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10-25-16

Jackie Henderson

From: Allison Silberberg
Sent: Tuesday, October 25, 2016 4:30 PM
To: City Council
Cc: Mark Jinks; Yon Lambert; Adam Ebbin; Bob Gronenberg
Subject: Fwd: VDOT I-395 Express (HOT) Lanes Public Hearing report - suggestion for today's City Council meeting

Dear Colleagues,

Bob Gronenberg asked me to forward his email to you all. In a subsequent email, he stated that he was very supportive of the Eads Street changes.

I am cc'ing Bob on this.

Thanks...Allison

Allison Silberberg
Mayor of Alexandria
allison.silberberg@alexandriava.gov
o: 703-746-4500

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Bob" <bob2@comcast.net>
Date: October 25, 2016 at 8:02:54 AM EDT
To: "'Allison Silberberg'" <allison.silberberg@alexandriava.gov>
Subject: VDOT I-395 Express (HOT) Lanes Public Hearing report - suggestion for today's City Council meeting

Good morning Allison,

Last night I participated in the Public Hearing for the I-395 Express (HOT) Lanes project at Wakefield High School, my third or fourth engagement on this subject over the past year. As I understand it, VDOT Megaprojects Director Susan Shaw and her team will be briefing the City Council today, I would like to inform you of the proposal I offered at the conclusion of last night's event. I am not lobbying for or against the extension of HOT lanes from Edsall Road to the 14th St. Bridge, but rather a safe and responsible way forward.

If the current HOV lanes are converted to HOT lanes, I suggest that the third lane VDOT is currently proposing NOT be added. I strongly recommend maintaining the existing two lane configuration inside the Beltway for the following reasons:

Safety:

To accommodate a third lane, VDOT plans to reduce the shoulder on the west side of the roadway from 10 feet to as little as 2 feet and shrink the lanes from the Federal Highway Administration standard

of 12 feet to 11 feet. The current shoulder not only provides a safety zone for HOV lane drivers, but also provides access for first responders to jump over the low barriers and respond to emergencies in the congested main (non-HOV) lanes where the current shoulder width is not adequate.

Shrinking the travel lane width to 11 feet raises additional safety concerns. A sizable and increasing percentage of vehicles using the HOT lanes are expected to be commuter buses. I recently walked across the Shirlington overpass, stopping mid-span to observe the limited clearance between 8.5 foot wide buses speeding southbound in the HOV lanes where VDOT reports the lane width (in this section) is currently 11 feet. As there are only two lanes and wide shoulders, traffic in the right lane can bear slightly to the right and left lane to the left. Unfortunately, if the roadway is converted to three substandard lanes, the center lane will not have this luxury, and buses passing buses will have little margin of error.

Construction:

Converting two lanes to three is NOT simply a matter of restriping. The current shoulders are structurally inadequate to serve as travel lanes and will need substantial strengthening. This will entail tens, if not hundreds, of millions of dollars of unnecessary expenditures along with disruption to neighboring communities such as Parkfairfax.

Traffic Flow:

While the improvements proposed for the Eads St. interchange (Pentagon/Pentagon City) are commendable, VDOT has failed to address the "funnel" effect that will occur at the 14th St. Bridge. VDOT's jurisdiction ends at the state line, however it is projected that 56% of the northbound traffic will continue across the unmodified two lane center span of the 14th Bridge where only a single lane is available to access the SE/SW Freeway (I-395). Despite being asked numerous times by me and others, VDOT is unable to effectively address the 3 to 1 lane merge and its impact on traffic flow, and it is doubtful that the District will welcome more single occupancy vehicles onto its already gridlocked streets any time soon.

Bottom Line:

While there are three HOT lanes on I-95 south of the Beltway, a large volume of northbound traffic bails out at the Beltway. In my judgment, VDOT has not made the case that the additional lane for I-395 inside the Beltway is needed. Given the significant construction requirements, serious safety impact and lack of coordination with District authorities on the 14th St. Bridge choke point, I strongly recommend that the project be scaled back to convert and maintain two smooth flowing HOT lanes on I-395 at the present time.

Sorry for the short fuse, but I wanted to make you aware and appreciate your consideration and support. FYI, I had a sidebar discussion with Sen. Ebbin on this as well.

Best regards,

Bob Gronenberg



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