

## **Construction Notes from Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia**

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Construction

### **Maryland Job Growth Rate, Unemployment Rate Improve**

**Annapolis, Md.** – Maryland's unemployment rate improved to 3.7 percent in November. The rate was 4 percent in October. According to the Baltimore Sun, employers added 9,200 jobs and the number of workers rose to approximately 2.9 million; the number of unemployed decreased by nearly 10 percent.

### **North Carolina Transportation Committee Cranks Up**

**Raleigh, N.C.** – The Carolinas AGC reports that the 21st Century Transportation Committee was recently briefed on an alternative to the gas tax and on new technology that will make it easier in coming years to collect highway tolls. As an alternative to the gas tax, the panel is looking into a satellite technology system that would be used to tax drivers for every mile they drive. A few hundred North Carolina drivers will be recruited next year to test that system as part of the \$16.5 million Road User Charge Study.

The study will enlist 2,700 drivers in six states to determine whether Americans would accept the idea of paying by the mile, instead of by the gallon. The University of Iowa Public Policy Center is expected to start recruiting 450 Triangle drivers for the mileage study in early 2008. The schedule has not been announced. Kevin Leibel of Chapel Hill-based Innovation Management, which will oversee the study in the Triangle, said volunteers' cars will be fitted with GPS and computer hardware to track the miles they travel through each state and local government jurisdiction.

### **Discovery Place To Close In 2009 For Renovations**

**Charlotte, N.C.** – One of Charlotte's most popular attractions will close to the public in January 2009 for 14 months in order to undertake \$31.6 million in renovations, according to The Charlotte Observer. Cambridge Seven Associates and Little Diversified are the architects on the project. The Discovery Place project is part of the city's and county's \$158 million investment in new and renovated cultural and arts facilities.

### **SCDOT Looking At Toll Lanes To Pay For Highway Improvements, Reduce Congestion**

**Columbia, S.C.** – SCDOT is looking at options for putting toll lanes on interstates 95, 26, 20, and the future I-73 to pay for highway improvements and to reduce congestion. While the concept of tolls on heavily traveled sections of SCDOT interstates is still in the discussion phase, the toll lanes would have to meet the criteria of existing law. Money collected must be used exclusively for highway improvements; toll lanes must be removed after improvements have been made and paid for; and tolls can only be placed on existing interstates with permission of the state legislature.

### **VDOT Completes Agreement For Capital Beltway Hot Lanes**

**Richmond, Va.** – Virginia Department of Transportation Commissioner David S. Ekern has signed all agreements with Virginia's federal and private partners on the Interstate 495 Capital Beltway High Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lanes project ensuring that construction will begin on the 14-mile project this spring. Key aspects of the 80-year agreement require the Commonwealth of Virginia to:

- Retain ownership and oversight of the HOT lanes including ensuring that Fluor-Transurban meets all of the daily and hourly operational standards of the HOT lanes.

VDOT will continue to own and manage the Beltway general purpose lanes, as VDOT has done since the opening of the Beltway in 1964.

- Share in project revenues and refinancing gains when they exceed a total return on investment of 8.1 percent — a first in the U.S. concession market.
- Provide a \$409 million financial grant to the project to support the construction of key elements including the final phase of the Springfield Interchange (Phase VIII), improvements to the I-66 interchange, participation in the regional congestion management plan and reconstruction of aging bridges on the Beltway.
- Have the right to build any other transportation improvement in the corridor. However, Fluor-Transurban may bid to construct those additional improvements.
- Provide police and emergency services to the corridor

Key aspects in the 80-year agreement require Fluor-Transurban to:

- Finance and build a 14-mile stretch of HOT lanes (two lanes in each direction) on the Capital Beltway, based on a fixed-price, fixed-time, design-build contract. Construction is expected to last five years (see map at [www.virginiadot.org/projects/HOT\\_495.asp](http://www.virginiadot.org/projects/HOT_495.asp)). Construction costs may not exceed \$1.4 billion and must be completed before Spring 2013.
- Finance and build three new access points from the Beltway into Tysons Corner, build HOV connections from I-95 to the Beltway (known as Phase VIII of the Springfield Interchange), as well as reconstruct and improve more than \$250 million of existing bridges, traffic lanes, overpasses, interchanges and signs. These maintenance and reconstruction costs are long-term savings to Virginia taxpayers.
- Finance all but \$409 million in project costs — accepting the financial risk if HOT lane use does not meet expectations or if construction costs exceed current estimates.
- Manage and fund all operations and maintenance of the HOT lanes including major repairs and rehabilitation.
- Collect tolls from non-HOV vehicles. Tolls will vary and be based on the level of congestion in the HOT lanes. All toll collection will be "open lane" and with transponders. During rush hours, the average trip cost is expected to be \$5 to \$6 and Fluor-Transurban must ensure free-flowing traffic conditions in the HOT lanes at all times.
- Ensure that HOV, transit, and commuter buses travel for free. Toll collection and enforcement will be in accordance with state laws including privacy requirements and EZ Pass requirements. Today, toll enforcement is by camera and police monitoring. Initial HOV enforcement technology will also be police monitoring of the lanes.
- Return the HOT lanes to the Commonwealth in good order at the end of the agreement.

The agreement is the culmination of more than five years of work among numerous local, private, regional, state and federal entities.