible projects in the proposed agreement.

As with the I-66 Commuter Choice Program, all projects would be required to benefit the toll payers of the corridor. Under the agreement with the Commonwealth, the corridor is inclusive of the entire I-395/95 37-mile Express Lane corridor.

Selected projects would need to support the goals of the agreement, as follows:

1. Move more people;
2. Enhance transportation connectivity;
3. Improve transit service;
4. Reduce roadway congestion; and
5. Increase travel options.

Elements of the Proposed Memorandum of Agreement

The proposed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) will establish the implementation of this joint program, including how the annual transit funds are disbursed to the Commissions, and the process by which the Commissions will select projects for funding. Key elements of the proposed agreement are as follows:

1. Distribution of ATI Funds

The proposed MOA designates NVTC as the recipient and manager of the annual transit investment (ATI) funds for purposes of jointly administering the program with PRTC.

2. Project Selection Process

Each year, PRTC and NVTC would jointly agree upon a process for project selection in accordance with the MOA with the Commonwealth. The process shall include a time line such that the projects selected

by the Commissions can be sent to the CTB for review at its May workshop and approval at its June meeting.

3. Reports

- a) The PRTC Executive Director and the NVTC Executive Director shall provide joint reports to the Commissions quarterly, and at such additional times as either PRTC or NVTC may request, about the status of project funds.
- b) Annually, and in advance of the required annual report to the CTB, the PRTC Executive Director and the NVTC Executive Director shall provide a joint report to the Commissions of the status of all funded projects.

The Commissions will be presented the I-395 Annual Transit Payment MOA for approval at the January meetings. Upon enactment, PRTC and NVTC will jointly establish a program timeline and project selection process for the initial call for projects, anticipating selected projects would commence service on toll day one (as early as December 2019).

Summary: “Impacts of Bus Stop Improvements”

Original Report by University of Utah Department of City & Metropolitan Planning (March 2018)

Improving bus stops by providing shelters, seating, signage and sidewalks is relatively inexpensive and popular among riders and local officials. Making such improvements, however, is not often a priority for U.S. transit providers because of competing demands for capital funds and a perception that amenities are not tied to measurable increases in system effectiveness or efficiency.

A recent study analyzed bus stop improvements made by the Utah Transit Authority (UTA) to determine whether, and to what extent, the improvements are associated with changes in stop-level ridership and demand for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit service in the areas immediately surrounding improved bus stops. The study compares ridership and paratransit demand from before and after the improvements at the treated stops and at a set of unimproved stops selected using propensity score matching to control for demographic, land use and regional accessibility influences.

The bus stop improvements included creating ADA-compliant concrete pads and installing a variety of fixtures, including trash cans, benches, shelters, better connections to sidewalks, and (at a grocery store) a shopping cart corral. Amenities like shelters, seating, universally accessible bus stop platforms, trash receptacles, bike parking, signage and lighting are all popular with riders and local government partners, but do they lead to measurable improvements?

The analysis shows that the improved bus stops are associated with a statistically significant increase in overall ridership and a decrease in paratransit demand compared to the control group stops. Specifically, between 2013 and 2016, improved bus stops saw ridership increases that were *92% higher* than increases at the control group stops, while also experiencing ADA paratransit demand increases that were *94% lower* than at the control stops.

These outcomes are important for transit service providers as they seek to increase overall ridership and reduce costs associated with providing paratransit service.

So What? Why should OMNIRIDE improve bus stops?

Providing evidence on performance metrics associated with stop improvements would help inform investment decisions associated with “first-mile/last-mile” improvements, which should be prioritized in OMNIRIDE’s annual performance goals. Having the correct amenities at a bus stop is critically important. Increased levels of amenities can make elderly and disabled riders comfortable with using the fixed route system and appropriate amenities can increase the appeal of the OMNIRIDE transit system.

The study asserts that the bus stop improvements appear to be popular, but perhaps the more important finding from this study is the reduced ADA paratransit demand observed in the areas surrounding the improved stops. Many bus stops in the survey lacked a stable, level pad from which a wheelchair could easily board a bus. Many also lacked sidewalk connections that would facilitate wheelchair access to the stop location. In short, many of the stops effectively inhibited those with mobility-based disabilities from getting to UTA’s scheduled bus service.

An accessible bus stop can mean the difference between an elderly or disabled rider being able to utilize OMNIRIDE bus services or not. If accessible stops are not available, riders may be forced to use options that provide increased boarding assistance and flexibility, such as paratransit or accessible taxis. Neither of these options are as cost effective as public transit. Therefore, increasing the number of accessible stops is vital for elderly and disabled populations with Prince William County.

This study augments OMNIRIDE’s understanding of how improvements in bus stops can affect human interactions with our transit services. It is frequently asserted in transit design literature that the bus stop is the point of first contact between a transit agency and its customer. How a stop is designed and constructed sends important signals to the public about OMNIRIDE’s attitude toward existing and potential riders – are they to be valued, facilitated and coaxed into riding, or merely accommodated.