

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is the Bowers Hill Interchange Improvements Study?

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) have initiated the Bowers Hill Interchange Improvements Study to evaluate potential improvements to the interchange where Interstate 664 (I-664), I-264, I-64, U.S. Route 460, U.S. Route 58, U.S. Route 13, and VA Route 191 (Jolliff Road) meet in the City of Chesapeake. The study has been expanded to include approximately seven miles of I-664 between the Bowers Hill Interchange and College Drive in the City of Suffolk. Considerations also include how the study area would interact with the planned and existing Express Lanes in the Hampton Roads region.

2. Was a Bowers Hill Interchange Improvements Study completed already?

In April 2019, FHWA issued the Bowers Hill Interchange Improvements Study Environmental Assessment (EA) which evaluated the potential impacts of a No-Build Alternative and two Build Alternatives. Under Alternative 1, there would be additional lanes and barrier separation of movements between U.S. Route 58, I-664, I-264, and I-64 at existing weave/merge conflict points within the main interchange area. Alternative 1 would retain much of the existing infrastructure and maintain all local access connections. Alternative 2 proposed a full interchange reconstruction. The improvements included braided ramps similar to Alternative 1; however, it would provide additional barrier separation of major movements by realigning NB I-664 within the main interchange area.

Since the publication of the EA, the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO), along with the Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission (HRTAC), VDOT and the FHWA, expanded the study parameters to include approximately seven additional miles of I-664. Given the expanded study area, additional environmental review is required to document analysis of possible social, historic and natural environmental impacts that could result from potential improvements.

The expanded study, to be conducted in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), is assumed to be a major infrastructure project and will require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The EIS will officially begin with FHWA publishing a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register. Currently, VDOT is conducting early planning activities that will allow VDOT and its partner agencies to collect data and agree upon the course for the study.

3. What is the difference between an Environmental Assessment (EA) and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)?

An EA determines whether or not a federal action has the potential to cause significant environmental effects. Federal agencies prepare an EIS if a proposed major federal action has the potential to significantly affect the quality of the human environment. The regulatory requirements for an EIS are more detailed and rigorous than the requirements for an EA. Due to the expanded study parameters, it is assumed the updated Bowers Hill Interchange Improvements study will be an EIS.

4. Why was the study area expanded?

In Summer 2020, HRTPO expanded the Bowers Hill Interchange Improvements Study area to fully assess the improvements needed to address the concerns in the Bowers Hill Interchange and as part of the regional transportation network. The expanded study area includes approximately seven miles along I-664 north to College Drive. The study would also evaluate how the study area would interact with planned and existing Express Lanes in the Hampton Roads region.

5. What is the Purpose and Need?

The Purpose and Need is a statement setting the goals for the study and serves as the primary criteria for comparison of potential alternatives. This statement provides the basis for the NEPA study, including which documents the transportation conditions FHWA and VDOT aim to identify and address. The Purpose and Need is used to determine the range of alternatives considered in an EIS.

The purpose of the Bowers Hill Interchange Improvements Study is to reduce congestion, improve travel reliability and provide additional travel choice on I-664 from and including the Bowers Hill Interchange to College Drive.

The following needs elements have been identified:

- Reduce Congestion
- Improve Travel Reliability
- Provide Additional Travel Choice

The Purpose and Need statement was concurred upon by the agencies that have joined VDOT/FHWA in the study in December 2020.

6. What are the concepts being presented?

VDOT has developed several preliminary concepts for the study area. These concepts provide a high-level view of potential improvements that will be refined into more detailed alternatives as the study progresses.

The preliminary concepts include improvements to the I-664 mainline as well as options for the Bowers Hill Interchange.

Concepts A and B add additional general purpose lanes to the I-664 Mainline. These concepts would be paired with the two options for the Bowers Hill Interchange carried forward from the Environmental Assessment (EA) completed in April 2019.

Concepts C and D add new Express Lanes to the I-664 Mainline. The Express lanes would continue through the Bowers Hill interchange.

Concept E explores Collector-Distributor lanes around interchanges to separate through traffic from collector-distributor lanes which would provide direct access to interchange on and off ramps

Concept F focuses on Transportation Systems Management and Travel Demand Management (TSM/TDM) improvements, which improvements would maximize the efficiency of the current transportation system or reduce the demand for travel on the system through low-cost improvements.

Concept G would focus solely on transit-only improvements as a standalone concept.

7. What are the next steps for the study?

After this Citizen Comment Opportunity, the public comments received in February and March of 2021 will be shared with the agencies involved in the study to inform agency concurrence on a range of concepts. Following agency concurrence on the range of concepts, the FHWA will publish a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register, which will formally initiate the NEPA study, anticipated to be an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). NOI only occurs once FHWA and VDOT have collected enough information to inform the formal decision to initiate the EIS. It is anticipated FHWA will issue NOI in May/June 2021. The range of concepts to be carried forward in the EIS will be identified in the NOI, which will be shared with the public for review.

Once the EIS has been initiated, VDOT will refine alternatives, assess impacts, identify the recommended preferred alternative, and evaluate potential impacts. FHWA and VDOT will share the Draft EIS and provide an opportunity for public input in Spring/Summer 2022.

Concurrently with the Draft EIS, VDOT will submit the joint permit application (JPA) for water quality permits and obtain other federal authorizations where applicable. The Final EIS, FHWA's Record of Decision (ROD), and issuance of applicable federal authorizations will be issued in Winter/Spring 2023 concluding the study. Once FHWA issues a Record of Decision (ROD) and federal authorizations are obtained, the Bowers Hill Interchange Improvements Study will be completed.

A detailed project schedule can be found on the presentation material boards available on the project website.

8. Who is involved in the study?

The Bowers Hill Interchange Improvements Study is being conducted in accordance with NEPA. The lead agencies, VDOT and FHWA, coordinate monthly with dozens of cooperating and participating federal, state and local agencies that are involved in the study, including U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO), Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission (HRTAC) and the surrounding localities.

9. How can the public provide input and stay informed on the study?

The public is invited to provide input on the study. Presentation materials will be available online as early as February 12, 2021 on the study website at bowershillinterchange.com and the video presentation will be online March 15, 2021. The public can also access the online survey to provide input on the preliminary concepts. Comments may also be submitted via email to bowershill@vdot.virginia.gov using subject line "Bowers Hill Interchange" or via letter mailed to Bowers Hill Interchange Improvements Study, 11827 Canon Blvd, Suite 402, Newport News, VA 23606. **Comments should be submitted or postmarked by March 25, 2021.**

The public can also check the website for regular study updates, and announcements on upcoming meetings. Study updates and meeting information will be emailed directly to those who sign up to receive the monthly study newsletter.