

COALITION FOR SMARTER GROWTH

PRESS RELEASE

Governor McDonnell's Top Priority Project – Route 460 Would Waste Billions of Dollars and Divert Scarce Revenues From Higher Priority Needs

For Immediate Release
February 14, 2011

Contact:

Stewart Schwartz: 703.599.6437

Governor McDonnell has touted Route 460 as his top priority transportation project and a key reason for his transportation borrowing and spending plan. “We’ve expressed strong concerns about the level of borrowing to be spent on billions in subsidies to private toll road builders,” said Stewart Schwartz, Executive Director of the Coalition for Smarter Growth. “Most wasteful of all of these projects is Route 460, which would consume at least \$782 million in state grants and \$491 million in subsidized state loans, with only 15% covered by the private contractor.” Even national toll road promoter Peter Samuel has questioned the viability of the project.ⁱ

Schwartz continued: “This \$1.5 billion – or higher -- project cannot be justified based on the traffic numbers and would divert scarce resources from much more critical needs in the traffic-choked areas of Virginia. Yet, the current transportation funding package would write a blank check to the Governor to proceed with projects like Route 460.”

\$1.8 Billion for Eight Minutes of Travel Time in 2026?

According to a study by the Virginia Department of Transportation,

“Future traffic volumes will result in increased travel delays on Route 460 due to capacity limitations at traffic signals and the lack of access control...Forecasted travel time increases from 71 minutes to 79 minutes from existing conditions to Year 2026.”ⁱⁱ



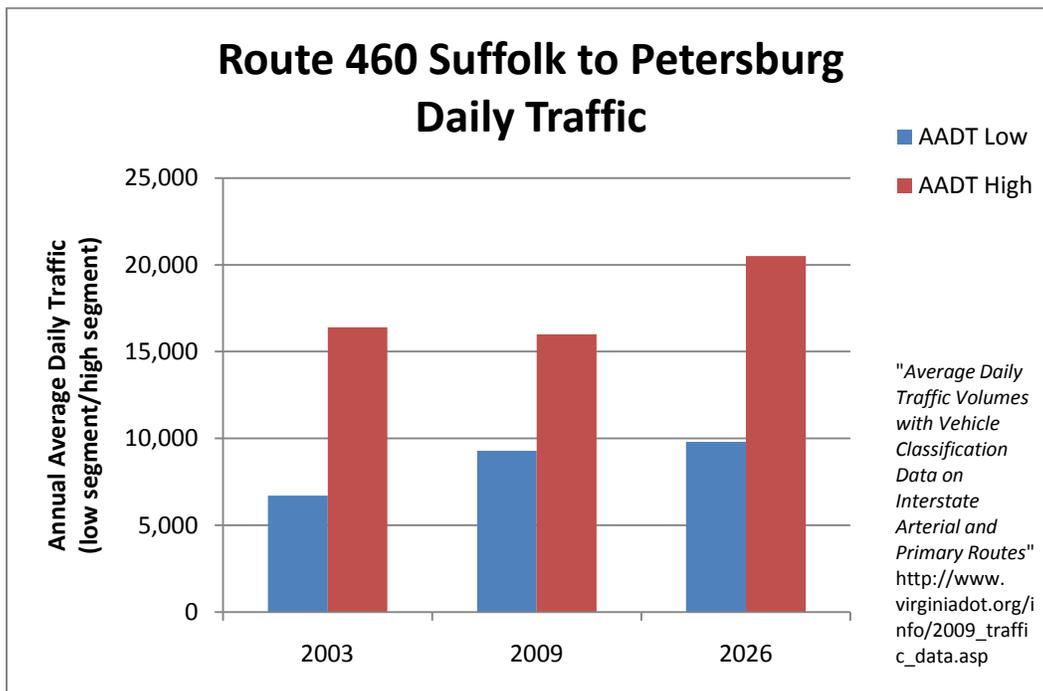
Rush hour on Route 460, Gov. McDonnell's top priority project. Image from VDOT.

Route 460 is proposed as a new 55-mile long limited access highway between Suffolk and Petersburg, south of the James River. An existing four-lane highway and Norfolk Southern's “Heartland Corridor” railroad currently traverse the distance. A review of the Environmental Impact Statement shows that the most significant delays are at traffic lights in the five small communities along the route. In terms of improving travel time performance and safety in

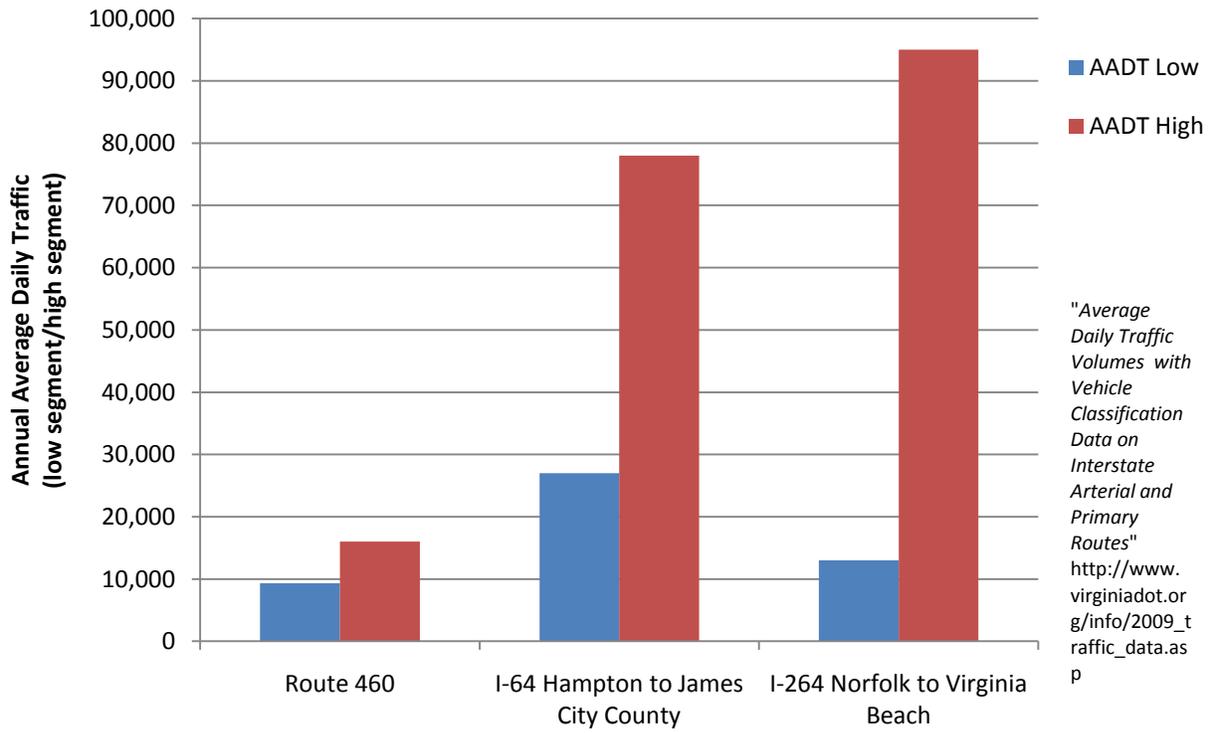
the corridor, roundabouts in lieu of traffic lights and local street networks for local traffic could be used to reduce the delays. In some cases small limited access bypasses (along with limits on adjoining development) could reduce delays at far less cost than an entirely new 55-mile long highway.

Let's Compare – Route 460 vs. Other Virginia Roadways

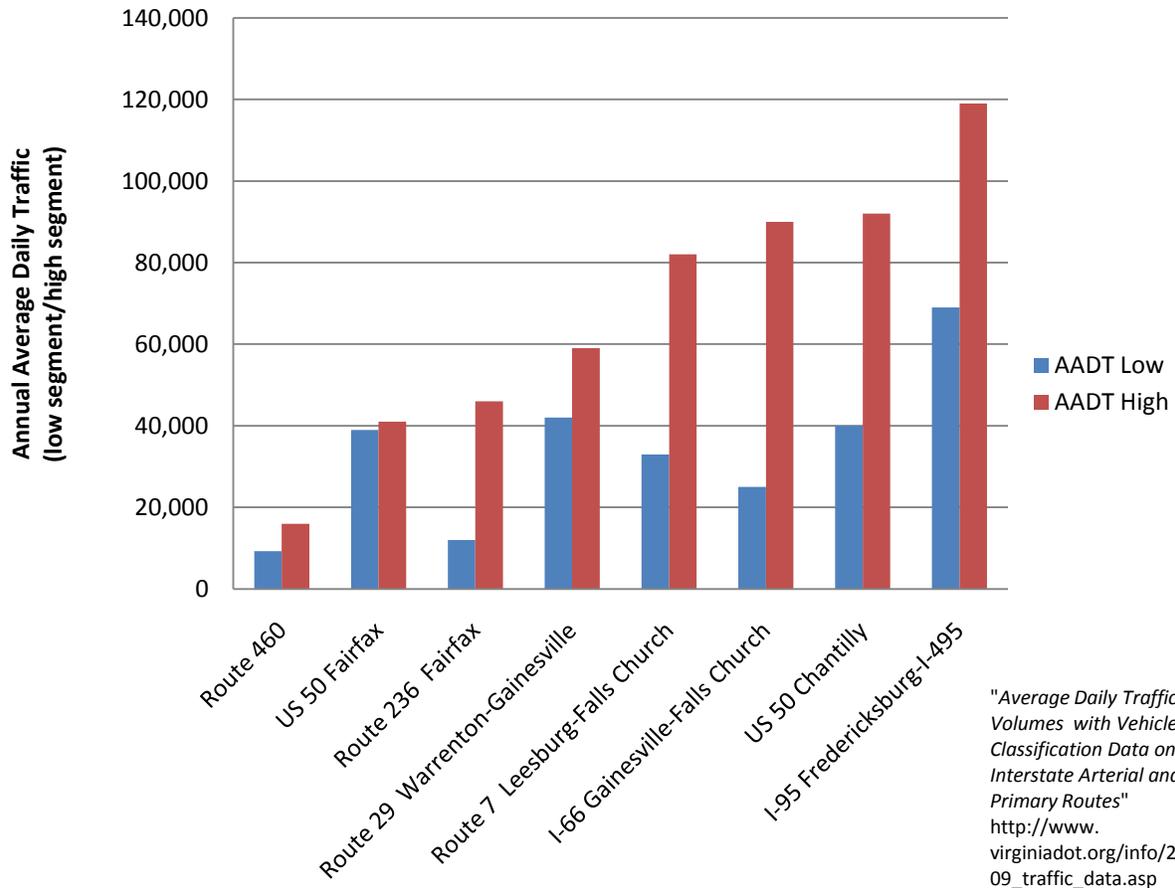
The graphs below compare 2009 traffic volumes on Route 460 against other roadways in Virginia, using VDOT's traffic volume data. The graphs illustrate the average daily traffic volumes for the lowest volume segment and the highest volume segment along particular stretches of each roadway – corridors that are very familiar to area residents and commuters. In addition, the first graph shows that for the highest traffic volume segment on Route 460, traffic declined from 2003 to 2009 and would grow slowly between 2009 and 2026, hardly justification for a \$1.5 billion new highway.

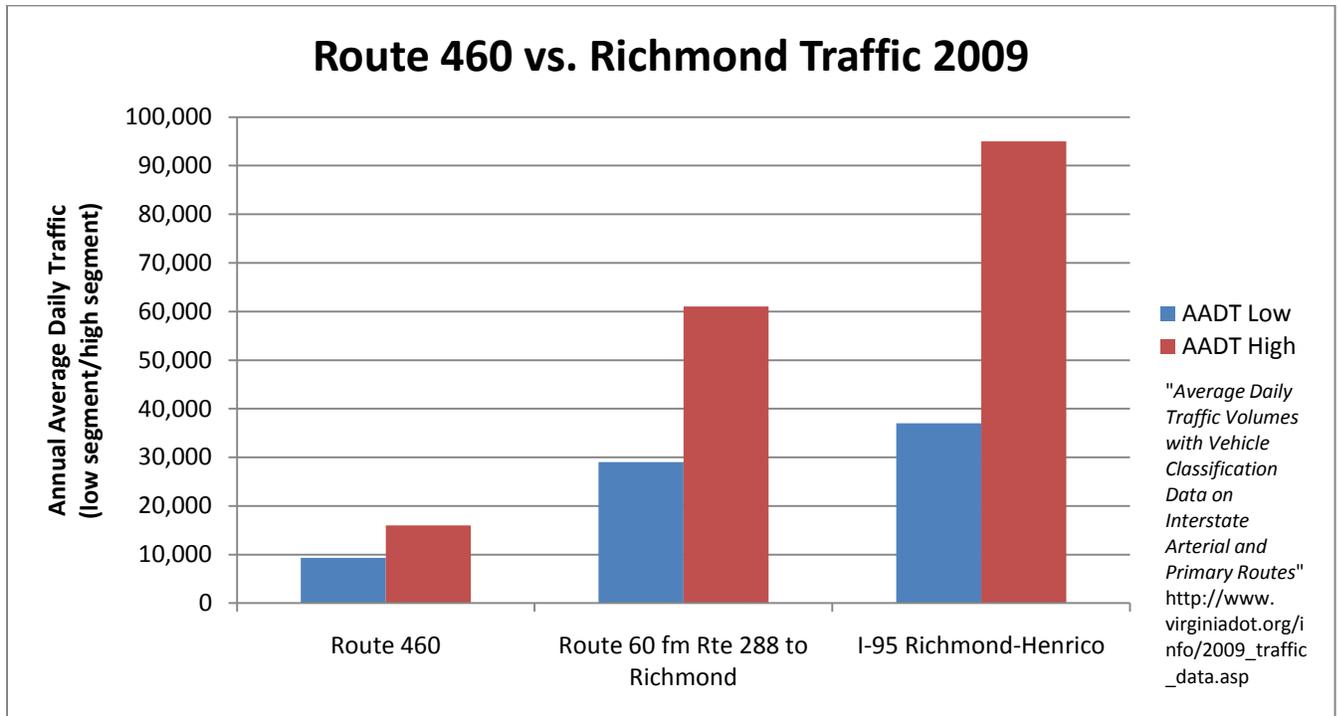


Route 460 vs. Hampton Roads Traffic 2009



Route 460 vs. Northern VA Traffic 2009





We Can Still Be Safe – Without the Price Tag.

It has been argued that we need to build a new highway because the existing Route 460 is unsafe – lacking medians, shoulders or divided sections. Yet, building a new, parallel highway will still leave Route 460 with no medians, shoulders or divided sections and would consume funding that could otherwise be used for these safety improvements. Furthermore, roundabouts, local road networks and small bypasses would be less costly alternatives that address the minor traffic delays along the corridor.

Conclusion:

Spending billions of taxpayer dollars to subsidize a private road project in a rural and lightly trafficked part of the state (see Figures 1 and 2) would waste scarce resources. Virginia faces many more critical transportation needs than this proposed highway. The figures above demonstrate that traffic is not projected to increase by an amount that warrants the cost and risk of this project. We should instead be targeting our huge maintenance needs, including \$3.5 billion in structurally deficient bridges, focusing on areas with the most traffic, and investing in an integrated solution to land use and transportation.

Figure I – Route 460 and Surrounding Areas

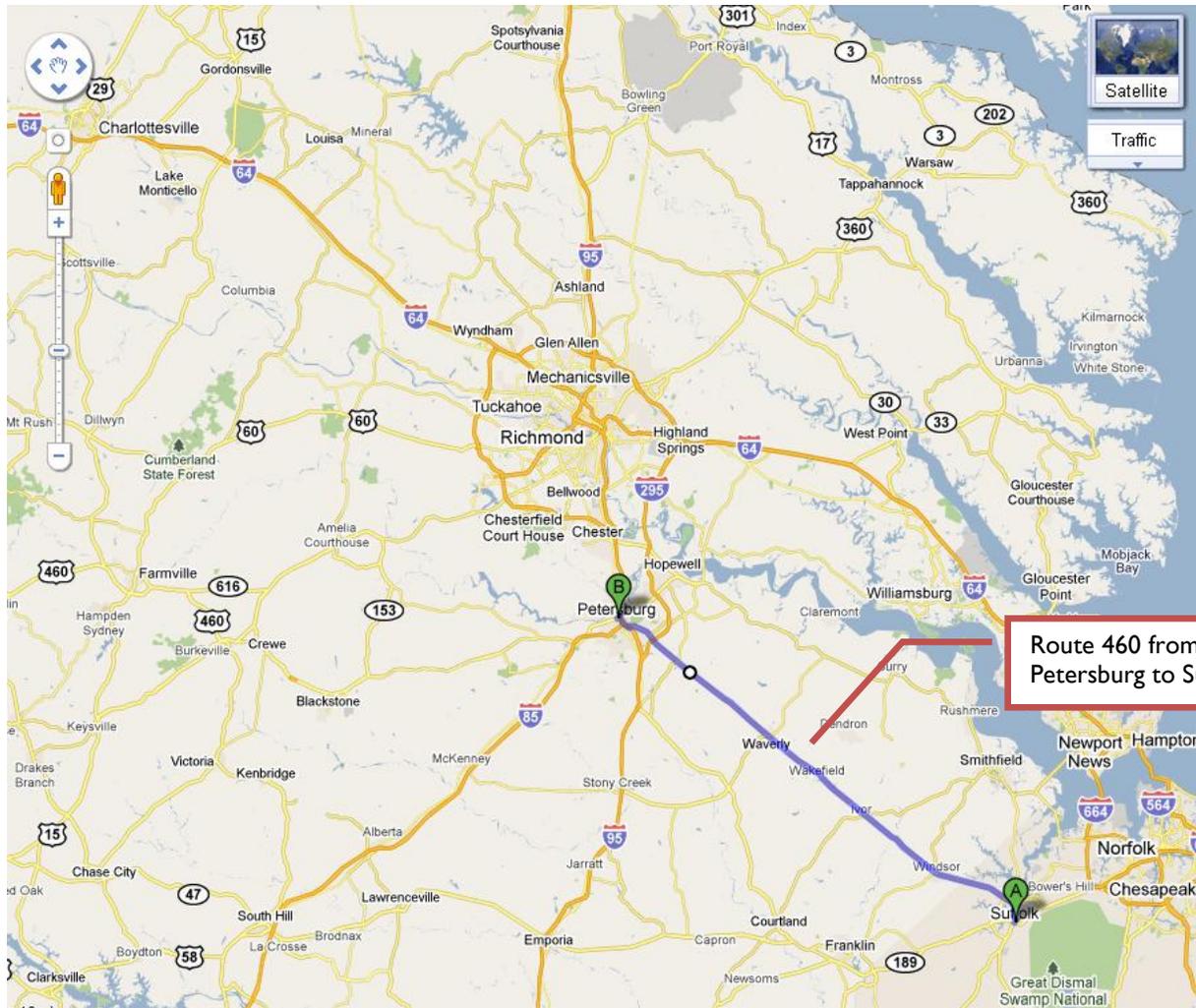


Figure 2 – Route 460 and Surrounding Areas

Image from VDOT ⁱⁱⁱ



ⁱ <http://www.tollroadsnews.com/node/4962>

ⁱⁱ http://www.virginiadot.org/projects/resources/460_DEIS_Chgs_1_2.pdf, pages 1-2

ⁱⁱⁱ http://www.virginiadot.org/PPTA_Projects/Route_460/documents/460NMI_MAP.pdf