



NEWS RELEASE

VirginiaDOT.org

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INTERSTATE 81 EXIT 19 SAFETY PROJECT COMING SOON *Project begins in late September/early October*

Bristol, VA – In the coming weeks, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and Contractor Boring Contractors, Inc., based in Abingdon, will begin a project to improve safety at Interstate 81 exit 19 in Abingdon.

The \$3.7 million construction project includes realigning a portion of Empire Drive; widening a curve along the southbound off ramp; and adding traffic signals at the intersection of newly aligned Empire Drive and Route 11, and where Route 11 intersects with the end of the exit 19 southbound ramps.

The project will also improve how traffic merges onto southbound I-81. Currently, there are two I-81 on ramps for motorists to access southbound I-81. The on ramp accessed from Route 11 south (toward Damascus) will be removed, and the I-81 southbound on ramp accessed from Route 11 north (toward Abingdon) will remain in place. Additionally, the acceleration lane onto I-81 southbound will be lengthened.

Periodic short-term lane closures will be necessary during construction. Motorists are advised to be alert to work zone signs forewarning of lane closures and other changes in the work zone.

Initially, motorists should be alert to flaggers and lane closures during daytime and nighttime hours along Empire Drive.

The project is anticipated to finish summer 2022.

The exit 19 improvements are part of VDOT's Smart SCALE program, created to prioritize transportation projects statewide. The project is valued at approximately \$7 million, including design, right of way and construction.

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