

SEMINARY ROAD HOV RAMP PROJECT PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING COMMENTS AND RESPONSES - DECEMBER 6, 2021

Comment Date	Source	ID#	Category	Comment	Name	Response
12/3/2021	Comment Form	211203.01	Design	Can there be native vegetation planned into the landscape and are there areas where shade trees can be added? Can shade trees be considered for others areas along 395 to reduce the heat island effect?	None Given	The proposed modification is to convert the existing HOV ramp to HOT. No changes to roadway vegetation are planned for this modification.
12/3/2021	Comment Form	211203.02	Support	Please convert the ramp from HOV to HOT	None Given	Comment noted.
12/6/2021	Email	211206.03	Traffic	<p>Hello! I would like to submit public comment for https://www.virginiadot.org/projects/northernvirginia/395_express.asp, as I do not have time to attend this meeting with a 2-month-old :)</p> <p>In a vacuum without knock-on effects, as an Alexandria resident who uses this bridge to get from west to east Alexandria for work and family, I would strongly prefer to not have to use the traffic lights to cross 395. I would hate to see local traffic so severely deprioritized over toll lanes, which are already given far too much accommodation in Northern Virginia.</p> <p>If, however, this project can be demonstrated to reduce traffic volume and/or speed on Seminary Road, it may be a net improvement. I can tell you I am regularly passed, with noticeable speed differential, while going 35mph over this bridge — and that the bridge's existence makes people see this whole section of Seminary Road (from Francis Hammond Middle School on the east side to Beaugard and beyond on the west side) as a major highway.</p> <p>In general, this intersection is already very weird and broken, and needs much more attention than toll lane considerations.</p> <p>Thank you for your time.</p>	Victoria Waskowicz	Under 2020 and 2040 Build scenarios with the south facing Seminary Road ramp converting from HOV to HOT, the following can be expected when compared to No-Build: Seminary Road HOT ramp volume will increase as toll-paying vehicles will now have this new access. I-395 northbound volumes for the General Purpose off-ramp to Seminary Road and southbound General Purpose on-ramp from Seminary Road will decrease during AM and PM, respectively. The data and analysis also suggest that the HOT ramp volume increase would include the shift of some volumes from the General Purpose ramp and traffic that was cutting through the local arterials because they did not have access to this ramp under the No-Build scenario. With the reduction in the General Purpose ramp volume, there will consequently be a reduction in the volumes along the Seminary Road rotary level that provides access to General Purpose ramps. During the AM peak, at this interchange, the Seminary Road westbound drivers that use local routes (cut-through traffic) along arterials in the City of Alexandria could take the Seminary Road HOT ramp, resulting in reduced westbound volumes from the City. Similarly, during the PM peak, at this interchange, the Seminary Road eastbound drivers cutting through the City's local arterials can take the HOT ramp, resulting in reduced eastbound volumes going into the City from the interchange.
12/6/2021	Email	211206.04	Traffic	<p>Thank you for the opportunity last week to discuss this proposed change in ramp operation. You helped me understand that my concern about the weave in the AM peak period westbound on Seminary Road for through traffic likely would actually be improved, rather than made worse.</p> <p>While I no longer have concerns about the weave mentioned above, I remain concerned that much is in flux that might impact this ramp. With major changes coming to Mark Center and Skyline (with hundreds of thousands of square feet of office being converted to residential use), and with Seminary Road under study by the City, I would think it wiser to wait and see how uses and traffic settle out over a few years.</p> <p>Mostly, my concern remains that adding any non-HOV traffic to the Express Lanes reduces their attractiveness for HOV and transit use, if speeds in those lanes are reduced by the additional HOT traffic. My concern might disappear if VDOT were to conduct a good before-and-after study of the Express Lanes, to see what speeds truly are, and whether HOV and transit usage are up, down, or unchanged. The lanes have been opened for two years, though the pandemic has undoubtedly affected their use, as it has our transport systems in general. I trust VDOT to determine when would be the right time to develop the data on the Express Lanes in the "after" condition. Such data might well support the ramp's operational change, or advise against it. But I think it useful to know those answers in order to provide the best guidance for the decision.</p>	Owen Curtis	<p>Based on the results of our study, we have concluded that it is important to implement the ramp conversion now rather than in the future. The conversion of the HOV ramp at Seminary Road will provide additional travel options to the drivers in the region while not being detrimental to the freeway or arterial operations. It maintains the existing access options and utilizes the unused capacity on this ramp to provide new access to the toll-paying vehicles.</p> <p>The anticipated increase in peak hour volumes for the ramp for the 2040 scenario is approximately 200 vehicles. The analysis indicates that some of the single occupant vehicles would shift from using the General Purpose Lanes to using the Express Lanes. This would result in a slight reduction in the number of vehicles using the General Purpose lanes and the General Purpose ramps. The increase of 200 vehicles in the Express Lanes is not anticipated to have a negative impact on the attractiveness to HOV users of the I-395 Express Lanes.</p>
12/6/2021	PIM Meeting Chat	211206.05	Traffic	I apologize for getting on the call late. Can you please explain why VDOT and Transurban do not think opening this ramp to HOT traffic will increase local traffic on Seminary Road? The city is opposed to it and why is VDOT going against the city position? I am sure this was covered during the first part of the meeting that I missed.	Carter Flemming	<p>The current usage of the ramp is low. We estimate the ramp has a capacity of 1400 to 1600 vehicles per hour and is utilized by less than 300 vehicles per hour during the peak hours. It is important that we make use of the existing infrastructure. Based on our traffic studies, what we have shown was that it encourages greater use of the interstate network.</p> <p>With the implementation of the conversion, we anticipate a slight reduction in traffic on the General Purpose lanes and on local streets. Based on the results of the analysis, we anticipate that some of the vehicles that are currently taking The I-395 General Purpose lanes or cutting through local streets, will shift to the Express Lanes.</p>
12/6/2021	PIM Meeting Chat	211206.06	Traffic	Is there a threshold for increased traffic on Seminary Rd that would return the ramp to HOV?	Carolyn Griglione	There is no threshold per se. We are evaluating the change as part of a larger system. Our studies show that we are going to see the system be better utilized with more traffic on the Interstate. The primary goal of our study was to assess the impacts associated with the conversion of the ramp from HOV to Express. We found is that there are positive impacts associated with the conversion.

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12/6/2021	PIM Meeting Chat	211206.07	Traffic	When were the traffic studies for Seminary Road traffic done? Pre-covid, or during Covid?	Carter Flemming	These were all done pre-COVID.
12/6/2021	PIM Meeting Chat	211206.08	Outreach	So the city's opposition to the change has not had any impact on VDOT's decision? Has VDOT met with city staff regarding this change to hear their position?	Carter Flemming	We have coordinated the scope and study methodology with City staff. We met several times with City staff back prior to 2019. They reviewed our traffic studies and we addressed their comments. City staff provided input on the study area to be used in the study. We met with City representatives back in 2019 and then we have again coordinated with them and met during the fall of 2021.
12/6/2021	PIM Meeting Chat	211206.09	Outreach	<p>Thank you for hosting the meeting. And I was just trying to understand how the city's position against it was taken into account with the Transurban and VDOT decision to go forward with it.</p> <p>I know you're saying they made some suggestions about the study area and all, but it's my understanding anyway that the city is still opposed to this change. Is that incorrect or have the city changed their mind?</p>	Carter Flemming	<p>The City's position in 2012 was a preference for ramp operations that minimize traffic volumes. Back in 2012, we were projecting larger traffic volumes than what we are seeing on the ramp. The current counts taken by the new study indicates that we are well below the capacity of the ramp and much lower than what people thought would happen with the implementation of the Mark Center development. The current volumes are significantly lower than what the traffic analysts anticipated.</p> <p>City staff reviewed the VDOT study and indicated in a letter dated December 6, 2019, that, "Overall, we found the analysis methodology is consistent with good industry practice and there were no fatal flaws in the assumptions, projections or results." In a Memo from City Manager Mark Jinks to City Council dated November 15, 2021, Mr. Jinks notes that, "After reviewing the VDOT analysis, the City submitted a letter in 2019 stating the City position on the project which maintains the 2012 City position expressing a preference for ramp operations that minimize traffic volume traveling to and from Seminary Road east of I-395. In its review of the VDOT analysis, City staff concurred with the VDOT findings which found that converting the ramp to High Occupancy Toll (HOT) has minimal impacts within the City of Alexandria borders."</p>
12/6/2021	Comment Form	211206.10	Traffic	This is just a cashgrab by Transurban and VDOT is more than willing to oblige. Traffic is due to get much worse in the next few years with the Landmark improvements planned and cutting off access to 395 will make the Duke street exit a nightmare.	Santiago Gasco	<p>Under 2020 and 2040 Build scenarios with the south facing Seminary Road ramp converting from HOV to HOT, the following can be expected when compared to No-Build:</p> <p>Seminary Road HOT ramp volume will increase as toll-paying vehicles will now have this new access. I-395 northbound volumes for the General Purpose off-ramp to Seminary Road and southbound General Purpose on-ramp from Seminary Road will decrease during AM and PM, respectively. The data and analysis also suggest that the HOT ramp volume increase would include the shift of some volumes from the General Purpose ramp and traffic that was cutting through the local arterials because they did not have access to this ramp under the No-Build scenario. With the reduction in the General Purpose ramp volume, there will consequently be a reduction in the volumes along the Seminary Road rotary level that provides access to General Purpose ramps. During the AM peak, at this interchange, the Seminary Road westbound drivers that use local routes (cut-through traffic) along arterials in the City of Alexandria could take the Seminary Road HOT ramp, resulting in reduced westbound volumes from the City. Similarly, during the PM peak, at this interchange, the Seminary Road eastbound drivers cutting through the City's local arterials can take the HOT ramp, resulting in reduced eastbound volumes going into the City from the interchange.</p>
12/7/2021	Email	211207.11	Support	Hell yes! I've never seen a HOV vehicle use it. Open it and I'll use it, guaranteed.	V. Careatti	Comment noted.
12/7/2021	Email	211207.12	Support	I strongly support allowing HOT access. It's crazy that one cannot get on the HOT lanes at Little River Turnpike with the reconfiguration of its on ramps making one have to go a long way down 395 to get on.	Mark	Comment noted.
12/7/2021	Email	211207.13	Support	I would be in favor of the change. More options for drivers is better. I would just change the signs and make the change as soon as possible. It would be better for commuters and travelers.	Chris	Comment noted.

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12/8/2021	Email	211208.14	Design	The Interstate 395 Seminary Rd HOV-only ramp should have been converted to a HOT Express Lanes ramp when the 395 Express Lanes originally opened back in late 2019. It should work like the traditional HOT lanes where those who can use the lanes for free can continue to do so. It does not impact any existing right of way and does not require any additional construction since all of that is taken care of when converting the HOV lanes to HOT Express Lanes. It should encourage the use of the Express Lanes to the Seminary Rd destinations instead of forcing non-HOV 3 to exit the Express Lanes just north of Edsall Rd just to access Seminary Rd.	Ethan Cua	Comment noted.
12/8/2021	Email	211209.15	Support / Design	Please convert to HOT lanes. Make this ramp consistent with other access points.	Kristine Metter	Comment noted.