



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Steve Titunik 703.928.6569

July 22, 2008

www.VirginiaHOTlanes.com

HOT Lanes Construction Begins on the I-495 Beltway in Northern Virginia *Bringing new travel choices to motorists*

Federal, state and local leaders broke ground today on a \$1.4 billion public-private transportation project that will bring new travel choices to the I-495 Capital Beltway in Fairfax County. Construction is beginning on 14 miles of High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes – two new lanes in each direction – that will stretch from the Springfield Interchange to just north of the Dulles Toll Road.

The new lanes will provide the Beltway's first ever HOV network for carpools and vanpools and create opportunities for new bus services. Vehicles carrying three or more people and motorcycles will travel the new lanes for free while other motorists can opt to pay a toll to use the HOT lanes or continue to ride in the regular lanes for free. Variable toll prices will be used to ensure the HOT lanes are always free-flowing and provide faster, more reliable travel.

"We are connecting three of the most important travel corridors in the nation – I-95, I-66 and the Dulles Toll Road – that support our national security and nearly 30 percent of the state's population," said Virginia Transportation Secretary Pierce Homer. "By bringing HOV and future transit to the Beltway, the Commonwealth is ensuring more transportation choices than ever before to keep people moving on this heavily congested corridor."

U.S. Department of Transportation Deputy Secretary Thomas Barrett noted, "This project will bring the freedom of free-flowing lanes to one of the nation's most congested highways. Virginia continues to be a national leader in embracing innovative solutions to tackle congestion that are changing the way highway projects are financed and operated throughout the country."

In addition to the HOT lanes construction, 50 bridges and 10 interchanges will be rebuilt, and three new interchanges will be added at Jones Branch Drive, Westpark Drive and Route 29. The project will add new walking and bike paths, replace sound walls and build new sound walls to reduce noise impacts for surrounding neighborhoods.

"During construction, commuters may face challenges, but when completed we will have a Beltway that provides transportation choices for carpooling and bus service," said Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Gerald Connolly. "The County and VDOT will work with the community on strategies to keep motorists informed and offer them assistance and solutions for avoiding congestion-related impacts."

Construction and Traffic Management:

Construction will last five years, with this summer's work to include:

- Concrete barriers going up along the outside shoulders of the Beltway,
- Crews clearing land on VDOT right of way to make room for the new HOT lanes; and

- Workers preparing for construction along the entire project area, including work on interchanges and lane closures during non-peak hours.

The first outer two lanes will be completed in 2010. Then traffic will be shifted to the new lanes, so work on the inner two lanes can take place from 2009-2012. Bridges and overpasses along the corridor will be rebuilt and lengthened. The HOT lanes will open to traffic in 2013.

There will be no lane closures on the Beltway during rush-hours, weekends and holidays. Traffic management strategies that are underway include:

- an aggressive public outreach program allowing motorists to make informed travel decisions;
- helping employers set up alternative commute and telework programs for their employees;
- dedicating safety service patrols;
- re-timing traffic signals to ease delays;
- adding traffic cameras to spot accidents and dispatch assistance; and,
- coordinating efforts with state police, fire and rescue during emergencies.

Partnership:

The HOT lanes construction is a Commonwealth of Virginia project, with VDOT as the lead agency in collaboration with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and coordination with the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation and Fairfax County. Fluor-Transurban is the private partner.

The Beltway HOT lanes will be built under a \$1.4 billion private, federal and state funding partnership that includes \$409 million from the Commonwealth, \$349 million in private equity and \$1.1 billion from tolls paid by motorists to support bonds and loans. Under this partnership, VDOT will own and oversee the lanes, and Fluor-Transurban will build, operate and maintain them. Fluor-Transurban is investing funds to help pay for construction of the lanes, with tolls being the primary source of funding. Fluor-Transurban assumes the debt, the construction risks and operations and maintenance costs.

How HOT lanes will work:

HOT lanes are tolled lanes that operate alongside the existing highway lanes. Buses, carpools, motorcycles and emergency vehicles will have free access. Vehicles with fewer than three people can choose to pay a variable toll to use the HOT lanes, or they can ride in the general purpose lanes for free as they do today.

The HOT lanes will use an "open road" toll collection system – meaning no toll booths. HOT lane users will need a transponder to travel in the lanes. Electronic readers above the HOT lanes will read transponders. To keep vehicles moving at a reliable, steady speed, tolls will change according to traffic conditions. When traffic increases, tolls will go up. When traffic decreases, tolls will go down.

Commuter Solutions and Information during Construction:

Commuters can save frustration and stress by teleworking, carpooling, vanpooling and riding the bus. They can obtain information and assistance in finding their best options as well as sign up for project updates at www.virginiahotlanes.com. A project information line is also available at 1-877-495-VDOT.

END