

I-95 Richmond Bridge Restorations Project

Frequently Asked Questions



Upham Brook Bridge Overpass, I-95, Richmond, VA (Photo by VDOT)

Why is it necessary to restore these bridges?

According to the Federal Highway Administration, 25% of publicly-owned bridges in the United States are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. The Richmond bridges along I-95 are more than 50 years old. While they are safe, the traffic volume and weight they carry increases every year. It is imperative that we restore them to ensure the safety of our drivers for another 50 years or more.

How is this project different from other VDOT projects?

Prefabricating bridge elements offers major time savings. With traditional bridge construction, foundations for piers and abutments must be built first. Pier columns and caps must be built before beams and decks are placed. With prefabricated bridge elements, these components can be fabricated concurrently, and then shipped in as needed.

Prefabricating bridge elements also permits a more effective use of work time. Prefabricated elements are typically constructed off-site, so weather only affects the portion of the work done onsite. As a result, weather delays are less frequent. Since there is less disruption of traffic, fewer workers need to be exposed to traffic control.

What bridges will be restored?

The project will restore overpasses that cross the following secondary roads and waterway:

- Lombardy Street
- Overbrook Road
- Sherwood Avenue
- Robin Hood Road
- Hermitage Road
- I-95 over the Boulevard
- Ramp over the Boulevard
- Westwood Avenue
- Laburnum Avenue
- Upham Brook northbound (Henrico)
- Upham Brook southbound (Henrico)

Is VDOT planning to shut down I-95 completely at any time during the project?

No. Barring an accident, a weather-related event or the occasional moving of equipment, one travel lane will remain open on I-95 in each direction during construction. Except on infrequent construction weekends, I-95 traffic will return to its normal configuration during the day.



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Are the bridges safe to drive on?

Yes, the bridges are safe to drive on. The aim of the project is to keep them that way.

How will the four-year construction project impact traffic?

Using prefabricated elements minimizes construction-related traffic disruptions for commuters and other travelers. Shorter construction time ensures that lane closures are shorter in duration so traffic patterns can quickly return to normal.

Our goal is to complete the project with as little motorist inconvenience as possible. Much of the foundation restoration to the piers and abutments from 2010 through 2012 will be done during the day and will require occasional single lane closures under the bridges and on I-95. Periodic double lane closures will also be required on I-95 overnight and some weekends.

When beams and decks are replaced during the main construction phase – from October 2011 through fall 2014 – I-95 traffic will at times be reduced to one lane in each direction from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. On specified weekends, lanes may be closed from 8 p.m. Friday until 6 a.m. Monday. This allows the contractor to work around the clock to replace the bridges. By working at night and on infrequent weekends, we will impact fewer drivers and reduce motorist delays.

For real-time traffic information, call 511 or visit www.511virginia.org. For project updates, go to www.i95bridges.org, call 800-FOR-ROAD (800-367-7623) or follow @VaDot or @511centralva on Twitter.

How many vehicles use this section of I-95?

Up to 160,000 vehicles per day.

Will you be working on more than one bridge at a time?

We will during the foundation restoration phase through 2012, which will take place under the bridges and will require only occasional lane closures. During the main construction phase, however, we will only be working on one bridge at a time.

What happens if the bridge can't open in time for morning rush hour?

The contractor will be fined if the bridge isn't open by 6 a.m. on weekdays. If this happens, we'll activate VDOT's communications plan and contact local news, police, and other government entities about any potential disruption to the flow of traffic. Also, plans are in place to have detours ready for each bridge if an opening is delayed.

Why will most of the construction take place between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m.?

This is when I-95 has the least amount of traffic. Only about 17% of I-95 drivers use the road at this time. The schedule gives the contractor 10 hours to replace the bridge segments when the fewest travelers will be inconvenienced. Since there is less disruption of traffic, fewer workers need to be exposed to traffic control.

What if there's an accident on the bridge during construction or an emergency vehicle needs to get through?

Every effort will be made to keep at least one lane open for emergency use in addition to one travel lane in each direction for drivers. However, this may not always be possible. Our goal is to remove any vehicles that block the travel lanes as quickly as possible. Traffic in the work zone will be monitored by Virginia State Police.



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What is VDOT doing to ensure driver safety in the work zones during nighttime construction?

VDOT conducts safety inspections and evaluations of each work zone to anticipate traffic issues.

Will residents along I-95 hear construction noise during the nighttime hours?

Yes, there will be some noise during construction, but mostly secondary noise from equipment, trucks and construction vehicles.

Will VDOT be installing soundwalls to reduce traffic and construction noise?

No. We only install soundwalls when a new roadway is built or an existing road is widened following a comprehensive environmental study. No travel lanes will be added as part of this project.

How will VDOT communicate with the homeless people who live under the I-95 bridges?

The affected homeless were informed via flyers as well as through Homeward Virginia before any construction activity began under the bridge.

Should area businesses be concerned that VDOT will be encouraging drivers (potential customers) to use I-295 to avoid I-95 construction?

No. We considered the needs of local businesses when planning this project. Crews will only work during non-peak nighttime hours and throughout occasional weekends. No work will take place on major holidays. For truck drivers bypassing Richmond, I-295 will be a safer route to take.

How is VDOT going to communicate to drivers about this project?

Drivers will have a number of ways to get construction updates and avoid delays. They can call 800-FOR-ROAD (800-367-7623), visit i95bridges.org, or receive Twitter updates @VaDot and @511centralva. They can also call 511 for automated travel information while on the road. In addition, announcements will be made through TV, radio, internet, billboard and print advertising before and during major lane closures.

Why does VDOT have a public relations budget for this project?

This is a significant project that will last four years and affect thousands of people. Communication is critical to making this project work. Our goal is to communicate to drivers before they reach the work zone. The traditional methods of informing motorists of pending construction work cost little; these methods include press releases, open houses, and interviews. In many cases, however, these methods are inadequate to reach the members of the audience that will be most affected by the construction work. Effective options include paid commercial advertisements on drive-time radio, on television, on the web, and in local newspapers. We believe that keeping drivers safe and informed is well worth the investment.

How much will the project cost over the four-year period?

The most recent estimate puts total construction costs at \$106 million.* Although 80% of it is funded by federal dollars, none of it comes from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, also known as the federal stimulus package.

*Economic estimates developed by Chmura Economics & Analytics



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Why is VDOT spending \$106 million dollars on this project when state agencies are having to cut spending?

We simply cannot risk the safety of I-95 travelers. The existing bridges are more than 50 years old and are deteriorating. Prudence dictates that we proceed.

What percentage of the contract will go to minority sub-contractors?

Archer Western, the primary contractor, will sub-contract 6.02% of the work to minority businesses, exceeding the goal of 5% set by the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise.

How will the project impact the local economy?

According to an independent study, the project will directly generate around 160 new jobs annually in the city of Richmond and Henrico County over the course of the four-year project.

Beyond safety improvements, what other benefits will result from this project?

New construction technologies and materials, such as corrosion-resistant reinforcement, will extend the life of the bridges at least 50 years and will save Virginia taxpayers \$10 million or more in maintenance costs over the next half century.*

Why are you working on the bridges when there are roads that need paving and potholes that need repair?

Restoring the I-95 bridges is vitally important to driver safety and needs to be done now to address our aging infrastructure. We will continue to assess the road conditions and schedule maintenance accordingly.

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