

# VIRGINIA BEACH VISION

## **Statement of Position Midtown Tunnel Contract Adopted on April 16, 2012**

Virginia Beach Vision, representing 120 business and community leaders, asks the Commonwealth of Virginia and our elected representatives to uphold the contract with Elizabeth River Crossings (ERC) for the Midtown Tunnel, Downtown Tunnel and Martin Luther King Highway Extension project (tunnel project).

The tunnel project was ranked by the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission as the region's highest priority based on project utility to the region, regional economic gain and the ability to complete. This project will reduce significant congestion at these tunnels that are already carrying 130,000 vehicles and experiencing 5 mile backups each way on a regular basis. The Midtown Tunnel has been deemed the most congested two lane facility east of the Mississippi, a distinction that does not speak well for our transportation system.

Were the Commonwealth to terminate the existing ERC contract, it is likely another viable plan to expand the Elizabeth River crossings will be 10 or more years into the future. With facility traffic projected to double in the next 10 to 15 years and with the expansion of the Panama Canal expected to grow shipping through the Port of Virginia, the tunnel facilities are evermore critical to our future economic prosperity. Further project delay will do significant damage to existing commerce, future growth, and to the overall quality of life throughout the region.

Though Virginia Beach Vision believes the ERC contract must be sustained, we caution that toll financing cannot and should not be the primary funding source for future transportation construction projects. As we have advocated in previous communications over the years, the Commonwealth must find a designated, sustainable and significant new source of revenue to support our transportation system.

*Virginia Beach Vision was founded in 1993 by a small assemblage of prominent business and civic leaders who saw the need for a non-partisan, issue-oriented group to provide private sector leadership that would create a vision and advance initiatives necessary to the City of Virginia Beach and the Hampton Roads region's future development, prosperity and quality of life. Today, Virginia Beach Vision's Board of Directors is comprised of 120 business and community leaders.*