

IMPROVE **81**

I-81 CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Speakers Bureau

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Program Benefits



Enhanced Safety

This program will implement a series of improvements such as lane and shoulder widening to reduce the rate and frequency of crashes along the corridor.



Reduced Congestion

The program improvements will reduce congestion and improve reliability by adding capacity in targeted areas of the corridor and improving speed of incident clearance to help limit travel delays.



Economic Development

I-81 is the main corridor and key economic artery of western Virginia. These improvements will ensure that goods and services critical to our economy move safely and efficiently through and within the region.

Project Development Process (Capital Projects)



Planning

16 PROJECTS



Preliminary
Engineering (PE) &
Environmental
Evaluation



Design

32 PROJECTS



Right of Way &
Utility
Coordination



Construction



Completed

8 PROJECTS

Planned Improvements

The **325-mile long corridor** spans three VDOT districts:
Bristol, Salem, and Staunton.

Localities along the corridor include: City of Bristol, Washington County, Smyth County, Wythe County, Pulaski County, City of Radford, Montgomery County, City of Salem, Roanoke County, City of Roanoke, Botetourt County, Rockbridge County, City of Lexington, City of Buena Vista, Augusta County, City of Staunton, City of Waynesboro, Rockingham County, City of Harrisonburg, Shenandoah County, Frederick County, and the City of Winchester.



Capital Improvement Projects

There are currently **56 Capital Improvement projects** within the Program. Some of these projects include:

+1

Widening

The addition of a third lane for added capacity and safety. Some projects include the addition of a third lane in both the northbound and southbound directions while some projects include the addition of a third lane in only one direction.



Acceleration/Deceleration Lane Extension

Allows drivers additional time to make appropriate speed adjustments on the entrance and exit ramps before merging into interstate traffic or encountering sharper curves and stop conditions on exit ramps.



Curve Improvement

Installation of static and/or flashing chevron signs along specific curves to notify drivers of upcoming sharp or challenging curves where crashes are prevalent.

Capital Improvement Projects

There are currently **56 Capital Improvement projects** within the Program. Some of these projects include:



Truck Climbing Lane

An additional lane added to enable trucks to ascend a steep grade at a lower speed while maintaining regular traffic speeds for passenger vehicles.



Auxiliary Lanes

Allows drivers additional time to speed up or slow down when merging on or off I-81. Typically constructed between two interchanges, these lanes help enhance safety by reducing traffic “weaving” between I-81 travel lanes and ramps.



Shoulder widening

Wider shoulder lanes increase safety for the travelling public during emergencies such as flat tire or breakdown, provide recovery area for errant vehicles, and enhance safety for emergency responders.

Operational Improvements

The Program also includes a host of **Operational Improvements** which enhance safety as well as mobility, particularly during emergency events. Examples of operational improvements include:



Changeable Message Signs

Changeable, or Digital, message boards help to alert drivers in real time of incidents along the interstate and assist with directing them to alternate routes.



Additional Traffic Cameras (CCTV)

The additional traffic cameras assist the Traffic Operations Center during emergency events as well as provide information to travelers via the VA 511 system.



Enhancements to Safety Service Patrol

Additional hours of operations and additional routes help to protect the travelling public during vehicle emergencies, speed up recovery time, and protect incident zones.

Operational Improvements

The Program also includes a host of **Operational Improvements** which enhance safety as well as mobility, particularly during emergency events. Examples of operational improvements include:



Detour Route Improvements

One of the biggest challenges of the I-81 Corridor is the lack of reliable alternative routes. Low cost, high return investments in signal systems and minor geometric improvements help to efficiently move traffic around incidents on the interstate.



Enhancements to Clearance Times

Reducing incident clearance time saves time, money, and enhances reliability along the interstate system. The implementation of a Towing and Recovery Incentive Program (TRIP) and lift-and-tow devices help to clear incidents more quickly to keep traffic moving.

Planned Studies With Potential Future Improvements

The [I-81 Corridor Improvement Plan](#), Section 10, identified three areas for further analysis and potential future improvements based on the outcome of the analyses:



Truck Parking

Appendix I of the I-81 Study Report includes an analysis of truck parking availability along the corridor and identifies deficiencies. The Plan recommends the formation of a task force comprised of representatives from the Virginia Department of Transportation, The Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles, private travel center owners, economic development authorities, trucking associations, and representatives from local and regional governments and planning agencies. The purpose of the task force is to:

- Identify site-specific issues and overcome obstacles to parking development
- Investigate opportunities to fund the expansion of public and private truck parking facilities in targeted locations
- Develop a truck parking information system for public rest areas initially and examine opportunities to partner with the private sector
- Implement mobile technology to assist truck drivers with finding available and reserved parking

The Truck Parking Task Force was formed in August 2020 and has begun the work to serve its purpose.

Planned Studies With Potential Future Improvements

The [I-81 Corridor Improvement Plan](#), Section 10, identified three areas for further analysis and potential future improvements based on the outcome of the analyses:



Speed Enforcement

With specific focus on the northern end of the I-81 Corridor within the Commonwealth, the I-81 Corridor Improvement Plan recommends the formation of a task force comprised of members of the Commonwealth Transportation Board, Department of State Police, and local law enforcement to determine strategies for enhanced speed enforcement.



Multimodal Improvements

The I-81 Corridor Improvement Plan states that the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation will work through a cooperative process with the railroad industry, Amtrak, local governments, intercity bus operators, and regional planning bodies to fully develop the capital improvement needs to support impactful multimodal improvements along the I-81 Corridor.

Capital Improvement Project Status – Bristol District

- 7 projects under design by VDOT staff
- 6 projects under design by on-call consultant
- 2 projects under design by project-specific consultant (procured)
- 1 Design-Build project under design for January 2021 advertisement
- 2 projects – Construction Complete
- **Of the 18 current SYIP projects in the District, all are currently under design or have completed construction**

Capital Improvement Project Status – Salem District

- 2 projects under design by VDOT staff
- 0 projects under design by on-call consultant
- 1 project under design by project-specific consultant (procured)
- 2 Design-Build projects, bundled and advertised as a single project is currently under procurement.
- 1 project - Construction Complete
- **Of the 6 current SYIP projects in the District, all are currently under design or have completed construction**

Capital Improvement Project Status – Staunton District

- 3 projects under design by VDOT staff
- 1 project under design by on-call consultant
- 4 projects under design by project-specific consultant (procured)
- 0 Design-Build projects
- 3 projects advertised for construction in December, construction to begin in spring.
- 5 projects – Construction Complete
- **Of the 16 current SYIP projects in the District, 16 are currently under design or have completed construction**

Corridor-wide Operational Improvements

- Curve Improvements (static and flashing Chevron signs) - Complete
- Safety Service Patrol Enhancements – Complete
- Lift and Tow - Complete
- Towing and Recovery Incentive Program – Underway with implementation scheduled for March 2021
- Traffic Camera Installations – 42 cameras now on VA 511, 8 awaiting integration to VA 511 (viewable to the Traffic Operations Center), 1 awaiting electric service installation.
- Changeable (Digital) Message Signs – Under construction, on schedule, fixed completion date October 28, 2021

Corridor-wide Arterial Improvements

Signal upgrades –

- Planning and design underway in concert with coordination with localities for signal system integration into VDOT central signal system.

Parallel Route upgrades –

- Minor geometric improvement projects to facilitate access to and from I-81 during incidents under design for construction in the near future.

Corridor-wide Communications

- Development of Communications Plan – Complete
- Development of Program-specific website – Complete
 - improve81.org
- Development of Leadership Briefing Package – Complete
- Development of Speaker's Bureau – Complete
- Program's first newsletter published on improve81.org
- Informational video and accompanying podcast about the improvements at the Troutville Rest Area have been posted on improve81.org
- Additional videos and podcasts will be posted to improve81.org approximately every other month.

Takeaway Scorecard

ACTIVITY	STATUS	ANTICIPATED COMPLETION
Curve improvements (8)	Complete	Fall 2019
Initial accel/decel lane extensions (8)	Complete	Fall 2020
Safety Service Patrol Expansion	Complete	July 2019
Additional Cameras (51)	Nearly Complete	Spring 2020
Additional Changeable Message Signs	Underway	October 2021
Arterial Upgrades	Underway	Varies by project
Remaining capital projects (32)	Underway	Varies by project

Advisory Committee

An I-81 Advisory Committee was established to provide advice and recommendations to the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) regarding the development of the I-81 Corridor Improvement Plan.

The committee is scheduled to meet four times each year at rotating planning district locations along the corridor and report to the Governor and General Assembly each December. The committee has 15 voting members: seven Virginia lawmakers, three CTB members representing the Bristol, Salem and Staunton districts, and the five chairs of the planning district commissions. VDOT's Commissioner and DRPT's Director will serve on the committee ex officio in non-voting capacities.

Advisory Committee Members

Voting Members

- Delegate Gwendolyn Gooditis, District 10
- Delegate Chris Hurst, District 12
- Delegate Sam Rasoul, District 11
- Delegate Tony Wilt, District 26
- Senator Creigh Deeds, District 25
- Senator John Edwards, District 21
- Senator Todd Pillion, District 40
- Chair Frank Friedman, Central Shenandoah PDC
- Chair Bradley Grose, Roanoke Valley/Alleghany PDC
- Chair Michael Maslaney, New River Valley PDC
- Chair Dennis Morris, Northern Shenandoah PDC
- Chair Willie Green, Mount Rogers PDC
- Ray Smoot, Jr., Salem District CTB Member
- Currently Vacant, Bristol District CTB Member
- Mark Merrill, Staunton District CTB Member

Ex Officio

- Stephen Brich, VDOT Commissioner
- Jennifer Mitchell, DRPT Director

Program Funding

In 2019, the General Assembly adopted legislation creating the Interstate 81 Corridor Improvement Fund. Revenues supporting the fund and improvements were identified from the following sources:



Truck Fees



Regional Fuels Tax

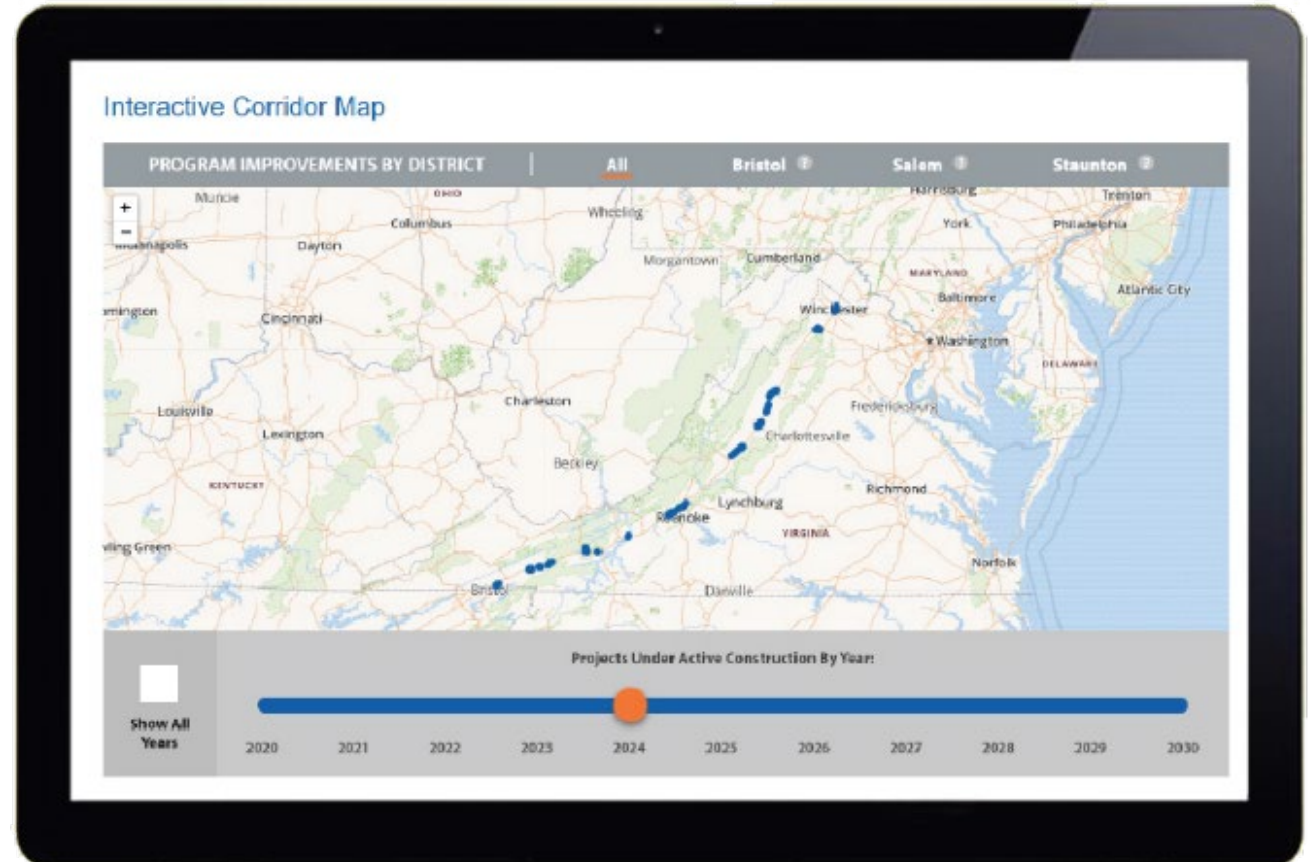


**Statewide Road
& Diesel Tax**

Schedule

The entire program is anticipated to last until at least 2030, with projects completed at various times. Timing related to specific projects can be found on the website via the interactive map or the [planned improvements](#), [work underway](#), and [work completed](#) pages.

Visit the website: Improve81.org



Next Steps

- Continue Design of Capital Improvement Projects
- Complete Traffic Camera Installations (Electric service and VA 511 Integration)
- Complete Procurement of Program's First Design-Build Contract in Salem District
- Begin construction of ramp projects in Staunton District (Spring 2021). Includes Exit 304, Exit 296, and Exit 291 bundled into a single construction contract
- Award Single-Phase Design Build Project in Bristol District (Exit 47 Acceleration Lane Extension)
- Begin Arterial Improvements (Signal improvements and minor geometric improvements)
- Execute TRIP Program

Contacts

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Program Team

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