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Virginia rolling toward I-95 tolls

Interstate 95 toll plans move forward with possible agreement slated for this winter

BY SCOTT SHENK
Date published: 4/18/2012

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The state's push toward instituting tolls on Interstate 95 south of Fredericksburg continues to advance, with a potential agreement slated for this winter.

The plan, part of a three-state federal pilot project that is still in the planning phase, would charge drivers a toll along the interstate between mile marker 126 in Massaponax to the North Carolina state line.

Drivers who continue south on I-95 from Virginia also can expect to pay a toll, as that state is also part of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Interstate Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Pilot Program. Missouri is the other state in the project.

In order to have the tolls approved, the Virginia Department of Transportation has to prove a need to federal transportation authorities.

State and local officials have said that with funding for road work drying up, there is a need. And revenues from the tolls would help pay for maintenance and construction along the I-95 corridor.

Cord Sterling, a member of the [Stafford County](#) Board of Supervisors and the Commonwealth Transportation Board, said this week that there isn't much money in state coffers.

"When you look at revenue per lane mile, we're running out of money," Sterling said at a George Washington Regional Commission meeting this week, during a discussion that followed a presentation of the tolling project's status by VDOT's Michael Estes.

David Ross, a [Spotsylvania County](#) Board of Supervisor who also is on the commission, asked Estes what he should tell his constituents about possibly having to pay tolls.

"It's a tough question to answer," he said before comparing the road system to owning a house--you have to constantly invest in it to keep it in shape. And tolls are one way to help pay for what Estes said is much-needed work.

Proponents say tolls are a user fee and that much of the revenue comes from drivers just passing through.

Estes said no rates or toll locations have been pinpointed. And there are still analyses, studies, data collection and more to be done before any decisions are made, he said.

VDOT plans to hold public hearings late this year, likely in the fall, when more details will be available.

Estes did lay out potential designs and placement of tolls, which could be cash or electronic.

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