What is the 495 Express Lanes Northern Extension (495 NEXT) project?
The project involves extending the I-495 Express Lanes from the existing terminus of the I-495 Express Lanes to the George Washington Memorial Parkway interchange in the vicinity of the American Legion Bridge. Project improvements would include replacing existing overpasses, implementing a shared-use path that could be used by bicyclists and pedestrians, and replacing and constructing new noise walls.

Why is the project needed?
Traffic congestion on I-495 routinely extends between the American Legion Bridge and Tysons Corner (south of Dulles Toll Road). This congestion occurs for multiple hours during morning and afternoon peak travel periods and on the weekends. Additionally, local roads and residential streets on either side of I-495 experience significant gridlock due to cut-through traffic several hours each weekday.

What are the goals and objectives of the project?
The 495 NEXT Project is intended to reduce congestion, provide additional travel choices, and improve travel reliability in an area that is one of the most congested travel areas in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region.

When did the project begin?
Virginia’s Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) approved funding in the amount of $6 million in 2018 for VDOT to conduct an environmental study to extend the I-495 Express Lanes by approximately three miles from the I-495 and Dulles Toll Road interchange to the vicinity of the American Legion Bridge and Maryland line.

What studies are being conducted?
In collaboration with the Federal Highway Administration, VDOT is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed three-mile extension of the 495 Express Lanes, and to comply with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended, and 23 CFR Part 771. VDOT began this EA in May 2018 and is expected to complete the study in summer 2020.

What is involved in the Environmental Assessment?
The EA looks at build versus no-build (implementing the project versus not implementing the project) scenarios. According to the requirements of NEPA, the study includes evaluating site-specific conditions and potential effects the proposed improvements may have on air quality, noise, neighborhoods, parks, recreation areas, historic properties, wetlands and streams, and other resources. The following technical studies provide information summarized in the EA:

- Air quality analysis
- Alternatives analysis
- Hazardous materials
What is the status of the Environmental Assessment (EA)? Will there be a public hearing? VDOT will hold a Location and Design Public Hearing for the I-495 Express Lanes Northern Extension Project (495 NEXT) on Thursday, March 12, 2020. Proposed design plans and findings from the project’s Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) will be presented to the public for information and input. The project will involve a change in limited access control.

The hearing will consist of an open house, formal presentation and opportunity for the public to provide written and/or verbal comments. The details are as follows:

**Thursday, March 12, 2020**
6:30 – 8:30 p.m. (formal presentation at 7 p.m.)
Langley High School
6520 Georgetown Pike, McLean, VA 22101
*If Fairfax County Public Schools are closed on March 12 due to inclement weather, the hearing will be held on Wednesday, March 18, 2020.*

When will the EA and technical reports be available for public review and comment? In compliance with federal regulations, the draft Environmental Assessment will be made available to the public on February 26, 2020, which is a minimum of 15 days prior to the public hearing. These documents will be available on VDOT’s project website at 495NorthernExtension.org and at the following publicly accessible locations within the project corridor:

**VDOT Northern Virginia District Office**
4975 Alliance Drive
Fairfax, VA 22030

**McLean Government Center**
Office of Fairfax County Dranesville District Supervisor
1437 Balls Hill Road
McLean, VA 22101

**Fairfax County Government Center**
12000 Government Center Parkway
How can the public provide input on this information?
In addition to providing comments at the public hearing, the public may provide written comments on the draft EA and/or design plans until the close of business on Monday, March 30, 2020, by emailing them to 495NorthernExtension@VDOT.Virginia.gov or by mailing them to Abi Lerner, P.E., Virginia Department of Transportation, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030. Please reference “495 Express Lanes Northern Extension Study” in the subject line.

Will there be an independent review of VDOT’s studies for FHWA’s decision regarding the environmental document?
The Federal Highway Administration reviews the EA and associated technical studies and makes an independent finding as to environmental impact.

How are potential air and noise impacts being evaluated?
The EA includes an air and noise assessment under build (implementing the project) conditions.

What traffic analysis is being done as part of the project?
As part of the EA, VDOT is conducting an operational and safety analysis of project-related traffic impacts on I-495 and the Dulles Toll Road, as well as on local roadways within and near the project area. This analysis looks at expected traffic conditions (including travel times and traffic delays, person throughput and secondary streets) in years 2025 and 2045 with the build alternative versus the no-build alternative (i.e., with and without the 495 NEXT project). Findings of this analysis will be published in a Traffic and Transportation Technical Report and Interchange Justification Report. The Interchange Justification Report is subject to approval by Federal Highway Administration.

Will the team assess a scenario with the implementation of the extension of the 495 Express Lanes in Virginia and without the widening of the American Legion Bridge?
The team is evaluating a scenario which includes the implementation of the extension of the 495 Express Lanes in Virginia prior to the widening of the American Legion Bridge. The preliminary analysis indicates that the extension of the Virginia Express Lanes helps move more people through the corridor, generates a reduction in cut-through traffic on local roads, and reduces
delays on local street intersections. The complete findings of this assessment will be presented at the March 12, 2020 Public Hearing.

Are Virginia and Maryland coordinating their efforts?
Virginia's 495 NEXT Project is being developed as an independent, stand-alone project that will be closely coordinated and compatible with plans for I-495 (the Capital Beltway) in Maryland. VDOT has been meeting with the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) on a routine basis. For more information regarding MDOT’s I-495 & I-270 Managed Lanes Study visit 495-270-p3.com.

What opportunities has VDOT provided to inform the public and gain input on the 495 NEXT Project?
Since launching the EA Study, VDOT’s project team has engaged and coordinated with key stakeholder groups including National Park Service, Fairfax County, the Fairfax County Park Authority and Maryland’s Department of Transportation. Close coordination with these groups is critical to VDOT’s planning and project development efforts. Additionally, the team has worked to inform surrounding residents and the general public through large public information meetings and smaller group briefings. A dedicated project website also was launched at 495NorthernExtension.org, providing easy access to project-specific information and updates, and opportunities to request and receive information from project staff.

VDOT has offered formal public participation opportunities through a Public Information held on June 11, 2018 and on May 20, 2019. Another formal public participation opportunity will take place with the March 2020 public hearing. Additionally, ongoing information and discussions between the project team and the public will be ongoing throughout the development of the project.

What is VDOT doing with public comments and input?
Comments from the public and key stakeholder groups are reviewed and addressed by VDOT’s project staff. Comments received following VDOT’s formal Public Information Meetings were addressed by subject matter, and responses were made available to the public. See Comment Report 1 for comments and responses from the first Public Information Meeting on June 11, 2018 and Comment Report 2 for comments and responses from the second Public Information Meeting on May 20, 2019. Transcripts of the discussion and question and answer sessions at these meetings also are available at 495NorthernExtension.org.

Additionally, we will continue to meet with citizens groups, public agencies and elected officials to present data and findings as they become available.
Will the 495 NEXT project include stormwater management? How will concerns regarding the safety and aesthetics of specific stormwater management designs located on private property be addressed and/or mitigated? Will property owners be compensated?

Currently, this segment of the I-495 corridor does not have stormwater management facilities. 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 will be properly compensated. Due to the need for ongoing maintenance, stormwater management facilities are generally not located on private property.

Is mass transit being considered as part of the project to address congestion?
The 495 Express Lanes Northern Extension would expand the Express Lanes network in Virginia that promotes carpooling and bus service to move more people by providing faster, more reliable travel in express lanes.

Additionally, a high-level joint transit needs study is being conducted by Virginia’s Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) and Maryland’s Transit Authority (MTA). This transit study is being conducted independent of the ongoing environmental studies in Virginia and Maryland. Study results are expected in 2020. The planned study area will include the northern I-495 corridor on both sides of the American Legion Bridge (Virginia and Maryland), but the limits of the study area are not yet determined. Regional stakeholders will be engaged in the study for input.

What other studies were completed during earlier I-495 Beltway Projects?
Previously, VDOT conducted an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the implementation of the 14-mile I-495 Express Lanes. This EIS included the study of Express Lanes improvements to the George Washington Memorial Parkway, and a Record of Decision by Federal Highway Administration was received in June 2006, leading the way for the 495 Express Lanes to be built and implemented. Reevaluations of this EIS were completed in November 2009, and again in November 2012 to include the Dulles Toll Road interchange.

In June 2014, an environmental study was completed prior to VDOT implementing a 1.5-mile shoulder lane use project on I-495 North from where the 495 Express Lanes terminate to the George Washington Memorial Parkway. This new shoulder lane opened to traffic in June 2015.