I-81 Corridor Improvement Study

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Process Streamlining Agreement

- Signed by FHWA and VDOT November, 2003
- Identifies decisions
- Defines process

Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement

- Approved by FHWA November 28, 2005
- High-level assessment of I-81
- Identifies deficiencies along corridor
- Describes projected travel conditions in year 2035
- Serves as basis for informed decision making
- Six public hearings in April 2006

Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement

- Distributed to 17 state and federal agencies for comment
- Federally mandated 45 day comment period
- Extended comment period by 2 additional months
- Accepted comments past the extension

Future Transportation Needs

- 2004 traffic volumes to nearly double by 2035
- Truck traffic projected to grow faster than general traffic
- Over 90% of I-81 to operate below level of service standard in 2035

Potential Solutions

- No single, consistent solution satisfies future need without providing excess capacity
- With excess capacity comes excess impacts.
- Varying number of lanes most efficiently addresses capacity needs
- Nearly all of the corridor needs additional capacity by 2035.
- 37% of I-81 requires an additional lane in each direction; remaining sections need more than one lane

Study Assumptions

- Horizon year – 2035
- All programmed improvements in place
- No rail improvements outside of Virginia assumed
- Freight diversion to rail is consistent with previous studies – 3.5%

Tolling

- In 2003, FHWA granted VDOT "conditional provisional acceptance" of I-81 Tolling Application under TEA-21
- Several conditions have been met through the Corridor Improvement Study
- The Tier 1 DEIS supports further exploration of tolling as part of a long term solution on I-81

Tolling, continued

- Commercial truck VMT is among the fastest growing VMT but it is a segmented, highly complex industry
- Long haul carriers are more likely to use a road with tolls when there are clear productivity advantages – travel time, safety, reliability

Tolling, continued

Traffic diversions from I-81 due to tolls would be relatively low regardless of the range of toll rates assumed:

- Low tolls ($.08/mile/car and $.04/mile/axle/truck) – approx. 10%
- High tolls ($.14/mile/car and $.07/mile/axle/truck) – approx. 12%

The most diversion occurs in the southern portion of the corridor

Recommendations

VDOT finalize Tier 1 study to:

- Improve the existing roadway
- Pursue the ongoing toll pilot under Section 1216(b) of TEA-21

Recommendations

The preferred concept shall:

- Consist of not more than one or two lanes in each direction in order to address 2035 capacity needs
- Provide general purpose lanes

Recommendations

Corridor improvements will be implemented using:

- Eight logical corridor segments
- Type of Tier 2 NEPA documents identified in the Tier 1 FEIS

Recommendations

- Rail improvements to be studied independent of the NEPA process
- DRPT and the Commonwealth's Multimodal Office, will conduct a study of potential multistate rail improvements:
  - to support future freight movements
  - in consultation with rail interests
- Expedite short term rail improvements
- Consider additional resources to support long term improvements in the I-81 corridor

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