Coalfi elds Expressway, Sections I and II

Thank you for attending tonight’s Location Public Hearing. The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), is evaluating changes to the location of Section I and Section II of the proposed Coalfields Expressway (CFX, U.S. Route 121).

The purpose of tonight’s meeting is:

- To receive citizen comments on the changes to the location of Section I and Section II of the proposed Coalfields Expressway and the Environmental Assessment completed for Section II.
- To share information on the study process and its current status.

Please take the time to examine the information, ask questions, and provide any comments or suggestions you may have. Your input is needed as part of the environmental review process and it is important.

Comment sheets are available for written comments and may be submitted tonight or by postal or electronic mail after the meeting until August 24, 2012. A VDOT representative is also available to record your comments orally. All comments received will be reviewed and considered by the project study team.

Thank you for attending.
PROJECT HISTORY

- The National Highway System Designation Act of 1995 designated the Coalfields Expressway (CFX) as a congressional High Priority Corridor and included it in the National Highway System.
- In 1998, Congress approved the Transportation Efficiency Act for the Twenty-First Century (TEA-21), which appropriated an additional $1 million for the planning and design of the CFX in Virginia.
- The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) for the CFX were completed in 2001. The ROD identified Alternative F1 as the selected alternative and noted that the project would be designed and constructed in numerous phases.
- Under provisions of the Virginia Public-Private Transportation Act (PPTA), VDOT’s PPTA private partners have proposed revisions to Alternative F1.
- An environmental revaluation has been completed for the changes to CFX Section I and an Environmental Assessment has been prepared to serve as a reevaluation of the FEIS as it pertains to Section II of the CFX.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of constructing the CFX is to address the following needs:

- Improve mobility and safety.
- Support economic development, including tourism.
- Satisfy Congressional initiatives.
DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ROADWAY – SECTION I

The proposed alignment of the PPTA Alternative and Alternative F1 are shown in the figure below, along with a typical cross-section of the proposed roadway. The PPTA Alternative is similar to Alternative F1; however, some shifts are proposed to provide a somewhat straighter alignment and to connect with the nearby Route 83 east of the Town of Pound.
Section II of the CFX is approximately 26 miles long and extends from the east end of Section I near its connection with Route 83 in Wise County to the proposed Route 460 Connector in Buchanan County (where CFX IIIA begins). The CFX would be a four-lane, limited access primary highway and it would be designated as U.S. Route 121. The typical cross-section for the new roadway and the alignments of Alternative F1 and the PPTA Alternative are shown below.

- The PPTA Alternative shifts the proposed CFXII alignment as much as two to three miles.
- The PPTA Alternative is still within the study area considered in the FEIS and crosses similar terrain and involves substantially similar environmental and social conditions as the selected Alternative F1 while also providing a somewhat straighter alignment.
- Shifting the alignment would reduce costs approximately 45% compared to VDOT’s traditional design-bid-build process.
### SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES - SECTION I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESOURCE</th>
<th>REMARKS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traffic / Transportation</td>
<td>The traffic forecast update shows approximately 70% increase in average daily traffic volumes by new design year of 2035 over volumes reported in FEIS for 2020 (from 3,100 to 5,000 vehicles/day).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relocations</td>
<td>The FEIS reported an estimated 7 residential relocations for Alternative F1 within the corridor corresponding to the modifications assessed in the Reevaluation (i.e., Segment 159 and a portion of Segment 118A in the selected corridor and a portion of Segment 150 in Alternatives A and C). An estimate of 25 residential relocations has been developed for the PPTA Alternative. While an exact estimate of the number of relocations cannot be made until more detailed design work is completed, it is expected that many of the homes and other buildings in the vicinity of the east end of the project can be avoided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise</td>
<td>As in the original analysis presented in the FEIS, the results of the current analysis indicate that future build-condition noise levels outside the proposed construction limits would not approach or exceed the FHWA noise abatement criterion of 67 dBA. Therefore, no noise impacts are expected under this criterion. A detailed noise analysis will be performed during the final design phase of the project using final engineering specifics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Quality</td>
<td>The project is located in an area that is in attainment of all NAAQS. While forecasted traffic volumes have increased due to extension of the design year farther into the future, the increases are not substantial enough to meaningfully change the air analysis results from the FEIS. Mobile source air toxics (MSATs) were not evaluated in the FEIS. Based on FHWA’s 2006 Interim Guidance on Air Toxic Analysis in NEPA Documents, the project is of a type that would have low potential for mobile source air toxics effects. On a regional basis, EPA’s vehicle and fuel regulations, coupled with fleet turnover, will over time cause substantial reductions that, in almost all cases, will cause region-wide mobile source air toxics to be significantly lower than they are today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatened and Endangered Species</td>
<td>No impacts to federally listed threatened or endangered species are anticipated.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Surface Waters</td>
<td>The FEIS reported approximately 1,900 linear feet of stream impacts within segments corresponding to Section I of the Coalfields Expressway. The analysis for this Reevaluation indicates that approximately 9,400 linear feet of perennial and intermittent streams and approximately 700 linear feet of ephemeral channels would be impacted by the project. During the detailed design phase, efforts will be made to reduce stream impacts to the extent practicable. Precise calculations of impacts to waters of the U.S. will be made during the permitting stage of this project. Further, compensatory mitigation measures will be developed in consultation with the permitting agencies to offset unavoidable impacts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wetlands</td>
<td>The FEIS reported no wetland impacts within segments corresponding to Section I of the Coalfields Expressway. The analysis for this Reevaluation indicates that approximately 3.6 acres of wetlands would be impacted by the project. This increase can be attributed in part to the more-intensive field identification efforts employed for the Reevaluation as compared with those for the original studies, which encompassed a much larger area and multiple alternatives. Much of the alignment generally follows the path of the original selected alternative, or another alternative that was evaluated in the FEIS but not selected. As the design process proceeds, additional efforts will be undertaken to reduce the wetland impacts to the smallest amount practicable. All unavoidable impacts will be offset by compensatory mitigation to be developed in consultation with federal and state water quality permitting agencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazardous Waste Sites</td>
<td>A review of Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy databases reveals one inactive coal mine, #12704AA1, in the south central portion of the study corridor. It is possible that other abandoned coal mines or prospects exist in the area. A former surface strip mine operation owned by the Curts Coal Company is located outside the project corridor; however, it is in the general area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Parklands</td>
<td>No publicly owned parks or recreation areas would be affected by the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 4(f) Evaluation</td>
<td>The project would not require the use of any Section 4(f) properties (public parks or recreation areas, historic properties, or wildlife refuges).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenic Byway</td>
<td>Route 23 is a designated Scenic Byway and VDCR requests that the integrity of the scenic corridor should be maintained and recommends landscaping enhancements at the intersection to mitigate construction impacts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historic and Archaeological Resources</td>
<td>No historic properties would be affected by the project.</td>
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Coalfi elds Expressway, Sections I and II  

SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES - SECTION II  

**Land Use**  
The much of the land within the study area is unhabited due to the terrain. Residential and commercial activities generally are clustered along existing roads. Although the PPTA Alternative shifts most of the alignment away from the original selected Alternative F1 corridor, the land uses that would be converted to highway right-of-way are similar in character within the two alternatives.

**Environmental Justice**  
Analysis of census data did not reveal any minority populations or low income populations in concentrations higher than their respective counties. Therefore, there are no Environmental Justice populations that would be disproportionately affected by the project.

**Relocations**  
The PPTA Alternative would require approximately 53 relocations. The comparable section of Alternative F1 was estimated to have 95 relocations.

**Visual and Aesthetics**  
The study area is characterized by steep valleys and ridges which are primarily forested. Viewsheds are limited due to the rugged terrain and winding valleys. While the locations of visual effects would be different under the PPTA Alternative as compared to Alternative F1, the character of the effects would be substantially similar.

**Topography, Geology, Soils, Mines and Minerals**  
Designs would take into account the mountainous terrain. Under the PPTA Alternative, through the agreement with the PPTA partners, much of the alignment will have been mined and left graded in preparation for the expressway infrastructure. Coal seams can produce low levels of acid drainage which can prematurely degrade infrastructure.

**Flannagan Reservoir**  
According to the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (VDCR) online database, there are no lands located in the project vicinity for either alternative. None of the sites located within the project area and disposed of according to regulations.

**Air Quality**  
The results of air quality modeling done for the FEIS show that no violations of National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) are expected. Since the area and expected use of the facility have not changed, and since the updated traffic volumes are well below the threshold for consideration of quantitative analyses of carbon monoxide and other pollutants, the project is not expected to interfere with the attainment or maintenance of the NAAQS.

**Farmlands**  
According to the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (VDCR) online database, there are no lands located in the project vicinity that are considered Virginia Outdoors Foundation resources.

**Waters of the U.S.**, including Wetlands  
Surface waters in the study area consist of two rivers, named streams, unnamed tributaries, wetlands, and ponds. These comprise approximately 63,624 linear feet of streams and 34.53 acres of wetland.

**Habitat and Wildlife**  
Primary impacts to wildlife would be the elimination of habitat and the displacement of wildlife utilizing such habitat. The new road would also contribute to fragmentation of wildlife habitat and potential interruption of wildlife movements. Other impacts may occur in the form of road kills as animals migrate or wander across the roadway in search of food and cover. This project would result in the impact of less than one half of one percent of the forest in Dickenson and Buchanan Counties.

**Turbid Areas**  
Turbid areas would include the project areas and adjacent riparian zone. The two main sources of turbid area are surface run-off and exposed areas of borrow during construction.

**Soils, Mines and Minerals**  
Seams can produce low levels of acid drainage which can prematurely degrade infrastructure. Much of the alignment will have been mined and left graded in preparation for the expressway infrastructure.

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## SCHEDULE & NEXT STEPS

### SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 8, 2009</td>
<td>FHWA approved the Reevaluation for Section I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 13, 2012</td>
<td>Environmental Assessment approved by FHWA for public availability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 13 and 14, 2012</td>
<td>Public Hearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 24, 2012</td>
<td>Final day to submit comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2012</td>
<td>Location decision by the Commonwealth Transportation Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2012</td>
<td>Environmental Assessment revised, as appropriate, based on hearing comments and CTB decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2012</td>
<td>Final decision on the Environmental Assessment by FHWA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Next Steps

The study team will review and evaluate the comments you provide to us tonight and during the comment period. The comments, along with other information developed during the study, will then be submitted to the Commonwealth Transportation Board for consideration in reaching a decision on the PPTA Alternative. Following the public availability period, the Environmental Assessment (EA) for Section II will be revised as appropriate to reflect changes in the proposed action or mitigation measures resulting from comments received on the EA or at the public hearing. It will then be submitted to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), along with a copy of the public hearing transcript, the recommendation of the preferred alternative, and a request that a final decision be made by FHWA.

Estimated start dates for right-of-way acquisition and construction are shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Right-of-Way</th>
<th>Section I</th>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
<th>Section II</th>
<th>Summer 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Fall 2014</td>
<td>Summer 2014</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Thank You!

Thank you for taking the time to review the materials presented at this public hearing.

Your comments are valuable and greatly appreciated. VDOT will carefully consider all comments received at this public hearing and during the comment period.

You may leave your comments in the box provided at tonight’s meeting. You may also record your comments orally at the designated recording station.

If you are not ready to provide your comments tonight, you may submit them by August 24, 2012 to the following address, which is also preprinted on the back of the comment sheet:

Mr. Michael Russell, P.E.
District Administrator
Virginia Department of Transportation
870 Bonham Road
Bristol, Virginia 24201

You also can submit comments by email to:

Bristolinfo@VDOT.Virginia.gov

Please reference “Coalfi elds Expressway Public Hearing Comment” in the subject line.