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# Improve I-81 Talking Points

## Why?

Interstate-81 is not only a major transportation network in the Shenandoah Valley but also a transportation and economic link running north and south in the eastern U.S.

Interstate-81 carries 62,000-73,800 vehicles per day (Staunton to Winchester segment) and is expected to continue to increase steadily in volume. For comparative purposes, a 1999, VDOT report showed 45,000 vehicles per day on I-81 in the Staunton District.

Interstate-81 is a major north-south truck route and its importance is projected to increase. Currently, I-81 carries 42% of statewide truck traffic. (I-95 carries 26%.)

By any measure (number of accidents/incidents, severity of injury, incident management, lost time and productivity), I-81 needs to be improved.

The Improve I-81 coalition was created to generate a unified voice in Richmond and Washington, DC to request greater attention and transportation improvements along our segment of I-81, a segment that has not had much capital expense or targeted non-infrastructure improvements in many, many years.

Routine maintenance and planned interchange improvements have helped keep I-81 traffic moving, but long-term planned improvements have been overlooked in favor of other Interstates in Virginia.

The Chambers of Commerce and other affiliated organizations along the I-81 corridor feel that it is time to develop a long-range plan for improving I-81 traffic flow and safety, identifying short, medium and long-range improvements.

A long-range plan is not only helpful for the State and local governments, but will help current and potential businesses plan their asset and vehicle allocations with more certainty.

The Improve I-81 coalition is also aware that financial resources will be needed as improvements are planned and occur along I-81 and we encourage Virginia and Federal officials and agencies to identify needs and resources available and needed to sustain immediate and long-term solutions to traffic and safety on I-81.

## Recommendations

Many studies have been conducted over the years and solutions identified. The coalition would like to see the following next steps:

- Identified viable short and mid-range solutions ranked according to ease of accomplishment and associated cost.
- Identify funding mechanisms, both available and proposed, for these priorities.
- A long term plan with timeline and funding sources for more expansive highway improvements.