

# State close to announcement on U.S. 301 financing



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(Photo: SUCHAT PEDERSON/THE NEWS JOURNAL)

An announcement about the source of key federal funding for a \$500 million U.S. 301 toll road is expected this summer. A fatal accident on Saturday occurred on a roadway that will be bypassed by the route.

The new highway's first 14-mile segment would bypass an often congested and sometimes dangerous stretch of two- to four-lane road between the Maryland line southwest of Middletown and the Del. 1 Roth Bridge.

The Delaware Department of Transportation [for years has been pushing to relocate U.S. 301](#) ([/story/news/local/2014/07/16/toll-road-plan-gets-tentative-ok-rating-agency/12768145/](#)). Efforts stalled in 2013 with the release of revised traffic and revenue forecasts showing that economic downturn of the past decade had drastically changed travel patterns and financing assumptions. Those changes led to months of review to

verify the project's continued viability and eligibility for a \$189 million Federal Highway Administration loan guarantee.

DelDOT spokesman Geoff Sundstrom said officials remain optimistic and expect to hear about a federal loan guarantee this summer.

"I would hope we have some kind of an announcement by the end of the month or the beginning of August," he said.

State lawmakers last month approved a footnote in the annual capital budget authorizing DelDOT to sell bonds in amounts needed to fully finance the project. The state portion will be secured through a pledge of toll revenues and, if needed, state Transportation Trust Fund receipts.

DelDOT already has sold \$125 million in federally backed bonds to cover the the costs of land purchases, design expenses and some utility relocations.

A man died and two others were injured in a head-on crash Saturday near Summit Bridge and Marl Pit roads, roughly in the center of the corridor that would be bypassed by the new U.S. 301. It was the latest in a long string of incidents along a roadway where fatal crash rates were 60 percent higher than the national average early in the last decade.

Transportation officials say the new roadway would divert heavy truck traffic onto the new toll road, while also increasing safety and economic development. The highway project would create about 5,200 construction-oriented jobs and 2,400 jobs in supporting industries, according to state officials.

Michael Johnson, who lives along Summit Bridge Road about 3 miles north of Saturday's crash scene, said relief can't come soon enough.

"It's been a problem all along," Johnson said. "You get an awful lot of tractor-trailers going back and forth between this road and Route 13 and 1, and a lot of other traffic making turns into or going into little developments or businesses. It's not getting any better."



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[Fatal crash investigation; 2 hospitalized](#)

[\(http://www.delawareonline.com/story/news/traffic/2015/07/11/summit-bridge-road-closed-following-crash/30018955/\)](http://www.delawareonline.com/story/news/traffic/2015/07/11/summit-bridge-road-closed-following-crash/30018955/)

DelDOT reports that five people died between Summit Bridge Road and north Middletown from Jan. 1, 2009, to Dec. 31, 2014. Three of those deaths came along the 3.4-mile section that includes the Marl Pit Road intersection, between Broad Street in Middletown and Boyds Corner Road.

DelDOT recorded 291 crashes along that section over the same five-year period, including 10 head-on collisions. In the section between Boyds Corner Road and Summit Bridge, there were 207 crashes in the five years ending Dec. 31, including two deaths and five head-on crashes.

Larry Tarabicos, an attorney who represents the proposed 5,000-home White Hall development and 1.4-million-square-foot Scott Run Business Park between the Summit and Roth bridges, said the U.S. 301 project remains crucial to southern New Castle County's growth.

"It's an indispensable part of any meaningful growth going forward," Tarabicos said.

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