

7 RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

As part of the development of context-sensitive solutions, input from the general public, special interest groups, governmental agencies, and other stakeholders during the public involvement phase of the study suggested that to “do nothing” was not a feasible option for I-66. Instead, a wide range of multimodal options should be considered. The technical evaluation included in Chapter 6 of this report indicated that no one concept alone would provide complete relief to the congestion problems within the I-66 corridor inside the Beltway, due to the growth in demand that is projected at all regional activity centers served by the corridor. However, in combination, there are feasible improvements that could help meet the problems identified during this feasibility study. The concept that was demonstrated to be the most responsive to the needs contained in the study’s problem statement was actually a combination of Roadway Widening with a new managed lane. The new managed lane could be used for HOV, HOT lanes, and/or express buses. This concept could be accommodated within the existing right-of-way and, with an estimated construction cost of \$112 to \$233 million (depending on the managed lane), is felt not to be cost prohibitive.

In addition to the recommended concepts for additional study, the interim improvements that can occur with minimal impact are also recommended for evaluation to address spot problems and geometric deficiencies. These interim improvements, which would involve less capital expenditures, may include improvements to existing signing, review of Transportation Management System (TMS) locations and messages, review and implementation of enforcement areas on I-66 westbound, review of horizontal and vertical alignments to improve safety, optimization of signalization of parallel routes, evaluation of existing ramp metering, and provision of a continuous 12-foot shoulder to be used only in the event of an emergency evacuation. Capital costs for these types of interim improvements are estimated to range from \$2 million for improved signage to approximately \$45 million for the continuous shoulder.

Additional studies will need to be conducted to further define the concepts. Detailed modeling will be required to determine which combination of managed lanes as well as the length of widening and which spot improvements are most beneficial. Detailed simulations can also help determine the effectiveness of TMS improvements such as signing and variable message signs as part of any managed lane concept. Regardless of these later decisions, the flexibility and additional westbound capacity afforded by the additional lane would provide for improved mobility to activity centers, safety, enforcement, and emergency response. Therefore, this general concept should be advanced for further detailed study as part of a Location Study in accordance with VDOT guidelines and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The detailed modeling (i.e., traffic simulation for the 6.5-mile segment) should be conducted as part of the NEPA study.

Additional coordination should be conducted with emergency response and emergency preparedness agencies to determine the most effective use of the facility for evacuation purposes. Additional capacity provided by the third lane will result in a positive benefit only if properly utilized during emergency situations.

The various transit concepts demonstrated improvements particularly at the regional level. Transit elements that can be incorporated as part of the recommended highway improvement, such as express bus service, dedicated busway, and BRT, should be considered as part of the highway NEPA study. The more capital-intensive transit improvements, such as Metrorail expansion, need to be investigated by the appropriate state and federal transit agencies.

Public involvement should continue to bridge the gap between the present Idea-66 Study and a possible environmental study. The Idea-66 Study Report should be circulated to the public through the project Web site, CDs, or hardcopy, and meetings held with stakeholders to explain the report. Any written comments received, either by mail or electronically, will be recorded and retained for consideration in moving forward to an environmental study.