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**HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 291**  
**AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE**  
(Proposed by the Senate Committee on Rules  
on March 5, 2004)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Cline)

*Encouraging the Commonwealth Transportation Board and the Virginia Department of Transportation, upon completion of the 18-month NEPA environmental review, to consider various ways to address congestion and safety problems on Interstate 81.*

WHEREAS, the Virginia portion of Interstate 81 stretches from Bristol to Winchester at a distance of over 1,300 lane miles, making it the longest interstate in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia portion of Interstate 81 passes through 13 counties, 21 cities and towns, and nearly one-fifth of Virginia's population; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia portion of Interstate 81 consists of over 90 interchanges, nearly all of which are in proximity to some form of commercial activity; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia portion of Interstate 81 is one of the top eight truck routes in the United States and a critical part of a major traffic corridor for the transportation of goods along the East Coast; and

WHEREAS, hundreds of businesses in a variety of sizes and industries are based along the Virginia portion of Interstate 81, contributing billions in revenue and thousands of jobs to Virginia's economy and enjoy a competitive advantage due to the central location of Interstate 81 along the East Coast; and

WHEREAS, timely maintenance and improvements to the Virginia portion of Interstate 81 over the past 40 years has contributed to the economic growth of the region along Interstate 81 and throughout the entire Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the twin challenges of relieving congestion and maintaining safety have grown to critical levels along the Interstate 81 corridor; and

WHEREAS, traffic levels along Interstate 81 have grown significantly over the past 40 years, especially over the past decade, where average daily traffic levels have doubled from 25,000 vehicles per day in 1990 to nearly 50,000 vehicles per day in 2000; and

WHEREAS, several large colleges and universities are located along Interstate 81, leading to increased traffic in late spring and early fall; and

WHEREAS, truck traffic along Interstate 81 was originally estimated to account for 15 percent of all traffic, but now accounts for around 30 percent of all traffic; and

WHEREAS, the number of fatal crashes along Interstate 81 from 2000 to 2002 was 73, outpacing the number of fatal crashes along Interstate 64 (64 fatal crashes) and nearly equaling the number on Interstate 95 (78 fatal crashes); and

WHEREAS, fatal crashes make up one percent of all crashes along Interstate 81, which is almost twice as high as the percentage of all crashes along Interstate 64 (.58 percent) or Interstate 95 (.61 percent); and

WHEREAS, Interstate 81 is currently the deadliest Interstate in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, improvements are necessary to address the twin problems of congestion and unsafe conditions; and

WHEREAS, under the Public-Private Transportation Act of 1995, the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) have solicited conceptual proposals to design, build, maintain, and operate improvements to all or parts of Interstate 81; and

WHEREAS, VDOT and the Federal Highway Administration have signed an agreement allowing for an 18-month environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act, which will help to safeguard our natural and cultural resources as improvements are considered for Interstate 81; and

WHEREAS, the length of time for proposals submitted under the PPTA to be completed has been estimated to be at least 10 years; and

WHEREAS, one particular improvement that could be made in a shorter time frame that would address both safety and congestion concerns would be the construction of so-called "truck climbing" lanes on portions of Interstate 81 where grades are steep and difficult for heavily laden trucks to traverse at the same speed as non-truck traffic; and

WHEREAS, construction of these "truck climbing" lanes would enhance safety by separating slow-moving trucks from faster traffic, and also serve to avoid aggressive driving that sometimes results from frustrated motorists; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Commonwealth Transportation Board and the Virginia Department of Transportation be encouraged, upon completion of the 18-month NEPA environmental review, to consider various ways to address congestion and safety

60 problems on Interstate 81. As part of its continuing review of construction plans for Interstate 81, the  
61 Board and Department are encouraged to (i) examine the potential for construction of "truck climbing"  
62 lanes along portions of Interstate 81; (ii) examine the portions of Interstate 81 that are potential  
63 candidates for "truck climbing" lanes, placing emphasis on those candidates that would not require the  
64 acquisition of additional right-of-way; (iii) investigate additional ways to address safety concerns along  
65 Interstate 81, especially during high volume periods surrounding the beginning and end of the college  
66 year; and (iv) determine the feasibility of interim safety measures along Interstate 81, including the  
67 placing and regular rotation of empty patrol vehicles in the median strip at various locations. The  
68 Secretary of Public Safety, the Secretary of Education, and the Virginia State Police are requested to  
69 provide technical assistance to the Commonwealth Transportation Board and the Secretary of  
70 Transportation, upon request; and, be it

71 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit copies of this resolution  
72 to the Virginia Secretary of Transportation, the Virginia Secretary of Education, the Virginia Secretary  
73 of Public Safety, the Superintendent of State Police, the Commonwealth Transportation Commissioner,  
74 and the other members of the Commonwealth Transportation Board in order that they may be apprised  
75 of the sense of the General Assembly in this matter.