

I-495 NEXT		Public Comments and Responses (Non-Specific)	
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5	Air Quality	This project should be evaluated for greenhouse gasses.	There are currently no explicit federal requirements pertaining to transportation project-related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, although a qualitative GHG assessment was completed in 2019 to help support an informed decision.
6	Air Quality	The EA did not address hazardous air pollutant (HAP) impacts.	The EPA's <i>Control of Hazardous Air Pollutants from Mobile Sources</i> lists hazardous air pollutants. A <i>quantitative</i> mobile source air toxic (MSAT) analysis was conducted in 2019 for the I-495 NEXT project to assess the potential air quality impacts of the project, document the findings of the analysis, and make the findings available for review by the public and decision-makers. The MSAT analysis can be found within the <i>Air Quality Technical Report</i> (February 2020) located on the project website.

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7	Climate Change	Adding transit options on I-495 is critical to achieving the goals of Fairfax County's Tysons Urban Center Plan and the forthcoming Community-Wide Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP).	Chapter 1 of the EA presents the Purpose and Need for the study. The Purpose and Need sets the goals for the study and serves as the primary criteria in the alternatives screening process. The Purpose and Need was presented to the public and to partnering resource agencies early in the development of the study. The Purpose and Need led to the development of the Build Alternative that meets the goals of the study. These goals include reducing congestion, providing additional travel choice, and improving travel reliability. The Build Alternative, therefore, would result in a transit enhancement. Express Lanes provide a dedicated running way for buses (which is shared with HOV-3+ vehicles and toll paying vehicles). Buses and HOV-3+ vehicles do not have to pay for the use of the facility. Through the use of dynamic tolls, the operator has the ability to move buses at the desired speeds. With the provision of the dedicated running way, transit operators are able to run transit routes that provide a travel time advantage to potential passengers. This is a condition similar to the operation that may be provided with the implementation of a Bus Rapid Transit facility. The provision of fast and reliable transit service serves as an incentive for drivers to shift to transit rather than use their automobiles. As indicated in the November 30, 2020 letter from Secretary Valentine to the Chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, the Commonwealth of Virginia is committed to provide dedicated, ongoing support for transit services along the corridor as part of the larger I-495 NEXT project.

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8	COVID-19	This project is not needed because traffic volumes have gone down with COVID-19.	The 2018 conditions evaluated in the study are representative of typical conditions in the corridor. The current traffic conditions associated with COVID-19 are anticipated to be temporary, as compared with the ultimate design year used to design the project, which is required to be a minimum of 20 years out. Moreover, the analysis of future conditions is based on 2025 and 2045 models. Daily traffic volumes across Northern Virginia have recovered on average to approximately 80% of pre-COVID-19 volumes, and VDOT traffic data for segments of I-495 shows that daily traffic volumes have recovered to nearly 90% of pre-COVID-19 volumes. Traffic volumes are anticipated to return to pre-COVID-19 levels by the time the project is constructed and operational. In order to understand the potential impacts of reduced traffic demand on the network and the proposed project, VDOT has conducted a sensitivity analysis of impacts to traffic forecast volumes and traffic operations under a conservative scenario where impacts of COVID-19 were long-lasting into the future horizon years, with reductions in traffic volumes.
9	COVID-19	Project studies should be postponed indefinitely due to COVID-19 because people aren't able to engage in the process.	VDOT has held three public meetings, two question and answer sessions for the general public, two public hearings, 23 meetings with elected officials, 109 meetings with stakeholders and agencies, 22 meetings with homeowners and business associations, and 22 one-on-one meetings with property owners. The Public Hearings held on October 5 and 8, 2020, provided both in-person, as well as virtual opportunities for the public to engage in the process. Prior to the Public Hearings, VDOT held two Public Information Meetings / Question-&-Answer Sessions virtually with the public. In addition, the materials have been available online and in hard copy in several locations since February 2020, and the project team has been available for questions and comments via phone throughout the planning and design process. VDOT has been proactive in its engagement with the public through meetings, as described above, with numerous local citizen groups and residential organizations. VDOT is continuing to meet with HOAs on a regular basis to provide updates and provide opportunities for additional input and dialogue. Additionally, VDOT is committed to continuing to engage with the community through the final design and construction phases. These public involvement opportunities exceed both FHWA and VDOT policy for this type of NEPA study.

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10	Design	Add more general purpose lanes instead of express lanes because express lanes are often underutilized.	<p>While an Express Lane may have the same physical capacity of a general purpose lane, Express Lanes have operationally higher capacities during peak periods, due to more harmonious travel times and fewer weaving areas with limited access points. Express Lane vehicular flows are also carefully monitored to maintain a guaranteed speed threshold for car poolers, van poolers, and transit vehicles. The resulting travel time reliability encourages HOV and transit usage in the Express Lanes, which moves more people through the corridor.</p> <p>Express Lanes also provide the ability to price the unused capacity through tolling of SOVs, which allows for more space to become available in the general purpose lanes. This reduces congestion and increases speed in the general purpose lanes compared to a condition where the Express Lanes were used only by HOVs.</p> <p>The addition of two general purpose lanes in each direction would not provide needed infrastructure to incentivize travel for HOV-3+ and transit vehicles. This would be detrimental to the goals of moving more people through the corridor and incentivizing multimodal options. The traffic volumes in the Express Lanes would be managed to allow for traffic to travel at free flow speeds (up to 65 miles per hour, and no lower than the minimum average of 45 miles per hour for Express Lanes required by FHWA).</p> <p>Chapter 1 of the EA presents the Purpose and Need for the study. The Purpose and Need sets the goals for the study and serves as the primary criteria in the alternatives screening process. These goals include reducing congestion, providing additional travel choice, and improving travel reliability. To meet this Purpose and Need, it was determined that the Build Alternative must include Express Lanes.</p>
11	Design	VDOT should provide access between the GWMP and the Express Lanes, but there should not be a connection from the Maryland Managed Lanes to the GWMP.	<p>VDOT's internal sensitivity analysis found that not including the access to and from the Maryland managed lanes system (proposed as a separate project) would result in increased congestion along GWMP westbound (outbound) due to the bottleneck for the existing ramp to northbound I-495 general purpose lanes. The proposed new ramp connection to northbound I-495 Express was found to relieve this congestion. GWMP provides direct access to major destinations in Virginia, including the CIA/FHWA headquarters in Langley, the Pentagon, Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, and the major commercial areas within Arlington and Alexandria. For trips from Maryland or beyond, GWMP provides the most direct – or in some cases, the only – route to these destinations.</p>

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12	I-495 Traffic	What effect on traffic in the general purpose lanes is anticipated based on implementation of the Express Lanes?	As demonstrated by the analysis, northbound general purpose travel times on I-495 would worsen if Maryland does not build managed lanes across the American Legion Memorial Bridge (ALMB) as a separate project. The difference in the southbound general purpose travel time would be negligible (5:06 in the No Build scenario compared to 5:11 in the Build scenario). However, other benefits of the I-495 NEXT project would be recognized throughout the Virginia roadway network including an overall increase in person throughput resulting from additional capacity, and improved arterial operations resulting from a shift in travel demand off congested arterials. The I-495 NEXT project has independent utility regardless of the Maryland Managed Lane project; additional detail is provided in response 3 on the previous page.
13	I-495 Traffic	Drivers will no longer be able to access the I-495 Express Lanes immediately south of the Georgetown Pike interchange.	VDOT analyzed the feasibility of providing a slip ramp connection from the I-495 general purpose lanes to the Express Lanes immediately south of the Georgetown Pike interchange. The analysis indicates that the provision of this slip ramp would be detrimental to traffic operations and safety on I-495. Direct access from the Georgetown Pike interchange to the Express Lanes would not be provided as part of the proposed I-495 NEXT project. However, the proposed layout of the Georgetown Pike interchange has been designed not to preclude future ramp connections from the Georgetown Pike interchange to the Express Lanes.
14	I-495 Traffic	With limited land, widening will not always be an option. Consider using technology to increase capacity rather than widening.	The review of potential options included in the EA and Alternatives Technical Report indicates that the use of technology alone, would not meet the Purpose and Need. The level of congestion is such that technological enhancements would not be able to solve the existing and forecast traffic operations and safety problems. However, the EA does not preclude the use of such technology, and the project would incorporate technological enhancements to the project to help improve the effectiveness of the proposed improvements during construction and after the construction is completed.
15	I-495 Traffic	What scenarios for the I-495 NEXT project have been studied?	As documented in the Traffic Technical Report, the following scenarios for the I-495 NEXT project in Virginia were studied: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•2025 No-Build and Build – with Maryland’s I-495 project</li> <li>•2045 No-Build and Build – with Maryland’s I-495 project</li> </ul> In addition, the study team conducted a sensitivity analysis of the following scenarios: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•2025 No-Build and Build – prior to Maryland’s I-495 project</li> </ul>

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16	I-495 Traffic	Was the existing bottleneck at the American Legion Bridge considered in the traffic study?	The bottleneck at the American Legion Bridge was considered and included as part of the traffic study area for the Existing Conditions and 2025 Future Conditions – without Maryland’s separate I-495 project. Without Maryland’s separate I-495 project built, the I-495 NEXT project improvements would increase to 2,500 more people per hour in both directions combined, and would better accommodate future travel demand.
17	I-495 Traffic	What happens to traffic if neither Virginia nor Maryland build their respective projects?	If neither Virginia nor Maryland constructed either of the separate projects on I-495, traffic conditions are projected to worsen. Due to future changes in land use in the region, and anticipated growth in corresponding traffic, traffic conditions are anticipated to get worse over time. As a consequence, lengthier rush hours, slower speeds, longer delays, more severe congestion, and increasing cut-through traffic would be more pronounced than today.

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18	I-495 Traffic	What are the impacts and benefits to the Dulles Toll Road / I-495 interchange with the project? Does it address the traffic issues at the interchange?	<p>With the I-495 NEXT project, travel times along the Dulles Toll Road through the DTR/I-495 interchange would decrease in both the Phase I (2025) and Ultimate (2045) scenarios, as detailed in the I-495 NEXT Traffic and Transportation Technical Report. Phase I of the Project would construct continuous express lanes for the entirety of the Project’s approximately three mile length, from the vicinity of the Dulles Toll Road/Airport Access Road interchange in Tysons to the GWMP interchange. Phase II would construct improvements at the I-495 and Dulles Toll Road interchange, approximately five years after completion of Phase I – with construction of Phase II starting not earlier than 2029 and completion anticipated by 2034. Finally, the Ultimate Condition of the Project, to be completed no earlier than 2045, would include additional access ramps at the Dulles Toll Road interchange and Route 123/Dulles Connector Road interchange. Additional opportunities for public input at the later phases of the Project are planned by VDOT as part of the phased approach.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel times – Phase I (2025): In the AM peak period, travel times from west of Spring Hill to east of Route 123 (through the I-495 interchange) are anticipated to be reduced by approximately 1.5 minutes in the eastbound direction (2025 Build scenario compared with 2025 No Build scenario); travel times are similar between the 2025 Build scenario and 2025 No Build scenario in the westbound direction in the AM peak and in both travel directions in the PM peak.</li> <li>• Travel times – Ultimate (2045): Due to reduced queue spillback from the northbound I-495 lanes, travel times are anticipated to be reduced by approximately 5.5 minutes in the eastbound direction (2045 Build scenario compared with 2045 No Build scenario); again, travel times are similar between the 2045 Build scenario and 2045 No Build scenario in the westbound direction in the AM peak and in both travel directions in the PM peak.</li> <li>• Access – As part of Phase I, the I-495 NEXT project would provide new direct access from eastbound and westbound Dulles Toll Road to the northbound I-495 Express Lanes. As part of the Ultimate scenario, the project would also provide direct access from the southbound I-495 Express Lanes to eastbound Dulles Toll Road, and from the northbound and southbound I-495 general purpose lanes to the Dulles Airport Access Road. In addition, the Ultimate configuration would provide access from the eastbound Dulles Airport Access Road to the northbound and southbound I-495 Express Lanes.</li> </ul>

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19	I-495 Traffic	What are the impacts to other regional roadways in Fairfax County as a result of the project?	As documented in Chapter 2 of the EA, the impacts to other regional roadways were considered as part of the traffic forecast modeling. Overall, the project would reduce congestion on the interstate system, especially upstream on I-495 northbound. The project would also form a seamless network of managed lanes between the American Legion Bridge, the Dulles Toll Road Connector, and the I-66 Inside the Beltway Express Lanes. The traffic forecast models indicate that this connection would incentivize some drivers to use the I-495 Express Lanes / Dulles Toll Road Connector / I-66 Inside the Beltway Express Lanes to get to and from points east in Arlington and Washington DC, instead of using the George Washington Memorial Parkway as a result of travel time reliability.
20	I-495 Traffic	What other local or regional projects were included in the traffic study and how is the National Capital Region Constrained Long Range Plan considered in the traffic and environmental studies?	As documented in the <i>I-495 NEXT Traffic and Transportation Technical Report</i> , project capacity and interchange ramp projects along the Dulles Toll Road and Dulles Airport Access Road were included in the future traffic model networks, as well as proposed transportation projects in the Tysons area. The separate Maryland I-495 and I-270 projects were also included since they are included in the CLRP. The FHWA-approved methodology for traffic forecast modeling and VDOT policy requires that projects in the CLRP be included in the analysis. The projects included in the CLRP are developed by the local jurisdictions in coordination with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG).
21	I-495 Traffic	What are the traffic and other benefits of the Virginia 495 NEXT project?	<p>The traffic and other benefits of the proposed improvements are defined by how the Build Alternative meets the Purpose and Need for the study. Chapter 1 of the EA presents the Purpose and Need and the means by which the Build Alternative meets the Purpose and Need is discussed in Chapter 2 of the EA. In general, the benefits of the 495 NEXT project include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moves more people</li> <li>• Provides travel time savings</li> <li>• Offers a new travel choice</li> <li>• Reduces traffic on local roads</li> <li>• Opportunities for increased transit and HOV use</li> <li>• Improves safety for area travelers and local residents</li> <li>• Extends Express Lanes network in Northern Virginia</li> <li>• Replaces aging bridge infrastructure</li> <li>• Implements measures to minimize and mitigate environmental impacts</li> <li>• New and improved pedestrian and bike facilities, including a new shared-use path along I-495</li> </ul>

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22	Impacts During Construction	What will be the impacts of the project during construction and what mitigation or strategies will be used to construction traffic impacts?	Estimated impacts and potential mitigation strategies are documented under the respective resource sections of Chapter 3 in the EA and are also analyzed in the associated technical documents. Following an FHWA NEPA decision, more detailed design and permitting phases could further reduce impacts and/or commit to required mitigation strategies. During construction, traffic delays and congestion would likely increase due to narrowing of lanes, temporary or long-term lane closures, and detours. Maintenance of Traffic plans and a Transportation Management Plan would be developed later in the detailed engineering phases of the project. These plans would include measures to mitigate traffic impacts during construction, as well as recommended travel-demand management strategies. Temporary impacts to neighborhoods during construction would be mitigated where feasible, by minimizing noise impacts, maintaining access to neighborhoods, limiting construction vehicle traffic through local and neighborhood roads, and following VDOTs specifications for erosion and sediment control.
23	Maryland Partnership/ American Legion Bridge	This project shouldn't move forward until Maryland upgrades the ALMB. What are the benefits of Virginia's I-495 NEXT as a stand-alone project if Maryland's project is stalled or doesn't get built?	Chapter 1 of the EA documents the Purpose and Need for the study and the analysis included in the EA and supporting technical reports illustrate how the Build Alternative is needed and would benefit the study area prior to the construction of the Maryland project. These benefits to the Virginia study area roadway network include an overall increase in person throughput resulting from additional capacity, providing new travel choices, improved arterial operations resulting from a shift in travel demand off of congested arterials, travel time reductions in the southbound direction of I-495, improved safety on residential streets and the general purpose lanes, and a decrease in traffic delays on local and neighborhood roads, especially at intersections. Although VDOT has identified potential future operational degradation in the northbound General Purpose Lanes prior to the widening of the American Legion Bridge, VDOT is working on development and evaluation of a range of mitigation options to be put in place until the American Legion Bridge is widened. VDOT also continues to work in coordination with MDOT to move the American Legion Bridge widening forward as a separate project. It is anticipated that MDOT would enter into a separate agreement with a concessionaire team in 2021. Details on these benefits are in Chapters 2 and 3 of the EA, and in the <i>I-495 Traffic and Transportation Technical Report</i> .

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24	Maryland Partnership/ American Legion Bridge	How will travel and tolling be coordinated between Virginia and Maryland?	Virginia and Maryland have been coordinating efforts to provide for a seamless, regional transportation network of managed lanes as announced by the two state Governors in November of 2021, under the “Capital Beltway Accord.” MDOT recently recommended a Preferred Alternative for their separate I-495 project in Maryland which includes HOT-3 lanes (3 passenger high occupancy tolled lanes), which is consistent with VDOT’s Express Lanes system. Coordination between Virginia and Maryland is ongoing and will remain focused on managing operational consistencies between the two highway systems. The two states are continuing to look into options for Virginia vehicles to exit the Express Lanes between Virginia and Maryland, and conversely to allow vehicles from Maryland to enter the system and use the lanes in Virginia. Following the FHWA NEPA decision, this coordination would continue and would inform the more detailed phases of design, construction, and operation of the proposed improvements.
25	Maryland Partnership/ American Legion Bridge	If this project is built before the ALMB is widened, there will be more crashes.	The I-495 NEXT project would eliminate weaving movements and would construct geometric improvements to the I-495 general purpose lanes. Furthermore, the analysis indicates that as a result of the construction of the I-495 NEXT project, there would be a reduction in volumes traveling on the arterials. This reduction in volumes would result in improve safety conditions on the local streets. Therefore, these improvements would results in safety improvements in the corridor. More detail on the safety analysis is in Chapter 8 of the <i>I-495 Traffic and Transportation Technical Report</i> .
26	Natural Environment	How would this project impact Dead Run?	As documented in Chapter 3 of the EA and the associated <i>I-495 NEXT Natural Resources Technical Report</i> , Dead Run, while located within the larger study area, is not currently anticipated to be impacted as a result of VDOT’s I-495 NEXT project. Initially, the project conservatively assumed potential construction associated with dynamic message signs in the vicinity of Dead Run, but since completion of the technical memos and EA, the design has changed to scale back the equipment and related construction in the area. Therefore, no temporary or indirect impacts are anticipated.
27	Natural Environment	The EA doesn't include all species noted to be observed by the public near I-495, such as nesting birds.	Section 3.15 and Section 3.16 of the EA discuss wildlife and threatened and endangered species, respectively. These sections, along with the associated <i>I-495 NEXT Natural Resources Technical Report</i> , present the species that have been observed and documented in databases maintained by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. FHWA and VDOT rely on the data provided by these agencies to document the resources that fall under their respective purviews.

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28	Natural Environment	This project will remove trees and destroy wildlife habitat, which is important for animal passage and habitat.	Section 3.15 and Section 3.16 of the EA discuss wildlife and threatened and endangered species, respectively. These sections, along with the associated Natural Resources Technical Report present the species that have been observed in the study area and the potential impacts that the Build Alternative could have on these resources. Habitat that would be affected by the project is primarily edge habitat that has already been fragmented along the highway in the right-of-way, in interchange loops, and the area in the median. Culverts connecting streams under roadways offer limited passage, and the habitat fragments result in low quality edge habitat. Habitat in these areas also is typically poor quality due to access restrictions posed by the travel lanes. Increasing the width of the roadway corridor would not likely increase habitat fragmentation as forested land would not be newly separated from contiguous forest. Of the approximately 118 acres of forested land that would be impacted by the project, approximately 30 acres of that would be forested areas outside of existing VDOT right-of-way. It should also be noted that of the 30 acres of forest impacts outside the existing VDOT right-of-way, approximately 28.5 acres would be impacted in Phase I and approximately 1.5 acres would be impacted approximately 20 years after the construction of Phase I is complete as part of the Ultimate Condition. Following a NEPA decision by FHWA, more detailed phases of design would advance that would include a revegetation plan to identify replacement vegetation locations and types where feasible following construction. VDOT would also continue to minimize environmental impacts where feasible during the final design process.
29	Natural Environment	Will trees that are impacted be replaced as part of the project?	The project includes a revegetation program to replace trees lost due to the construction of the project where feasible following construction. In addition, VDOT has committed to providing a tree survey for impacted areas during the design and construction phase of the project, once more detailed plans are available. The tree survey would be used to further document tree impacts and to inform the revegetation plan.
30	NEPA Study	What is a NEPA study and how is it used in decision making for the project?	NEPA, which stands for the National Environmental Policy Act, requires federal agencies to assess the environmental effects of their proposed actions prior to making decisions. A NEPA study – in this case, an Environmental Assessment (EA) – was prepared for the I-495 NEXT project in compliance with federal law and regulations. The EA was prepared in order to allow the Federal Highway Administration and VDOT to study the proposed action in the Build Alternative and a No-Build Alternative, and to make informed decisions about the impacts of each alternative on the natural and man-made environment.

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31	NEPA Study	Why was an EA done instead of an EIS?	As noted on the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) website, “An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is prepared for projects where it is known that the action will have a significant effect on the environment. An Environmental Assessment (EA) is prepared for actions in which the significance of the environmental impact is not clearly established.” For the I-495 NEXT project, an EA was prepared because the significance of the environmental impact was not known prior to project initiation. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process would be completed when FHWA issues a NEPA decision document. The EA was approved for public availability by the FHWA on February 24, 2020. Following the Public Hearing and receipt of public and agency comment, VDOT worked with FHWA to respond to substantive public comments and develop a Revised Environmental Assessment. Following that effort, VDOT would request a NEPA decision from FHWA. If the results of these efforts do not identify any significant impacts, VDOT would request a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) from FHWA. The FONSI would document FHWA’s selected action and document the absence of significant impacts. The issuance of the FONSI would complete the study process. On the other hand, if significant impacts are identified, FHWA and VDOT would need to initiate an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to complete the environmental study process.
32	NEPA Study	Why was only one Build alternative studied?	<p>VDOT, in coordination with FHWA, local governments, and stakeholders identified an alternative that would meet the project purpose and needs: reduce congestion, provide new travel choices, and improve travel reliability along I-495. The build alternative described in Section 2.2.2 of the Environmental Assessment (EA) was identified as the only reasonable alternative to advance based on the Purpose and Need for the study. For this alternative, VDOT considered a range of design options at several interchanges to meet the needs at those locations. The I-495 NEXT EA identified one build alternative in detail which is acceptable under FHWA’s Technical Advisory T 6640.8A Guidance for Preparing and Processing Environmental and Section 4(f) Documents (FHWA, 1987). These decisions were presented to state and federal permitting agencies through project-specific agency meetings and coordination as the study developed. The Advisory states that “An EA does not need to evaluate in detail all reasonable alternatives for the project and may be prepared for one or more build alternatives.” The single build alternative leaves ample flexibility for different designs to be considered when the project advances to permitting and more detailed phases of design following an FHWA NEPA decision.</p> <p>I-495 NEXT project has independent utility since it would provide a usable facility and be a reasonable expenditure of funds even if no additional transportation improvements in the area are made, including to the ALMB.</p>

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33	NEPA Study	What studies were performed in support of the environmental studies for the project?	<p>In addition to the Environmental Assessment (EA) which summarizes the study results, the following detailed technical reports are available for review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Air quality analysis</li> <li>•Alternative analysis</li> <li>•Hazardous materials analysis</li> <li>•Historic resources survey and evaluation</li> <li>•Indirect and cumulative effects analysis</li> <li>•Natural resources analysis</li> <li>•Noise analysis</li> <li>•Section 4(f)/Section 6(f) resources evaluation</li> <li>•Socioeconomic and land use analysis</li> <li>•Traffic and transportation analysis</li> </ul> <p>These studies were made available to agencies and the public with the EA.</p>
34	NEPA Study	When will the environmental study be completed and what decisions will be made?	<p>The environmental study process, also referred to as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, would be completed when FHWA issues a NEPA decision document. The Environmental Assessment (EA) was approved for public availability by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) on February 24, 2020. Following the Public Hearing and receipt of public and agency comment, VDOT worked with FHWA to respond to substantive public comments and develop a Revised Environmental Assessment. Following that effort, VDOT would request a NEPA decision from FHWA. Presuming the results of these efforts do not identify any significant impacts, VDOT would anticipate requesting and receiving a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) from FHWA. The FONSI would document FHWA's selected action and document the absence of significant impacts. The issuance of the FONSI would complete the NEPA process. Should significant impacts be identified, FHWA and VDOT would need to initiate an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to complete the environmental study process.</p>
35	Noise	Where noise walls are being replaced, please do not place them closer to property owners than the existing walls.	<p>As discussed in Chapter 3 of the EA, based on the preliminary noise wall analysis, some future noise walls are anticipated to be shifted from existing locations. As a result of the widening, some of the sound walls would need to be relocated to locations closer to the existing homes. However, VDOT has and would continue to refine the design to minimize the impacts to these properties.</p>

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36	Noise	What are plans to mitigate impact of increased traffic noise from the project?	As discussed in Chapter 3 of the EA, highway noise is mitigated with construction of a noise wall between the affected properties and the adjacent roadway. A noise wall is considered for construction if it is found to meet all the required criteria. VDOT performed a preliminary noise technical analysis (following the Federal Noise Regulations and State Noise Policy) to assess the preliminary potential impacts associated with road noise as a result of the project. An updated noise analysis would be completed during final design. Any property that is currently protected by a noise wall would have a noise wall in the future. The top of any new noise wall, if relocation of the wall is required, would be at least the same elevation as the existing noise wall. Additional detail on the noise study is in the <i>I-495 NEXT Noise Technical Report</i> .
37	Noise	Where noise walls are being replaced, please increase their height to 30 feet.	The I-495 NEXT Noise Technical Report (February 2020) was prepared based on preliminary designs as of Fall 2019, which were consistent with designs used for other impact calculations summarized in the February 2020 EA. A final noise analysis would be conducted during the final design phase, which would incorporate any design revisions between the Fall 2019 preliminary design and the final design. Noise mitigation (“abatement”) is determined using a three-phased approach. Phase 1 is to determine if highway traffic abatement consideration is warranted for the affected receptors. Phase 2 is to determine if a noise abatement measure is feasible, which requires consideration of both acoustical conditions (that 50% or more of impacted receptors experience 5 dB(A) or more of insertion loss is feasible) and engineering conditions (it is possible to design and construct the abatement measure). Phase 3 is to determine if a noise abatement measure is reasonable by meeting three criteria: to reduce noise by at least 7 dB(A) of insertion loss for at least one impacted receptor, to have an approved cost based on a minimum value of 1,600 square feet per benefitted receptor, and for 50% or more of benefitted residents and owners who respond to the outreach questionnaire to favor the noise abatement measure. Based on VDOT's <i>Highway Traffic Noise Impact Analysis Guidance Manual</i> (2018), VDOT can fund noise abatement that meets these criteria.

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38	Public Engagement	More technical public workshops are needed to help the public understand the plans and documents.	VDOT has held three public meetings, two question and answer sessions for the general public, two public hearings, 22 meetings with elected officials, 111 meetings with stakeholders and agencies, 22 meetings with homeowners and business associations, and 22 one-on-one meetings with property owners. The Public Hearings held on October 5 and 8, 2020, provided both in-person, as well as virtual opportunities for the public to engage in the process. Prior to the Public Hearings, VDOT held two Public Information Meetings / Question-&-Answer Sessions virtually with the public. In addition, the project materials have been available online and in hard copy in several locations since February 2020, and the project team has been available for questions and comments via phone throughout the planning and design process. VDOT has been proactive in its engagement with the public through meetings, as described above, with numerous local citizen groups and residential organizations. VDOT is continuing to meet with HOAs on a regular basis to provide updates and provide opportunities for additional input and dialogue. Additionally, VDOT is committed to continuing to engage with the community through the final design and construction phases. These public involvement opportunities exceed both FHWA and VDOT policy for this type of NEPA study.
39	Public Engagement	How does the public hearing affect the decision-making for the environmental process?	The Public Hearing provides VDOT with an opportunity to present the results of the EA, discuss these results with the public, and seek public comment on the EA and associated analyses. Substantive comments received during the public comment period and at the public hearing will be addressed by VDOT before requesting a NEPA decision from FHWA. Both VDOT and FHWA must consider these comments to determine if additional analyses are required before such a request can be made and/or if the comments identify any impacts that have not been considered already in the EA.
40	Public Private Partnership	Why is VDOT using P3 Delivery? Why does this benefit the public?	Currently, the 495 NEXT Project is being developed as a Concessionaire Project Enhancement in accordance with the 495 Comprehensive Agreement signed between VDOT and Capital Beltway Express, LLC. The original scope of the Comprehensive Agreement developed under the framework of the Public-Private Transportation Act of 1995 ("PPTA") anticipates project enhancements and sets out the process to add enhancements to the project. This overarching framework benefits the public by satisfying public needs such as reducing congestion, providing additional travel choices, and improving travel reliability via timely and efficient development and operation of the facility. The estimated cost of the project, \$500 million, is disproportionate to the entire statewide budget of \$1.4 Billion (2020) available for transportation projects as part of the SMART SCALE process across the rest of the Commonwealth.

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41	Public Private Partnership	Public roads and parkland will be given to a private company.	As with other Express Lane sections, the concessionaire (P3) would operate and maintain the Express Lanes, but would not own the roads or impacted land. VDOT would own all right-of-way. Any parkland that is required for the project, must be replaced in accordance with environmental requirements, and as approved by the National Park Service, and is part of the overall project cost.
42	Public Private Partnership	What is Transurban's role on I-495 and with this project?	During the planning phase, Transurban, in close coordination with VDOT, has been developing preliminary design plans to support VDOT's technical studies for the proposed project. VDOT has performed the detailed technical studies to complete the Environmental Assessment as well as additional independent studies to support the design. The preliminary design helps to define the project footprint. Transurban's work includes geotechnical studies, surveys, preliminary design, drainage and stormwater design, and utility investigations. VDOT reviews and approves this work as it is developed. VDOT anticipates entering into an agreement with Transurban in 2021, following receipt and approval of a binding proposal from Transurban. If the proposal is acceptable to VDOT, Transurban would then be responsible for design, construction, finance, operations and maintenance of the Express Lanes. VDOT continues to be responsible for regulatory approvals, project oversight, and agency coordination.

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43	Purpose and Need	What is the purpose and need of the project and how do the proposed project elements address the purpose and need?	<p>Chapter 1 of the EA presents the Purpose and Need for the I-495 NEXT project. The Purpose and Need sets the goals for the study and serves as the primary criteria in the alternatives screening process. The Purpose and Need was presented to the public and to partnering resource agencies early in the development of the study. The Purpose and Need led to the development of the Build Alternative that meets the goals of the study.</p> <p>As presented in Chapter 1, the purpose of the project is to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reduce congestion;</li> <li>2. Provide additional travel choices; and</li> <li>3. Improve travel reliability.</li> </ol> <p>As discussed in Chapter 2 of the EA, The Build Alternative addresses the Purpose and Need by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reducing congestion - The proposed project is anticipated to reduce congestion compared with the Existing and 2045 No-Build scenarios in three ways by: optimizing traffic volumes and travel demand on I-495, improving traffic operations, and increasing the number of persons moved.</li> <li>2. Providing additional travel choices - The proposed Express Lanes provide an alternative travel option for transit buses, HOV vehicles and van pools, or those wishing to pay a toll, and these options are shown to be utilized when provided.</li> <li>3. Improving travel reliability - The proposed Express Lanes would offer consistent and predictable travel times for Express Lanes users including HOV motorists and transit buses.</li> </ol>
44	Right-of-Way and Property Impacts	Right-of-way negotiations should include consideration of the cost property owners will have to replace landscaping and reduced property value from smaller yards, noise and vibration increases, and increased air pollution.	Following an FHWA NEPA decision, VDOT would advance with more detailed design phases that would include identifying and acquiring necessary right of way. In accordance with the VDOT Right of Way Manual (2016) and the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Policies Act of 1970, as amended, affected property owners would be fairly compensated for acquisition of their property (see Section 3.5.2 of the EA for information on anticipated property impacts). Right-of-way compensation is based on an appraisal to determine the value of what is being taken. The appraisal takes into consideration impacts to the affected properties including loss of vegetation, reduction in the size of the yards, and limitations on property usage (permanent easements) as well as the need to construct a fence to separate the trail from the residences. However, appraisals are based on market data and though these issues are considered, the market does not always support a value being placed on these issues.

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45	Shared-Use Path	Reduce the width of the proposed trail to minimize impacts to trees and bushes that provide a visual buffer between houses and the existing noise walls.	The 10-foot minimum pavement width standard helps ensure the safety of pedestrians and bicyclist using the shared-use path.
46	Shared-Use Path	Request fence between homes and proposed trail for increased privacy and security.	Following an FHWA NEPA decision, options to separate the trail from the adjoining residences would be considered. Consistent with VDOT practice, these decisions would be discussed with the adjacent property owners during the right-of-way phase of the project.
47	Shared-Use Path	Why is the trail on the community side of the noise wall instead of being on the highway side?	The proposed trail is proposed on the community side of the noise wall rather than the highway side due to the safety benefits of further separating bicyclists and pedestrians from highway traffic. VDOT has and would continue to coordinate the alignment and design elements of the path with residents of the surrounding communities, pedestrian and bicycle trail advocacy groups and Fairfax County staff.
48	Stormwater	Adequate stormwater retention is needed that does not increase hourly discharge into Scott's Run.	Currently, this segment of the I-495 corridor does not have stormwater management facilities. I-495 NEXT is required to comply with the administration, implementation, and enforcement of the Virginia Stormwater Management Act through permits issued by a Virginia Stormwater Management Program (VSMP) authority. The 495 NEXT Project would introduce stormwater management as an added benefit to provide the water quality and runoff control that this corridor needs. If right of way needs to be acquired, property owners would be properly compensated. Due to the need for ongoing maintenance, stormwater management facilities are generally not located on private property. The current stormwater management approach for Project NEXT satisfies meeting the requirements to the maximum extent practicable with the application of both onsite stormwater management facilities and nutrient credits. Using the proposed SWM approach, the conditions would be better with the project than they are today or would be in the future under the No-Build alternative.

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49	Stormwater	Stormwater retention improvements are needed for existing roadways as well.	Stormwater BMPs for water quality and water quantity for the existing impervious area within the limits of disturbance are not required in accordance with I-495 NEXT's specific project requirements as outlined in 9VAC25-870. Runoff for the existing impervious surface is being addressed through VDOT's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4). VDOT presented stormwater management (SWM) options to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ) to provide a holistic view of impacts to the surrounding properties should the project meet County requirements. VDEQ agreed with VDOT's assessment that the impact to residences and loss of natural habitat were too great to follow more stringent regulations. This documentation has also been shared with Fairfax County. The current SWM approach for the I-495 NEXT project satisfies meeting the requirements to the maximum extent practicable with the application of both onsite SWM facilities and nutrient credits. This approach was confirmed after 18 months of coordination between VDEQ, VDOT and Fairfax County to identify a balanced solution.
50	Tolling	The Express Lanes should be free (or minimal cost) on weekends.	Tolling on weekends, as well as on weekdays, is used to cover the costs to privately finance, construct, operate and maintain the Express Lanes without public subsidies. Additionally, the tolls on the Express Lanes are used to manage the utilization of these lanes. The I-495 Express Lanes are part of a system of managed lanes in Northern Virginia. The dynamic tolls are used so vehicles within the facility can travel at speeds of at least 45 mph. Under the Express Lanes tolling system, Transurban sets tolls low enough to attract drivers to its facility and high enough to avoid reaching congested conditions which would preclude them from maintaining the required facility speed.
51	Transit	Add dedicated lanes for BRT and rail options as part of I-495 NEXT, such as future expansion of the Purple Line to Tysons Corner.	The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation is conducting the I-495 American Legion Bridge Transit and TDM Study in coordination with the Maryland Department of Transportation's Maryland Transit Administration (MTA). The recommendations resulting from this study are aimed to work in concert with Virginia's proposed northern extension of the I-495 Express Lanes and Maryland's proposed managed lanes program for the American Legion Bridge, I-495, and I-270. Study updates are available at <a href="http://drpt.virginia.gov/transit/major-initiatives/i-495american-legion-bridge-transit-and-tdm-study/">http://drpt.virginia.gov/transit/major-initiatives/i-495american-legion-bridge-transit-and-tdm-study/</a> . As indicated in the November 30, 2020 letter from Secretary Valentine to the Chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, the Commonwealth of Virginia is committed to provide dedicated, ongoing support for transit services along the corridor as part of the I-495 NEXT project. This commitment ensures that the I-495 NEXT project, together with the existing I-495 Express Lanes, provide multimodal solutions to move more people through the corridor.