

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 19, 2012

The Honorable Robert McDonnell
Governor
Commonwealth of Virginia
Patrick Henry Building
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

The Honorable Victor Mendez
Administrator
Federal Highway Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

Colonel Paul B. Olsen
District Commander,
Norfolk District, U.S. Army
Corps of Engineers
803 Front Street
Norfolk, VA 23510

Dear Governor McDonnell, Administrator Mendez, and Colonel Olsen:

As the permitting and contracting process for the proposed new Route 460 nears completion, we urge you to delay any further action to advance this project to ensure that recently released information concerning this project is properly reviewed and analyzed, including Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) traffic projections that estimate this new toll road would only carry 8,700 vehicles a day when it opens in 2018, and new information concerning the substantial impact this project could have on valuable wetlands and other natural resources. It is imperative that the general public and local, State, and Federal decision-makers outside of your respective offices and agencies have an opportunity to examine and comment on this additional information.


VDOT's underwhelming traffic projections for the project are of particular concern considering the transportation funding challenges we face at both the Federal and State levels. A decision to divert a significant portion of limited transportation funding to build a new Route 460, which has such low traffic projections that it twice failed to generate private sector interest in constructing and operating the toll road in exchange for revenue, must be examined in a thorough and transparent fashion.


We believe that Virginia's scarce transportation dollars must be prioritized and directed towards the Commonwealth's most critical transportation needs, such as financing the third crossing of the Hampton Roads, reducing the proposed excessive tolls at the Midtown and Downtown tunnels in Norfolk, expanding I-64 between Richmond and Newport News, and numerous critical projects in Northern Virginia. Further, important new information has been provided to the Army Corps of Engineers, which has already voiced strong concerns about the amount of wetlands that would be destroyed by the construction of a new Route 460 compared to the reduced environmental impact of simply improving the existing Route 460.

In light of the recent traffic projections and new information related to the potential unnecessary destruction of valuable wetlands, the general public and other public officials deserve the opportunity to weigh in on whether this limited access 55 mile highway project should be prioritized over the State's more pressing transportation needs. Before a contract is executed to finance, design, and build the proposed new Route 460, the most up-to-date information about the effectiveness of this project and the impact it would have on wetlands and other natural resources should be made publicly available, and opportunities must be provided for public comment. We therefore respectfully request that you delay any further action on this project, and postpone the execution of the contract, until these concerns can be addressed.

Sincerely,


The Honorable Gerry Connolly
Member of Congress


The Honorable Bobby Scott
Member of Congress
PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER


The Honorable Jim Moran
Member of Congress