

media release

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Pocahontas 895 bridge to get new monitoring system

When the wind starts to blow, Bill Dale wants to know.

The road operations manager for [Pocahontas 895](#) is working to secure a system that will provide comprehensive weather and pavement monitoring for the [Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge](#).

The system will measure temperature, moisture, precipitation, wind speed and wind direction, and then connect with office and home computers to transmit the data to [Transurban](#). The system's "smart software" also will connect with roadside cameras to provide a digital image of the pavement being sensed, and with variable message signs to generate a text warning to motorists.

Existing temperature sensors on the bridge surface will be retained, giving the updated system a "second check" feature to ensure accuracy of information about pavement conditions, Bill said. The existing sensors, part of a [Virginia Department of Transportation](#) pavement monitoring system, will tie in with the upgraded system and VDOT's [Transportation Operations Center](#), making the array of weather information available to the entire Richmond-area driving public.

"This system will allow us to alert drivers, especially those driving trucks and oversize vehicles, to impending conditions that could impact their ability to control their vehicles," Bill said.

The new system will be "much more sensitive than what we have now," Bill said, and will be able to detect whether moisture is rain, sleet, slush, ice or snow. Roadside cameras linked to the sensors will automatically position to capture an image of the pavement so that Bill can check the data against what's actually happening on the road.

Two sets of sensors will be placed on either side of the bridge, at the highest point, which is about 145 feet from the James River below, as measured from the underside of the bridge. "A high bridge over a river, surrounded by moist air – it all spells 'ice,'" Bill said.

The enhanced sensing system is scheduled to be in place in time for winter, Bill added.