

that will be forwarded to the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB). The City resolution, public comments, and other information developed during the study, will then be forwarded to the CTB for a final decision. Following the public availability period, the EA and Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation will be revised as appropriate, to reflect changes in the proposed action or include mitigation measures resulting from comments received on the EA or at the public hearing. The revised EA and Final Section 4(f) Evaluation along with a copy of the public hearing transcript and the recommendation of the preferred alternative will then be submitted to the FHWA for final determination.

After final determination by FHWA, all further MLK Freeway Extension project development efforts will occur as part of the overall PPTA process. This may include a Solicitation for Conceptual Proposals (SFP) to identify private entities qualified to undertake this project. Representatives from the VDOT Innovative Project Delivery Division are available here tonight to answer any questions you may have on the PPTA process. Additional information can be found at http://www.virginiadot.org/projects/hamptonroads/downtown_tunnel-midtown_tunnel-mlk_extension.asp.



Schedule

April 7, 2008	Environmental Assessment and Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation approved by the Federal Highway Administration
May 14, 2008	Location Public Hearing
May 26, 2008	Final day to submit comments on the Alternatives, Environmental Assessment, and Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation
Spring 2008	Solicitation for Conceptual Proposals through PPTA Process
June 2008	Portsmouth City Council Resolution
July 2008	Commonwealth Transportation Board action
July 2008	Revised Environmental Assessment and Final Section 4(f) Evaluation prepared
August 2008	Final decision on the Environmental Assessment and Final Section 4(f) Evaluation by FHWA
Summer 2010	Begin Construction



MLK FREEWAY EXTENSION

Location Public Hearing
STATE PROJECT 0058-965-107, PE-101

May 14, 2008
4:00 PM – 7:00 PM
I. C. Norcum High School
1801 London Boulevard
Portsmouth, VA 23704

Welcome

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the City of Portsmouth, in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), are studying the extension of Route 58, Martin Luther King (MLK) Freeway to Interstate 264 (I-264). The extension would provide a new controlled access north-south transportation link from existing US Route 58 / MLK Freeway to I-264.

Need for the Project

A direct, limited-access connection does not currently exist between I-264 (which serves the Downtown Tunnel) and Route 58 (which serves the Midtown Tunnel). This requires traffic (including large trucks) to use congested local city streets, including London Boulevard (US 58/Route 141), Harbor Drive, Frederick Boulevard (US 17) and Turnpike Road (Route 337). The lack of a direct, limited access link between these two facilities offers commuters limited alternatives when either tunnel is congested or closed. The purpose of the MLK Freeway Extension is to provide improved highway system linkage and continuity, and reduce through traffic and related congestion on local streets.

Purpose of the Hearing

The purpose of this hearing is to share with you the findings of the study, to receive your comments, answer questions, and to receive your recommendations for a location decision. This hearing complies with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Historic Preservation Act. The displays placed around the room provide information on transportation challenges in the study area, the proposed project, and the social and environmental impacts of this project. Representatives of VDOT, its consultants, and the City of Portsmouth are available to answer your questions and listen to your thoughts and concerns.

Please review the maps and displays and share your thoughts by using the comment sheet provided at the meeting. You may leave your comments in the box provided at tonight's meeting. You may also record your comments orally at the designated recording station.

If you are not ready to provide your comments tonight, you may submit them by May 26, 2008 to the following address which also is preprinted on the back of the comment sheet:
Nicholas Nies
Environmental Division
Virginia Department of Transportation
1401 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

You also can submit comments by email to Nicholas Nies at: Nicholas.Nies@VDOT.Virginia.gov. Please reference "MLK Public Hearing Comment" in the subject heading.

If you need additional information following tonight's meeting, please call Mr. Nies at (804) 786-1092.

Background

Options to provide a connection between I-264 and US 58 and eliminate through traffic on local streets have been the subject of studies for many years.

In April 2005, VDOT decided to pursue the Downtown Tunnel/Midtown Tunnel/Martin Luther King Freeway Extension as a project under the Public-Private Transportation Act (PPTA). This proposed project includes three separate elements as follows:

- The Martin Luther King (MLK) Freeway Extension
- A new 2-lane parallel tube and improvements to the existing Midtown Tunnel and
- Improvements to the existing Downtown Tunnel

The MLK Freeway Extension project is listed in local and regional planning documents, including the City of Portsmouth comprehensive plan, *Destination 2025: Setting a Bold New Course*. The project is also listed as a regionally significant project within the approved Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC) *2026 Regional Transportation Plan* and the *2006-2011 Virginia Transportation Six Year Improvement Program (SYIP)*. The HRPDC also lists the MLK Freeway Extension project, along with the Midtown Tunnel project, as a regionally significant project in the *2030 Regional Transportation Plan*.

An Environmental Assessment (EA) and Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation were published for the project on April 7, 2008 and made available for public review and comment. Additionally, an Interchange Justification Report (IJR) was developed and completed in June 2007 to study potential interchange configurations for the MLK Freeway Extension and I-264. These documents are available for review at tonight's hearing.

Preferred Alternative

The Preferred Alternative, as evaluated in the current EA and Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation, is proposed as a four-lane limited access freeway connecting I-264 with existing MLK Freeway at London Boulevard. It would be elevated over top of, and replace, Harbor Drive, and include a new full interchange at I-264 and a new directional interchange at High Street. The existing MLK Freeway/London Boulevard interchange would be retained with minor improvements to existing ramps. A proposed interchange with High Street would provide access to and from the south only.

Road Closures

Preliminary designs for the Preferred Alternative include closing both the Des Moines Avenue exit and South Street entrance to I-264. This is due to safety concerns associated with ramp spacing on I-264. Harbor Drive would be closed and the following streets would dead end adjacent to the proposed facility: MacArthur Ave., both sides of King Street, both sides of County Street and Meander Road. Even though these roads adjacent to the proposed new facility would be closed to vehicular traffic, pedestrian and non-motorized vehicle access may be allowed under the facility at select locations. Queen Street and High Street would remain open to vehicular and pedestrian traffic under the proposed facility. These

closures may change as designs are finalized. Please note that the public will be provided another opportunity to comment on these final designs during a future public hearing.

Typical Cross Section

The typical cross section developed for the Preferred Alternative will provide elevated travel lanes with the proposed structure standing 18-30 feet above existing grade. A graphic presented at this hearing shows visualizations of the roadway south of Turnpike Road and north of High Street. The typical sections for the remainder of the project would vary depending on location. The precise width of required right-of-way will be determined during the project design phase.

No-Build Alternative

A No-Build Alternative is under consideration along with the Preferred Alternative and is being used as a benchmark to assess environmental impacts attributable to the proposed project. Under the No-Build Alternative, there would be no extension of the MLK Freeway and existing roads generally would remain in their present configuration. The No-Build Alternative includes projects contained in the *Hampton Roads 2026 Regional Transportation Plan*, without the proposed MLK Freeway Extension. Minor effects to environmental resources could occur during implementation of the programmed improvements associated with the No-Build Alternative; however, any potential effect would be assessed individually for those projects, which are independent of this project. The No-Build Alternative does not meet the purpose of, or need for, this project.

Traffic Analysis

In the project study area, the local streets with the heaviest existing traffic (including trucks) are Frederick Blvd., London Blvd., Effingham Street, Turnpike Road, and High Street. These routes have existing (Year 2006) traffic volumes ranging from 15,500 to 40,000 Average Daily Traffic (ADT). Without the proposed project, traffic volumes on these routes are expected to increase by an average of 25% by the year 2032. Assuming the proposed project is built, traffic volumes on these routes by 2032 are projected to decrease by an average of 32%, with a few routes experiencing as much as a 58% reduction. These reductions are attributable to the proposed MLK Freeway Extension, which is predicted to carry traffic volumes of 19,600 to 27,300 ADT in 2032.

Right Of Way and Relocation Assistance

The MLK Freeway Extension would potentially displace 18 owner families, two tenant families and seven businesses. Please refer to the relocation graphic presented at tonight's hearing for more information.

Information about right of way purchase is provided in VDOT's brochure entitled "Right of Way and Utilities: A Guide for Property Owners and Tenants." Copies of that brochure are available here from VDOT's right of way representatives. After this meeting, information and questions regarding right of way should be directed to:

Charles Horton
Hampton Roads District Right of Way Office
Virginia Department of Transportation
1700 North Main Street
Suffolk, Virginia 23434
(757) 925-2586
Charles.Horton@VDOT.Virginia.gov

VDOT ensures nondiscrimination and equal employment in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need more information or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, contact the VDOT Hampton Roads District Office, Civil Rights Division, at the above address or telephone (757) 925-2519 or TTY/TDD 711.

Tolling

As part of the overall PPTA project, the MLK Freeway Extension could be a tolled facility. If the MLK Freeway Extension is tolled, local traffic could continue to utilize the existing local road network to connect I-264 to Route 58 without being subject to tolls.

Cost

The current cost estimate of the MLK Freeway extension is approximately \$195 million, and is based on information known at this time and is subject to change as additional information becomes available. The estimate (which includes engineering, right-of-way acquisition and construction) will be refined prior to the completion of the NEPA process.



Summary of Potential Impacts	
Category	Impacts
Forest Land Displaced (acres)	0
Prime, Unique, or Statewide-important Farmland Displaced (acres)	0
Agricultural and Forestal District Land Used (acres)	0
Homes Displaced	20
Businesses Displaced	7
Farms Displaced	0
Schools Displaced	0
Churches Displaced	0
Cemeteries Displaced	0
Transit Routes or Stops Impacted	0
Parks or Recreation Impacts (acres)	0
Other Community Facilities Displaced (police, rescue, fire stations, etc.)	0
Environmental Justice Impacts to Minority or Low Income Populations	None
Section 4(f) Property Used	24.8 Acres
Residential Noise Impacts (Number of Properties Impacted)	125
Air Quality Violations	0
Length of Waters of the U.S. Disturbed (feet)	1,415
Wetlands Displaced (acres)	0.05
Floodplains Crossed (acres)	0
Wild and Scenic Rivers Impacted	0
Adverse Hydrologic Impacts	None
Adverse Wildlife Impacts	None
Threatened and Endangered Species Impacts	None
NRHP Eligible Historic Properties within Area of Potential Effect (number of properties)	3
NRHP Eligible Historic Properties Adversely Affected by Preferred Project	1
Hazardous Material Sites Impacted (number of sites)	0
Visual Impacts	None
Indirect and Cumulative Impacts	Minor

What's Next?

The study team will review and evaluate the comments you provide tonight and during the 10-day comment period. All comments must be received or postmarked by May 26, 2008 to be included in the public hearing transcript. A summary of the project and the public comments received will be presented to the Portsmouth City Council. The Council will then make a decision and that decision will be reflected in a resolution