



Breakout Session #2

I-64 Gap Project

Widening I-64 to 3 Lanes Between RVA and 757

Executive Summary

The 29-mile stretch of Interstate 64 (I-64) between the Richmond area and Hampton Roads that still has two lanes in each direction needs to be widened.

RVA757 Connects believes this is more than a roadway capacity enhancement. The widening of I-64 is an investment in the vitality of our megaregion, benefitting businesses, workers, citizens, tourists, industry, and trade. It will help the economic competitiveness of our region and state while relieving congestion and increasing reliability for commuters and truckers.

The widening project, commonly referred to as the "I-64 Gap Project," has been one of RVA757 Connects' top priorities since our group's inception. I-64 is the only interstate access to Hampton Roads, the Port of Virginia, and the largest naval military base in the world.

The I-64 Gap Project would add a third lane in each direction from Bottoms Bridge, just east of Interstate 295 in the Richmond region, to the Lightfoot exit in the Williamsburg area. It is estimated that this widening effort would cost \$750 million to \$800 million.

The challenge until now has been sufficient funding for design and construction.

Until this session of the General Assembly, there have been no funds earmarked for or dedicated to the I-64 Gap Project. RVA757 Connects has been advocating for I-64 Gap Project funding through direct appeals to the administration, elected officials, and transportation leaders. Thanks to those efforts, and the work of many others, there's now positive movement on the I-64 Gap Project on two fronts:

1. First, over the past few weeks, the General Assembly, both the House and Senate, have been discussing an initial budget (ranging from \$50 million to \$190 million) to at least start work on some segments of the 29-mile gap. The good news is that we should end up with at least a start towards the \$750 million to \$800 million needed to fund the entire I-64 Gap Project.
2. Second, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has now prioritized the I-64 Gap Project and is in the process of applying for federal U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) grant funding. The \$190 million in state funding could serve as matching funds for a potential federal grant that could help fund construction of the entire 29 miles.

Details on both of these fronts are included at the end of this 5-page document.

Background on the I-64 Corridor Improvements To Date

Local funding has been key to the improvements made to date on I-64 in the Hampton Roads region.

Through the leadership of Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission, the Hampton Roads Transportation Organization, Reinvent Hampton Roads, VDOT, and many others, the Hampton Roads region is making \$5 billion-plus investment in transportation improvements.

The nearly 200-lane miles of new or improved Interstate 64 under construction is one of the largest interstate highway construction projects in the country, and includes the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel Expansion, improvements to the I-64 corridor from Williamsburg to Hampton, and improvements on other choke points around the region, including the I-64/264 interchange and the I-64 Southside/High Rise Bridge projects. In addition, to maximize traffic thru and congestion relief, the Hampton Roads Express Lanes Network will be constructed to interconnect these critical projects.

Funding to-date for these improvements mostly comes from a Hampton Roads regional sales and use tax (grocery purchases exempt) and a regional gas tax dedicated to these transportation improvements. An additional \$93.1 million is still needed to fund the Hampton Roads Express Lanes Network to ensure that the region's investments in the I-64 corridor are fully maximized.

Progress on all of these improvements is impressive. In December 2021, the third segment of I-64 corridor improvements was completed on time and on budget, including:

- Widening of eight miles of I-64, from two travel lanes to three in each direction, between state Route 199/Newman Road in Lightfoot (exit 234) and state Route 199/Humelsine Parkway (exit 242);
- Widening and rehabilitation of bridges over the Colonial Parkway; and
- The full replacement of two bridges over Queens Creek.

Segment III took a little more than two years to complete, and it cost \$178.3 million.

The Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel Expansion is scheduled for completion in November 2025. This is the largest highway construction project in Virginia's history. This transformative undertaking will widen the current four-lane segments along nearly 10 miles of the I-64 corridor in Norfolk and Hampton, with new twin tunnels under the harbor channel. The expansion will increase capacity, ease major congestion, and enhance travel time reliability. The project's total budget is \$3.8 billion, of which \$3.56 billion is funded by HRTAC, making it one of the largest infrastructure projects in the country.

The bottom line: the Hampton Roads region, not the Commonwealth or U.S. federal government, is paying for all of these I-64 improvements in Hampton Roads.



Most Recent and Promising Activity on Addressing the I-64 Gap Project

The recent completion (December 2021) of the third segment of I-64 corridor improvements on the peninsula makes the I-64 Gap Project the last remaining two-lane segment that must be funded and built.

This includes nine miles in the Hampton Roads region and 20 miles in the Richmond region. Both regions, closely collaborating, have the best chance to make the I-64 Gap Project a reality.

Again, the challenge is funding. There are no funds earmarked for or dedicated to funding the I-64 Gap Project.

But there's now positive movement on two potential funding fronts:

1. **Movement in the General Assembly:** Over the past few weeks, in the General Assembly, both the House and Senate have been discussing an initial budget (ranging from \$50 million to \$190 million) to at least start work on some segments of the 29-mile gap.

At the end of Gov. Ralph Northam's term, the administration submitted a 2022-2024 budget that included \$20 million for permitting and design work on the I-64 Gap Project.

The House Appropriations Committee budget amendments related to transportation increased the I-64 Gap Project allocation to \$50 million. The Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee amendments called for \$190 million for the project, which would fund the remaining nine miles in the Hampton Roads region between Williamsburg and the New Kent County Line. The \$190 million also could be used as potential matching funds for federal grants to help fund other or all segments.

The final transportation funding amendments amount will be determined in the upcoming budget session. Governor Glenn Youngkin is calling back lawmakers to work on the budget starting on April 4, 2022.

2. **Requesting Federal USDOT Grant Funding:** VDOT has now prioritized the I-64 Gap Project and is in the process of applying for federal USDOT grant funding. This includes near-term federal competitive grants (such as RAISE, INFRA, and MEGA)

COMPETITIVE PROGRAM	PURPOSE	GUARANTEED AMOUNT	GENERAL FUND AUTHORIZATION	FEDERAL SHARE
Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Open	RAISE grants support surface transportation projects of local and/or regional significance.	\$7.5B	\$7.5B	80% Federal Share. Secretary has Discretion to Increase in Areas of Persistent Poverty
Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) 1Q 2022	INFRA grants will offer needed aid to freight infrastructure by providing funding to state and local governments for projects of regional or national significance. The BIL also raises the cap on multimodal projects to 30% of program funds.	\$8B	\$6B	60% Grant for Large Projects, 80% Grant for Small Projects, 80% Max Federal Share
NEW National Infrastructure Project Assistance (MEGA) February 2022	This new MEGA projects grant program will support multi-modal, multi-jurisdictional projects of national or regional significance.	\$5B	\$10B	80% Grant, 80% Federal Share
NEW Rural Surface Transportation Program 1Q 2022	This new competitive grant program will improve and expand surface transportation infrastructure in rural areas, increasing connectivity, improving safety and reliability of the movement of people and freight, and generating regional economic growth.	\$2B		80% Federal Share

VDOT's senior leadership has asked RVA757 Connects for assistance in making the strongest case possible for the I-64 Gap Project and in rallying even greater support.

Making a Strong Case for the I-64 Gap Project:

For some time, RVA757 Connects and others have been making a strong case for I-64 Gap Project funding. Our leading arguments include:

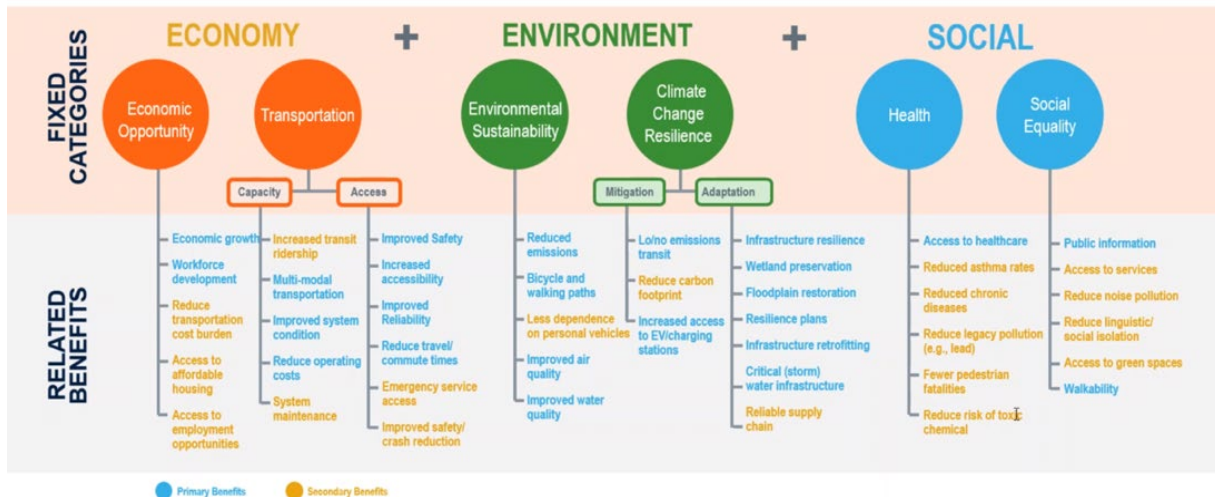
- **Economy:** The increasing movement of goods, people, and capital between the Richmond area and Hampton Roads creates a positive, catalytic impact on the larger geographic footprint.
- **Equity:** The 29-mile of the I-64 Gap Project's geographic area provides greater access to underserved residents.
- **Safety:** Eliminating choke points where I-64 goes from three to two lanes which will make the corridor safer.
- **Emergency:** The corridor is an important evacuation route for hurricanes.
- **Environment:** Traffic congestion increases vehicle emissions and degrades ambient air quality.
- **The Virginia Port:** Much of the Virginia Port Authority's cargo travels the I-64 corridor, supporting 436,667 part-time and full-time jobs and generating \$2.7 billion in state and local taxes and fees.
- **Military:** The military depends on the I-64 predictably for supplies and access to Washington, D.C.
- **Tourism:** In 2020, 84.4 million visitors spent \$17.5 billion in Virginia, supporting 255,764 jobs in the state. The I-64 corridor is a major part of Virginia's tourism infrastructure.
- **Reliability:** One traffic incident in the I-64 Gap currently can create congestion or a traffic standstill. A third lane and widened shoulders in each direction would greatly improve this situation.
- **Congestion:** The I-64 Gap Project area is congested, especially in the summer months. There is a significant loss of time for commercial carriers, commuters, and tourists.

Federal competitive grant programs are very specific in grant requirements and award criteria. For USDOT grants, three key areas - the economy, environment, and social equity - are being prioritized in determining grant awards.

The agency wants to see proposals showcasing these three benefits. The table on the next page from the USDOT shows these three core areas.

RVA757 Connects needs to help VDOT package the I-64 Gap Project’s benefits in a way that highlights these three key areas.

USDOT Structural Framework for Benefits



For the March 29 Board/MIC Meeting Breakout Session #2 (20 minutes):

We seek the Board/MIC’s input on three I-64 Gap Project-related questions:

1. Who knows and can reach out to budget conferees immediately? We need to convey:
 - RVA757 Connects supports the Senate’s proposed \$190 million in the state budget to advance the I-64 Gap Project.
2. How can RVA757 Connects bring even greater attention to this issue during the upcoming budget session that starts on April 4th to help lock in as much initial funding as possible for the I-64 Gap project?
3. How can RVA757 Connects help VDOT in its pursuit of large federal USDOT grants for I-64 Gap funding? Specifically:
 - a. What other RVA and 757 organizations could join us in advancing this cause? What about institutions of higher education, other nonprofits, or specific industries?
 - b. Should we create a “Friends of the I-64 Gap” campaign that informs, updates, and unites everyone in the I-64 Innovation Corridor around this cause?
 - c. How can we make the strongest case that the I-64 Gap Project will advance the economy, environment, and social equity – the three primary benefits the USDOT looks for in awarding grants (see chart above)?