

PROJECT UPDATES

# MEGAPROJECTS



*Pictured: I-66 at Route 50 Interchange*





## 95 Express Lanes Opitz Boulevard Ramp

This project is constructing a south-facing, reversible ramp between the 95 Express Lanes and an expanded Opitz Boulevard (Route 2000) bridge. The ramp will be built in the existing median between the southbound I-95 general purpose lanes and the 95 Express Lanes. In addition, the existing slip ramp from the southbound I-95 general purpose lanes to the southbound 95 Express Lanes just beyond Opitz Boulevard will be relocated to just south of the Dale Boulevard (Route 784) interchange. Construction began in fall 2022. The slip ramp relocation is scheduled to occur in late 2023/early 2024, followed by the new ramp opening in fall 2024.

Estimated cost: \$69.7 million

## 495 Express Lanes Northern Extension

In its second year of construction as of March 2023, work continues to advance on the 495 Express Lanes Northern Extension (495 NEXT) project. This initiative will reduce congestion and provide more reliable travel, improve safety and minimize cut-through traffic in residential communities, and support new transit services. The 495 NEXT project includes:

- Building an approximately two-and-a-half-mile extension of the 495 Express Lanes from near the Dulles Corridor to the George Washington Memorial Parkway
- Creating additional express lanes access at the Dulles Toll Road and Dulles Access Road interchange, and the George Washington Memorial Parkway interchange
- Constructing new bridges to replace existing I-495 crossings to include sidewalks and trail connections for bicyclists and pedestrians
- Adding four miles of new bicycle and pedestrian facilities including a path that is parallel to I-495
- Incorporating accommodations for extensions to tie into a future, new American Legion Bridge
- Providing funding for new American Legion Bridge bus service connecting Virginia and Maryland

VDOT is working with Transurban on the 495 NEXT project, with Transurban responsible for the project's financing, design, construction, maintenance and operations. Financial close was reached on February 28, 2022 with Transurban securing financing for the \$660 million project.

Construction activities are visibly underway throughout the corridor, with the new extended express lanes scheduled to open in late 2025 and final project completion occurring in 2026.

## I-66 Outside the Beltway

The 66 Express lanes Outside the Beltway from I-495 (the Capital Beltway) to University Boulevard at Route 29 in Gainesville opened ahead of schedule in 2022. The westernmost section of the lanes opened in September 2022, followed by the remainder of the corridor in November 2022.

The overall I-66 Outside the Beltway project is one of the nation's largest public-private partnership projects, as well as one of the Commonwealth's largest highway improvement initiatives. The 22.5-mile stretch of express lanes and other project improvements have transformed I-66 into an expanded, multimodal facility with new choices and enhancements already benefitting the nearly 200,000 vehicles traveling on I-66 each day in its busiest areas.

As of August 2023, more than 1 million trips have occurred every month on the 66 Express Lanes Outside the Beltway, with an average of 7,300 high occupancy vehicle toll-free trips each day and 1,200 toll-free transit bus trips per day on weekdays. There has been time savings for users on both the express and general purpose lanes.

The 66 Express Lanes provide direct connections at major interchanges that have been rebuilt along the I-66 corridor including Route 28, Route 50, Route 123, and I-495, as well as first-time connections to the Vienna-Fairfax/GMU Metrorail Station. New ramps also allow access between the express lanes and new commuter parking lots (built as part of the project) at University Boulevard in Gainesville and Century Park Drive in Manassas.

Additionally, the project is providing new and expanded commuter bus service along the I-66 corridor operated by Fairfax County's Connector and Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission's Omniride, adding new access to employment and activity centers in Washington, D.C. and across Northern Virginia.

Other important milestones achieved in 2023 include opening the first sections of the 66 Parallel Trail in Vienna and Oakton. In total, the project is completing 11 miles of new shared-use path that will comprise the backbone of the 66 Parallel Trail

between Dunn Loring and Centreville in Fairfax County. Trail sections will continue to open through 2023.

Final project elements are scheduled to be completed in 2023.

VDOT is working with I-66 Express Mobility Partners (EMP), a consortium of private developers Cintra, Meridiam and APG, under a 50-year agreement signed in November 2016, with EMP responsible for the project's financing, design, construction, maintenance and operations. I-66 Express Mobility Partners is providing approximately \$3.7 billion worth of project benefits including \$2.3 billion for design and construction costs, \$500 million for immediate transportation needs adjacent to the I-66 corridor, \$800 million over the 50-year agreement for transit service in the corridor, and \$350 million in future payments for additional projects in the I-66 corridor.

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## 495 Southside Express Lanes Study

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VDOT, in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and other federal, state, and local agencies in Virginia and Maryland, is conducting an environmental study, to evaluate transportation improvements for the 11-mile southern section of I-495 (Capital Beltway), from the Springfield interchange (I-95/I-395/I-495) in Fairfax County, across the Woodrow Wilson Memorial Bridge, to the MD 210 interchange in Prince George's County, Maryland.

This study is evaluating transportation improvements that would potentially extend and provide continuity of the express lanes system on I-495, provide additional travel choices, reduce congestion, improve travel reliability, enhance safety, and provide consistency with local and regional plans.

The 495 Southside Study was identified in the Commonwealth Transportation Board's adopted I-95 Corridor Improvement Plan as an area for additional study and is included in VDOT's current Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP), as well as in the National Capital Region's Visualize 2045 Constrained Long Range Plan (CLRP) as of June 2021.

This study is being coordinated with and informed by a Transit and Transportation Demand Management Study completed by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) in 2023 and coordinated with Maryland.

Improvement options under consideration for 495 Southside would keep commitments made to preserve space across the

Woodrow Wilson Memorial Bridge for transit (HOV/express bus/rail transit lane) in the future.

Public information meetings were held in spring 2022 in Virginia and Maryland, and additional information meetings are scheduled for fall 2023 to provide in-progress study updates and seek input. Recommendations from the 495 Southside Study will be presented at public hearings anticipated to occur in summer 2024, with completion of the study scheduled in late 2024.

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## I-95 Bi-Directional Study

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VDOT is conducting a feasibility study to add capacity and 24/7 reversible tolling on the 95 Express Lanes south of the Franconia-Springfield Parkway. The 95 Express Lanes are reversible and currently switch directions depending on time of day. Project development, environmental study, and procurement scopes and timelines are under development. VDOT is working on this initiative with Transurban, the private operator of the 95 Express Lanes.