

15. MISCELLANEOUS**A. MEETING WITH CONGRESSMAN RANDY FORBES**

I was contacted by Congressman Forbes' office last week regarding his interest in scheduling a meeting with the Board on Friday, October 19. He's planning to speak to the Franklin Rotary Club at lunch that day and wanted to meet with you all either before, or after, the Rotary meeting. Once you determine your preference (before or after lunch), a motion is required to continue your meeting until that time.

MOTION REQUIRED: A motion is required to continue your meeting until October 19 at a time TBD.

B. NOTICES

Attached for your reference please find copies of various notices.

C. INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE

Please find various items of incoming correspondence attached.

D. OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE

Please find various items of outgoing correspondence attached.

E. ARTICLES OF INTEREST

Please find copies of various newspaper articles attached for your reference.

Va. details where I-95 toll money

Priorities include improved interchange in Petersburg, safety upgrades in Richmond

BY PETER BACQUÉ
Richmond Times-Dispatch

Rebuilding the interchange of Interstate 95, Interstate 85 and U.S. 460 in Petersburg would be one of the state's top priorities if Virginia gets federal approval to put tolls on I-95.

Other top priority projects for use of the first six years of toll money would be repaving 76 lane-miles of I-95 mostly

south of Richmond, rebuilding four deficient bridges south of Richmond, and making safety improvements at I-95 and Interstate 64 in Richmond.

The state detailed its plans for the initial use of I-95 toll revenue in its application, released Monday, to the Federal Highway Administration. The toll program requires federal approval.

"These projects, critically needed in the aging and congested corridor, will make substantial improvements in travel times and reliability, safety and ride conditions," the Virginia Department of Transportation said in the toll-program application.

"Current funding is not able to keep up with the needs of the I-95 corridor," VDOT said. Over the next 25 years, VDOT said, I-95 will need \$12.2 billion in work while the agency expects to have only \$2.1 billion in state and federal funds.

Over the first six years, VDOT expects that the tolls will generate a total of \$250 million, for a net of \$155 million for the period after paying the toll system's upfront capital and operations and maintenance costs. Toll revenue available for I-95 improvements would increase once the initial costs are paid.

The tolls would have no end date. "It is VDOT's intent to continue collecting tolls

y would go

on I-95 in perpetuity, or as long as the funding is needed to reconstruct, rehabilitate, operate, maintain and/or improve I-95," the application said.

"We don't take putting tolls on I-95 lightly," said Michael Estes, VDOT's director of strategic initiatives, though "with tolling, we can fund the No. 1 priority" for the Tri-Cities' regional transportation planning agency: the I-95/I-85/U.S. 460 interchange improvements.

Toll revenue also would pay \$22.7 million for the replacement or rehabilitation of high-priority bridges: the Courland Road span over I-95 in Prince

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George County, the I-95 bridge over the Nottoway River in Sussex County, and the U.S. 301 and the Old Halifax Road bridges over I-95 in Greensville County.

Of the proposed repaving projects, seven would be in Chesterfield County, six would be in Prince George, four in Sussex, and one each in Henrico and Dinwiddie counties. Those projects would total \$42.6 million.

The toll revenue would free VDOT to use more of existing state and federal highway money on two projects to expand I-95's capacity — in Stafford County at the state Route 630 interchange, and between Fredericksburg and Garrisonville Road, Estes said.

The Commonwealth Transportation Board would have to approve the projects paid for by the toll revenue.

Under the state's I-95 toll plan, cars would pay \$4 and five-axle tractor-trailer trucks \$12 at a toll plaza located in Sussex near Emporia. The toll

would apply to vehicles traveling north and south.

By using electronic collection on "open-road" tolling lanes, travelers won't have to slow down to pay the fee, VDOT said.

The state's toll-program application noted that Sussex and nearby Emporia have some of the highest overall proportions of low-income residents and minorities in the highway corridor. In that area, local drivers are likely to use parallel U.S. 301 as an alternative to I-95, the application said, "thereby mitigating some of the effects of the tolls."

Seventeen local governments in the state have opposed the plan to place tolls on the highway. Nationally, drivers can use most of the interstate highway system toll-free.

A mainstay of public transportation funding, Virginia's gas tax has remained at 17.5 cents per gallon since 1986, and the General Assembly has rejected raising it.

I-95 carries about 40 percent of the interstate traffic in Virginia and has some of the worst congestion in the U.S.

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Roanoke County officials seek an answer to prayer

BY ANNIE McCALLUM
The Roanoke Times

ROANOKE — Roanoke County Board of Supervisors meetings soon could be off to a somewhat different start.

For months, county officials have grappled with the issue of prayer after the county's long-standing practice of opening meetings with an invocation came under scrutiny in May.

Now officials are poised to consider a nonsectarian prayer policy, potentially putting an end to a controversy involving a mix of religion and government. But as the county moves forward with what officials see as a possible solution, some are still unsettled by the pre-meeting prayers, including the Wisconsin-based group that made initial complaint to the county.

Roanoke County Attorney Paul Mahoney said last week that he has been working on a policy. A resolution establishing a policy regarding opening invocations is on the agenda for Tuesday's supervisors meeting.

Supervisors directed Mahoney to craft a nonsectarian prayer policy after reaching consensus last month following a lengthy and emotional meeting where more than 30 people spoke out about the issue, all but a handful asking officials to keep prayer.

Since then, the county has received another complaint from the Freedom From Religion Foundation. The group sent a letter Aug. 1 stating it was renewing its objection to sectarian prayer. Maho-

ney said the Freedom From Religion Foundation filed County's nonsectarian policy, which has successfully withstood a challenge in 4th U.S. Circuit, as well as information from supervisors that a local citizen submitted.

Richmond's City Council and the supervisors in Hanover County and Chesterfield County all lead with invocations. Policies in Richmond and Chesterfield call for nonsectarian prayers.

Alex Marshall, vice president of Secular Humanists of Roanoke, said he understands that a nonsectarian prayer policy will comply with the law, but he's still frustrated. Marshall sees his group as being overlooked and ignored.

"It's frustrating. It really is, when you hear public officials, elected officials, who in my mind are there to serve their entire constituency. They are not there to serve a certain section of their constituency," he said.

Susan Edwards, who organized the pro-prayer rally in July and has given supervisors information on possible prayer policy, is on the other side of the debate.

She said she's pleased with the supervisors' decision, though she is waiting to see what the policy will entail. She said she was glad that officials

didn't do away with prayer completely, which was the case recently in Henrico County when officials received a complaint from the Freedom From Religion Foundation and dropped invocations.

She also added she was encouraged by the number of people who turned out to voice their opinion, even those who do not agree with her position.

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