

VDOT Solicits Proposals for Midtown Tunnel and MLK Freeway Project

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'VDOT is looking for industry partners to help foot the bill for an estimated \$1 billion in long-discussed improvements to tunnels and roadways between Norfolk and Portsmouth.'

The Virginia Department of Transportation wants to:

- # build a new tunnel parallel to the Midtown Tunnel;
- # extend the Martin Luther King Freeway between Interstate 264 and London Boulevard in Portsmouth;
- # and upgrade the existing Midtown and Downtown tunnels under the Elizabeth River.

""It's one of the most congested corridors in the commonwealth," state Transportation Secretary Pierce R. Homer said yesterday. "It desperately needs upgrading." However, "it's a very expensive project," Homer said, "and we have no public-sector resources to pay for it.""

'The Transportation Department expects that user tolls will ultimately pay for the work.'

'In a 77-page request for proposals, VDOT yesterday called on the private sector to come up with ideas on how to build the group of improvements generally referred to as "the Midtown Tunnel project."'

'Industry's conceptual proposals are due to VDOT Sept. 29. The department plans to ask for detailed proposals in the summer of 2009, award a contract by 2010 and complete construction by 2015.'

'VDOT put out formal feelers for industry interest in the project in 2004. Three large engineering and construction firms put their hats in the ring: Tidewater Skanska Inc., Jacobs Civil Inc. and Parsons Transportation Group.'

'The project will be designed to allow possible future transit and rail connections between Norfolk and Portsmouth.'

'In Virginia, private companies can finance, design, build, operate and maintain infrastructure projects in partnership with state and local governments.'

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