



## **Statement of Position**

### **Route 460 Bypass Project, Commonwealth Connector**

**Statement of Position:** Virginia Beach Vision, Inc. supports plans to construct a limited access, interstate quality roadway parallel to the existing Route 460 corridor and believes its completion is a top priority for the Hampton Roads region. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Federal Highway Administration are encouraged to expedite the planned Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and permitting process so that this critical project can move forward to construction.

**Adopted by vote of the Virginia Beach Vision Board of Directors on February 11, 2014.**

**Background:** Since as early as 1999, Virginia Beach Vision has been on record supporting improvement to the Route 460 corridor to interstate quality from Bower's Hill to Petersburg as one of six priority regional projects in Hampton Roads. Despite strong regional support, inadequate funding options have precluded this project from moving forward until recently. In 2012 the Commonwealth Transportation Board approved a public-private proposal on a Design-Build-Finance structure for a parallel Route 460 interstate quality facility from US 460 Mobility Partners at a fixed cost of \$1.396 billion .

**Details:** The new Route 460 will stretch 55 miles from Prince George County to Suffolk and include seven interchanges to provide access to communities along the corridor. The new road will be financed through a combination of public dollars and tolls, while the existing Route 460 will remain free of tolls.

#### **Project Benefits:**

- **Improved travel safety and efficiency along the corridor** - The existing Route 460 corridor between I 295 and U.S. 58 has higher crash and fatality rates than other similar roadways in Virginia. By diverting long haul truck traffic from the existing roadway, removing many of the conflicts between turning and thru traffic on the existing road, and by being built to meet modern safety criteria, the new facility will significantly improve safety along the corridor
- **Generate short- and long-term jobs, attracts new business, and boosts tourism** - Traffic signals, access points and speed limit variations along the existing roadway hamper mobility and increase travel times. An improved corridor with travel speeds of 70 mph that links the Port of Virginia with two of the Commonwealth's largest employer areas will provide opportunities for major economic development in the region. Estimates suggest the project will generate 4,000 jobs during construction and 14,000 long-term jobs when the road opens.
- **Accommodates greater freight traffic from the expected growth at the Port of Virginia** - Port traffic to and from Hampton Roads is expected to grow when the expansion to the Panama

Canal opens. Moving the freight efficiently by road and rail is essential to attracting new shipping interests and the related distribution and manufacturing facilities to locating along the 460 corridor.

- **Expands the westbound hurricane evacuation routes** - The 460 project will provide an alternative to I 64 for evacuation of the Hampton Roads area, able to evacuate 153,000 citizens, bypass tunnel connectors and offering a westbound hurricane-evacuation route.
- **Enhance connections among the region's military installations** - Cited as a critical need by military commands.
- **The existing Route 460 will remain a free alternative to commuters** - The new facility will be tolled at 7 cents a mile for cars and 21 cents a mile for trucks. Travelers wishing to avoid the tolls will continue to have access to the existing Rt. 460 roadway.

**Project status:** The US Army Corps of Engineers has issued an Intent to prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Route 460 Location Study. The supplemental study is to evaluate the economic and social benefits of a new limited access 460, along with the evaluation of environmental affects. The Corps has indicated that the new alignment will impact 400 acres of wetlands. It is anticipated that the supplemental study will be completed within the next 6 months when it will be forwarded to the Council of Environmental Quality in Washington, DC for an additional 12 month review. Until that time, public hearings, right of way acquisition and construction have been suspended.