

Existing Conditions

South Military Highway (U.S. Route 13) has long been an important roadway for the City of Chesapeake and the Hampton Roads area. In the early 1940s, before the construction of I-64, South Military Highway was built as a defense highway to serve the Norfolk Naval Station, Little Creek Amphibious Base and the Norfolk Naval Shipyard. It bypassed the congested traffic areas of Portsmouth and Norfolk, providing a direct route to transport military supplies. At the time of its construction, the roadway ran through rural farm areas with an average daily traffic (ADT) count of approximately 2,000 vehicles per day.

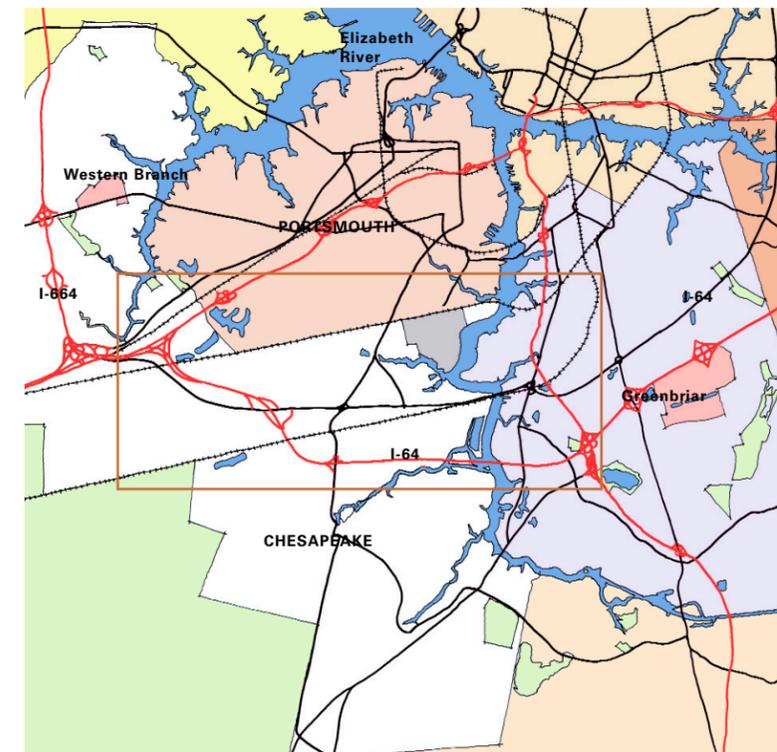
South Military Highway continues to be an important roadway for the City of Chesapeake and the Hampton Roads region. The facility is no longer just a military transport route but an urban arterial serving the traffic demands of both a local and regional population. Its location is both an asset and a detriment for the users it serves. It serves as a major east-west arterial for a variety of users including through commuters and heavy trucks from numerous light industrial businesses. Various neighborhoods and commercial uses along the corridor also generate traffic on South Military Highway.

Today, South Military Highway serves as an incident management route to Interstate 64. When incidents occur at the high-rise bridge (G.A. Treacle Bridge) and traffic is diverted from I-64 to the South Military Highway corridor, traffic volumes rise dramatically and significantly impact traffic operations and level-of-service conditions for the corridor. This roadway is classified as a principal arterial, defined as a multi-lane facility serving major centers of activity, characterized by high traffic volumes carrying significant portions of

urban area traffic. Major intersections along the corridor are signalized. Current average daily traffic counts along the corridor gathered by Kimley-Horn in the spring of 2005.

As population growth and associated traffic volumes continue to increase in the region, the regional dependence on this corridor will continue to climb. One of the critical pieces of this corridor that requires immediate attention is the replacement of the Gilmerton Bridge. In the east, the Gilmerton Bridge serves as a gateway into the corridor.

The bridge was constructed in 1938 and crosses the Southern



Branch of the Elizabeth River. The bridge is a twin bascule span, four-lane structure that has an average daily vehicle count of 36,000 vehicles per day. Because of its age, the bridge has the following weight restrictions:

Single Units: 14 Tons

Semi-Trailers: 20 Tons

Twin Trailers: 27 Tons

These restrictions affect commercial activity along the corridor forcing all heavy vehicle traffic generated at the east end of the corridor to travel west and access I-64 via George Washington Highway. The Virginia Department of Transportation has planned for the replacement of the Gilmerton Bridge and the design work for the new bridge is to be finalized in 2005. The City Council approved that the new bridge be built along the existing alignment using a staged construction process that allows traffic to continued passage along South Military Highway over the Elizabeth River. The six-lane bridge will initially have four vehicle travel lanes, with two shared pedestrian/bicycle lanes. The reconfiguration of the laneage to accommodate six travel lanes is based on future demand. The new bridge structure is currently being designed with no weight restrictions and an increased mean water clearance resulting in a 25% to 30% reduction in bridge openings. Fewer openings equal fewer interruptions in traffic flow. Currently, construction is expected to begin in the fall of 2007 and will be completed in the fall of 2009.

Along with the volume of traffic and variety of users, the corridor has many current problems, many of which are inter-related with the traffic issues. The image of South Military Highway is impacted by poor property maintenance and aesthetics, insufficient buffers between land uses (particularly industrial activity adjacent to residen-

tial areas), and inadequate or deteriorating infrastructure (Gilmerton Bridge, South Military Highway pavement needs resurfacing, uncoordinated traffic signalization, poor lighting, and sewer and utility lines).

Land uses along the corridor are generally characterized by:

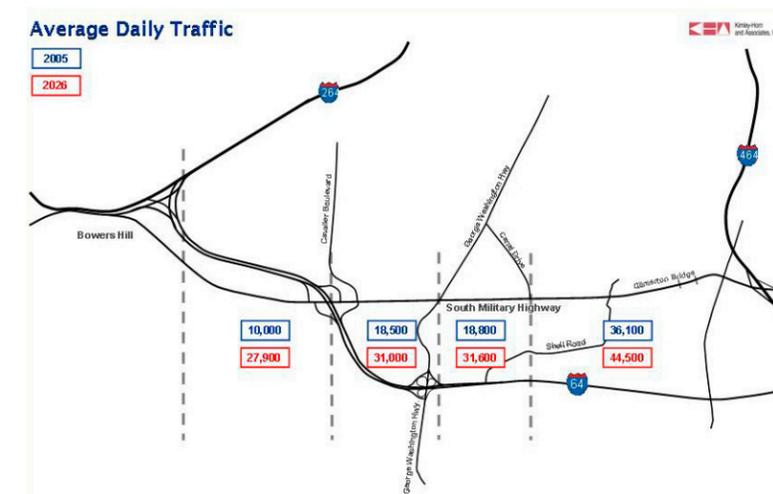
- heavy and light water-related industry with some residential and business\commercial in the eastern portion (Gilmerton)
- a mix of business\commercial, residential and office\institutional in the middle portion (Community Core)
- a mix of warehousing\light-industrial
- residential, and agricultural uses in the western portion (Bower's Hill)

The City's most recently updated Land Use Plan reflects a mixture of uses along the corridor, with a continued emphasis on Water Related Industrial and Heavy Industrial uses in the vicinity of the Gilmerton Bridge, General Business\Commercial uses in the middle portion, and Warehousing\Light Industrial uses in the western portion of the corridor.

In addition to the updated 2026 Land Use Plan which is part of the recently adopted 2026 Comprehensive Plan, the City of Chesapeake has also adopted their 2050 Master Transportation Plan (MTP). The development of the 2050 MTP plays a key role in sustaining and directing future development in the City of Chesapeake. The 2050 MTP identifies the ultimate typical section of South Military Highway as an eight-lane facility. For the South Military Highway Corridor Study, and in a effort to remain consistent with the 2026 Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC) Regional Transportation Plan and the 2026 City of Chesapeake Comprehensive Plan, horizon year analysis was kept at 2026. The

planning horizon year of 2026 results in traffic projections requiring only six-lanes for a major portion and four-lanes for the western section of the South Military Highway Corridor. The 2050 traffic projections prepared by the City of Chesapeake however, indicated the need for an eight-lane facility and therefore that ultimate configuration is identified in the MTP.

The interim year (2026) of analysis reflects the traffic demand that will need to be accommodated over the next twenty to twenty-five years. The 2050 MTP addresses traffic demand that is expected in the next forty to forty-five years. It should be recognized that the 2026 planning horizon is an interim year of analysis in relation to the 2050 MTP. The recommended improvements and the associated Plan addresses the needs for 2026 and are not intended to contradict those needs and the ultimate eight-lane configuration for South Military Highway per the 2050 MTP.



Current average daily traffic counts along South Military Highway