



## Truck Lanes and Interstate 81 in Virginia

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## I-81 Corridor Description

- Long-haul corridor
- Mostly rural; rolling and mountainous terrain
- Designed for 15% trucks; carries 30-40%



# Truck-Toll Proposal

- **Public-Private Transportation Act of 1995**
  - Law allows solicited and unsolicited proposals
  - Early 2002: private consortium, STAR Solutions, proposed building separate truck lanes and partially financing them with electronically-collected tolls on trucks
  - Toll revenues would support revenue bonds







## Was the Proposal Feasible?

### Several questions needed answers:

- How many lanes will I-81 need in the future?
- Does truck separation work for the *entire* corridor?
- Are rail improvements the answer?
- Is tolling feasible as a funding source?
  - Virginia law allows tolls on I-81 only on trucks

## Two Federal Processes Required



- **March 2003 – applied to FHWA for tolling I-81**
  - Possible funding option; no decisions have been made
- **January 2004 – launched I-81 Corridor Improvement Study under National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**
  - NEPA process helps determine what to build, not private proposal

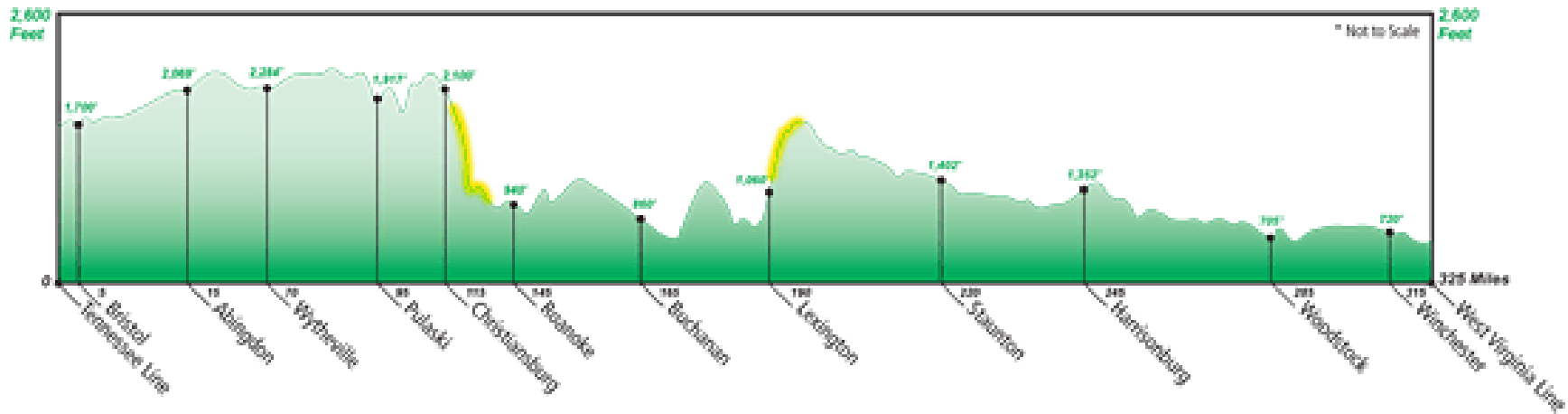


## Key Findings of I-81 Corridor Study

- **Traffic volume will nearly double by 2035, with truck volume growing fastest.**
  - In 2035, 37% needs one more lane in each direction; the rest needs more.
- **Building two separate lanes for trucks for the entire corridor doesn't work because it provides too much capacity for trucks and not enough for other vehicles.**
- **Rail alone does not meet future needs.**
  - With Virginia-only rail improvements, it may be possible to divert 3-6% trucks to rail.
- **The rate of trucks diverting to other routes is low, even with high tolls on trucks.**

# What Happened?

- Virginia's transportation policy-making body, the Commonwealth Transportation Board, in October 2006 directed VDOT to implement a program of safety improvements, including truck climbing lanes and interchange ramp extensions.



## Lessons Learned

- **Consider required federal processes, including compliance with NEPA.**
- **NEPA helps determine what can be built.**
- **Start public involvement early.**
  - Coordination with MPOs and PDCs
  - Presentations to hundreds of groups
  - Public hearings held in April 2006
  - About 3 in 4 responders were strongly opposed to using tolls on I-81 as a funding source