



Update on Interstate 81 National Environmental Policy Act Process *Tier 1 and Tier 2 studies*

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Policy Directives

In October 2006, the CTB resolved that:

- DRPT shall conduct an I-81 Freight Rail Study in cooperation with the Office of the Secretary of Transportation and Norfolk Southern Railway, independent of the EIS process, in order to expedite short term rail improvements and to study the potential long term diversion of truck traffic along the I-81 Corridor to rail, and
- VDOT shall take immediate action to implement safety and operational improvements within the corridor, including, but not limited to, dedicated truck climbing lanes, the extension of on and off ramps at various interchanges, the installation and upgrading of guardrails, the modification of major interchanges, and other safety and operational improvements ... and
- VDOT in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration shall finalize the Tier 1 EIS in accordance with the Process Streamlining Agreement to improve existing I-81 by constructing, with the advice and consent of the CTB, not more than two general purpose lanes in each direction, only where needed to address 2035 travel demands; that for the Tier II environmental review process, projections of future travel demand be based on then current assumptions of rail diversion and other factors in the corridor taking into account the I-81 Freight Rail Study; that VDOT shall pursue the ongoing toll pilot project pursuant to federal law other than for dedicated truck lanes; and, that the Tier II environmental review process for the Corridor improvements may be implemented using the eight logical corridor segments identified in the Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement

Recent Tier 1 Study Milestones

- As directed by the CTB, VDOT finalized the Tier 1 EIS with a concept for future construction that would add a varying number of general purpose lanes (one or two in each direction, only where needed) to address 2035 travel demands.
- Received Tier 1 Record of Decision (ROD) from Federal Highway Administration in June 2007
- Tier 1 ROD advances initiatives endorsed by CTB.
- Tier 1 ROD identified eight independent sections for further detailed Tier 2 studies.

Current Tier 2 Study

- One section is active, as funded by CTB.
- Overlap of interstates 81 and 77 in Wythe County, between exits 72 and 81



Status of Tier 2 Study, I-81/I-77 Overlap

- Currently negotiating with consultant to produce study
- Slated to start at end of the year; scheduled to take about 18 months to complete
- Will use information from previous Location Study and Tier 1 EIS
- No Build is under consideration for each Tier 2 study.
- Will not move on other sections until I-81 Freight Rail study is complete in spring 2008

Tier 1 ROD and Safety Improvements

- In the Tier 1 ROD, FHWA also endorsed and advanced safety and operational improvements for I-81, independent of the eight identified sections.
- These improvements include truck climbing lanes, among others.
 - Rockbridge County, northbound from mile markers 195-202
 - Montgomery County, southbound from mile markers 128-119
- Work is in compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106.

Tier 1 ROD and Rail

- Tier 1 ROD also noted:
 - public support of improvements to Norfolk Southern's rail lines
 - DRPT's work with the Secretary of Transportation and Norfolk Southern to expedite short-term rail improvements
 - DRPT's multistate I-81 Freight Rail Study to determine potential long-term diversion of truck traffic from I-81
- Rail diversions will be factored into future traffic projections.