

Transportation Committee

(www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mountvernon/visioning_task_force.htm)

Overview Vision Statement

To encourage the citizens of Mount Vernon District to create a vision of what should be implemented for transportation infrastructure within 25 years that enhances quality of life and promotes a strong and growing economy throughout the entire region.

The Committee strives to encourage citizens by conducting outreach activities to promote public participation. A vision without a plan is just a dream. The issues that follow are presented as the start of a plan to realize a vision; to spark interest, dialogue, and further analysis into the future as Mount Vernon District evolves. As we proceed to disseminate our vision for the Mount Vernon District, we must assure that we continue to provide an appropriate road map for implementation, adjusted to the changing circumstances which at present we cannot predict, though we know it will take a concerted and sustained effort by all of the stakeholders.

The Committee is proposing 16 transportation oriented issues for inclusion in the overall vision for the future of the Mount Vernon District. However, these issues are clearly interrelated with aspects other than transportation. We must assure that a proper integration occurs for mutually supportive progress in the realm of planning and zoning, land-use and the environment - all supported by a synchronized development of an appropriate transportation infrastructure.

Top 5 Issues

1. Mass Transit - Expansion of Rail Transit along US Route 1
2. Eastern Bypass - Construct limited access parkway between I-95 and an upgraded Maryland Route 301 or alternative parallel corridor.
3. Transportation Construction Funding
4. Transportation Maintenance Funding
5. Transportation Impact Fee

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ISSUE #1

Mass Transit - Expansion of Rail Transit along US Route 1

COMMITTEE POSITION

The need for some form of rail transit to alleviate congestion and provide transportation options along Route 1 is recognized by the residents of the Mount Vernon District, but not necessarily by VDOT. Interplay of rail and busses to form a connecting grid is deemed imperative to assure smooth traffic flow within the District and on the County's highways. The grid should consist of extended Blue and Yellow lines for North-South transportation, and with busses providing East-West connections between Metro stations and extending into western Districts. The extension of rail on Route 1 may need to project into Prince William County.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

For the past ten years efforts to secure a Mass Transit Study for Richmond Highway have been thwarted. A study had been previously funded, then funding was diverted and as of the end of 2010 it still has not been initiated. This study is needed to determine the most economical and operationally sustainable mode of rail to be constructed, as well as define its placement on Route 1 (i.e. on which side of the highway or in the center between lanes). That, in turn, will permit the proper alignment of a reconstructed Route 1 from the Beltway to the Occoquan.

The rail options which should come into consideration are:

1. An extension of Heavy Rail (Metro) from Huntington due South. This option provides the most transit capacity and also provides a seamless connection with the existing Yellow Line, minimizing the need for rail-to-rail transfers. However, a further extension of the Yellow Line, whether underground, at-grade, or elevated, is recognized as the most costly option.
2. Light Rail would be less expensive and is easier to run at-grade than heavy rail, but has a lower capacity than heavy rail and would require a rail-to-rail transfer at Huntington.
3. A third option is Monorail. This option potentially involves the least amount of right-of-way, but the elevated structure presents a large visual obstruction and costs more than a light rail at-grade option.

In any event, the Mass Transit Study should provide a firm recommendation as to which option is most appropriate.

The extension of the Yellow Line to Fort Belvoir is currently in direct competition with an extension of the Blue Line from Springfield to Fort Belvoir. This is unfortunate, since on a long-range basis, both rail lines will be needed to accommodate the residential complexes along both the Route 1 and the I-95 corridors. Additionally, on a long-term basis, the residential expansions south of Fort Belvoir and extending into Prince William County will also require supporting rail transportation.

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NEXT ACTION STEPS

- Provide priority to fund and execute the Route 1 Mass Transit Study, with an expanded mission to extend its vision further south into Prince William County.
- Develop a funding source to pay for future rail extensions, aimed at establishing a transportation grid, with North-South rail transit and East-West bus transit.
- The transportation grid will be significantly reinforced by connecting the rail lines from Huntington (the Yellow Line) and rail from Springfield (the Blue Line) at or near Fort Belvoir.
- Rail must be planned to continue due south from Fort Belvoir, where the Yellow and Blue lines meet, towards Fredericksburg and an inter-connection with VRE and AMTRAK.
- The East-West bus system needs to connect vital transportation links, to include connecting Yellow and Blue line stations and projecting due west into other Districts to include the stations of the new Silver line at Tyson Corner and beyond.

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ISSUE #2

Eastern Bypass

COMMITTEE POSITION

Construct limited access parkway between I-95 and an upgraded Maryland Route 301 or alternative parallel corridor.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

As development continues south of Lorton and more cars crowd I-95 in both directions, it is clear that new solutions or the re-energizing of past initiatives must be studied and explored in order to reduce congestion in northern Virginia and Fairfax County. Residential development and growth continues unabated in Prince William, Stafford and Spotsylvania counties as well as in Fredericksburg with more cars headed into the Northern Virginia and District of Columbia. Truck traffic continues to increase as more supplies are required for operation of the communities and their populations in the National Capitol region. Rush hour continues to expand and absorb more hours of the day. Flex- and telecommute work schedules have not helped to reduce traffic.

This issue focuses on construction of an Interstate 95 Eastern Bypass to and around the National Capitol area – referred to as “I-95E”. Background for this issue has been obtained from the Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance (NVTA) website from its list of regional priorities (www.nvta.org).

“The Eastern Bypass is part of what regional planners in the 1960s proposed as a third or outer Beltway. The Eastern Bypass' primary function is to divert north-south interstate traffic, heavy trucks in particular, moving up and down the East Coast off the Capital Beltway and Woodrow Wilson Bridge and away from and around the metropolitan core. Potential corridors, benefits and feasibility were last examined in the late 1980s in a joint Maryland-Virginia (Bellomo-McGee) Study. This Study examined six possible corridors ranging from 57 to 91 miles in length. It estimated travel demand of 60,000 vehicles per day by 2010 and costs between \$1.5 billion and \$1.8 billion (in 1988 dollars) depending upon the corridor.” (NVTA)

“The Northern Virginia 2030 Transportation Plan includes the Eastern Bypass and estimates its cost at \$1.215 billion.” (NVTA)

The construction of an Eastern Bypass would significantly contribute to increase the quality of life in the Mount Vernon District. Removing cars and trucks that are traveling north and south with no business in the Northern Virginia, District of Columbia and Maryland counties of Montgomery and Prince George will decrease the total traffic on I-95 north/south through the National Capitol region and lower the commute times for the area as well as reduce the number of cars transiting our District.

NEXT ACTION STEPS

- Fairfax County should endorse the concept of an Eastern Bypass and should recommend to the Governors of Maryland and Virginia to direct their Departments of

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Transportation to conduct a joint study and recommend the best corridor for this highway.

- Fairfax County should recommend to the Maryland-Virginia-District of Columbia Joint Legislative Commission on Interstate Transportation to place this issue on its agenda.

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ISSUE #3

Transportation Construction Funding

COMMITTEE POSITION

Monitor and support the Northern Virginia Transportation Coalition efforts to secure sufficient funding to construct new roads and highways within Fairfax County.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

On the basis of current funding arrangements, over the next six years transportation revenues are expected to be reduced by \$2.1 - \$2.6 billion based on state estimates and AASHTO federal revenue estimates. State revenue for the next six years will be reduced by \$1.5 billion. Gas tax revenues are declining because of population change, prices, the economy, and the cars that are being driven today and in the future. Motor vehicle sales and use tax collection started downward in FY 2004 and have now plummeted. Federal revenue is trending downward with its long-term future unknown. A one-time \$8 billion Congressional bailout saved the current fiscal year funding. Federal gas tax faces the same challenges as the state gas tax and is 80% of the total federal highway trust fund. The six-year federal transportation spending authorization ends this fiscal year. Federal funding is increasingly unpredictable. The Commonwealth Transportation Board will be consulting with federal and state partners to determine best approach to estimating federal revenues for next six years. Existing policy goals will be followed – to complete project phases; bridges; multimodal; congestion relief; and to maximize funding from partners. Estimated reduction in insurance premiums revenues will mean that fewer bonds can be sold which will directly impact construction projects and designated projects. This review occurs each year in November/December timeframe.

The Commonwealth of Virginia cannot afford to administer and deliver transportation-related services, programs and projects the same way. The economic outlook in Virginia, United States, and internationally has continued to decline over the past two years. The transportation revenue outlook continues to be on the decline. Virginia must make fundamental structural changes to transportation administration, services, programs, and projects to address the long-term change to the Virginia revenue base. These reductions are in addition to the \$1.1 billion reduction in state revenues last year.

NEXT ACTION STEPS

Fairfax County should support the efforts of the Northern Virginia Transportation Coalition as the Coalition intends to strive for:

1. Addressing the Commonwealth's \$billion surplus to close the funding gaps for new construction in Northern Virginia.
2. Engaging our elected officials to work with the Federal government to share transportation funding costs under the Base Relocation Program.

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3. Withdrawing the No-tax pledges on transportation funding, by candidates for public office, which are contrary to the best interests of the citizens of the Commonwealth and future economic prosperity.
4. Monitoring the progress of the Commonwealth of Virginia working together and doing whatever is necessary to secure significant, new, dedicated, reliable transportation revenues to erase Virginia's crippling transportation deficit, which threatens Virginia's long-term prosperity.
5. Sustaining a series of periodic Public Information meetings to keep residents of the County informed on the progress of new road construction activities in Northern Virginia.
6. Monitoring VDOT's reporting to the Governor, General Assembly, Commonwealth Transportation Board, and Fairfax County Board of Directors.

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ISSUE #4

Transportation Maintenance Funding

COMMITTEE POSITION

Monitor and support the Northern Virginia Transportation Coalition efforts to secure sufficient funding to sustain the transportation network within Fairfax County.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

In 2009, The Northern Virginia Transportation Coalition recognized that greater investment in transportation infrastructure is essential to short-term economic recovery and long-term economic prosperity. Transportation-dedicated taxes and fees have remained virtually unchanged in Virginia since 1987. Documented unfunded transportation requirements exceed \$100 billion, including more than \$3.7 billion in structurally deficient bridges and \$1 billion in interstate and primary highway repaving needs. Inadequate capacity and poor pavement conditions annually cost \$4.7 billion or nearly \$1,000 per licensed Virginia driver in accidents, operating costs and congestion-related delays. Virginia's Six-Year Improvement Program, which has experienced over \$4 billion in cuts in the past two years, is not an accurate reflection of the Commonwealth's acute transportation needs. \$400 million in Virginia's Transportation Trust Fund for construction is diverted annually to the Highway Maintenance and Operations Fund, and the annual growth factor for state maintenance funds to localities has been reduced from 4% to 3%, leaving fewer funds to meet growing needs. VDOT has already significantly consolidated operations and reduced personnel over the past 2 years. The revenue stream created by 2007 legislation to support \$3 billion in transportation bonds over a ten-year period is currently capable of funding only \$2 billion worth of bonds and is insufficient to support any bonds before 2010. Declining state revenues and expanding needs have increased Virginia's dependence upon federal funds at a time when the state soon will be unable to provide federal matching dollars, meaning that for every \$20 in matching dollars the Commonwealth is lacking, it forgoes \$80 in federal funding.

The federal surface transportation program is up for re-authorization this year and future allocation levels are very much in doubt. The Commonwealth lacks funds for transportation infrastructure to attract new business and supplement public-private partnership transportation investments. The Northern Virginia Transportation Coalition has previously affirmed support for a minimum of \$400 million per year in new, dedicated, sustainable transportation funds for Northern Virginia and for the position that such funds must not be viewed or used as a replacement for new or existing state transportation revenues.

NEXT ACTION STEPS

The Committee supports the efforts of the Northern Virginia Transportation Coalition as the Coalition intends to strive for:

1. The inclusion of bonds, public-private partnerships, General Funds, allocation formula changes, tolls and other currently used mechanisms remain part of the solution.

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2. Recognition that bonds, public-private partnerships, General Funds, allocation formula changes, tolls and other currently used mechanisms are inadequate individually or collectively to address well-documented needs.
3. Fiscal and political realities dictate that the Commonwealth's transportation needs cannot be met without new and reliable revenues in the form of dedicated taxes and/or fees.
4. No-tax pledges on transportation funding by candidates for public office are contrary to the best interests of the citizens of the Commonwealth and future economic prosperity.
5. Monitoring the progress of the Commonwealth of Virginia working together and doing whatever is necessary to secure significant, new, dedicated, reliable transportation revenues to erase Virginia's crippling transportation deficit, which threatens Virginia's long-term prosperity.
6. Sustaining a series of periodic Public Information meetings to keep residents of Northern Virginia informed on the progress of road and highway maintenance activities in Northern Virginia.
7. Monitoring VDOT's reporting to the Governor, General Assembly, Commonwealth Transportation Board, and Fairfax County Board of Directors.
8. Including two representatives from the Mount Vernon District on the Northern Virginia Transportation Coalition to keep our supervisor apprised of funding issues and discussions that could affect the Mount Vernon District, and to assure that the Mount Vernon District receives its appropriate share of the available maintenance funding.

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ISSUE #5

Transportation Impact Fee

COMMITTEE POSITION

The Board of Supervisors should adopt a zoning ordinance to assess and impose impact fees on new development to pay all or part of the cost of reasonable road improvements that benefit the new development as authorized by Va. Code Section 15.2-2319. And Fairfax County should assess and impose transportation fees on all new development ("a specific development or subdivision" that requires a building permit – Va. Code Section 15.2-2323).

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

Desired residential and commercial development has been stymied in view of the lack of progress to expand the existing transportation infrastructure and the public's outcry due to the worsening gridlock in the Mt. Vernon Magisterial District. While road infrastructure improvements and widening on Route 1 and key intersections have been completed so that there are 6 travel lanes and dedicated left turn lanes and deceleration lanes, Richmond Highway is congested with the volume of commuter vehicles, as well as local trips for residents and visitors to the Fort Belvoir post hospital. That is, those improvements to the transportation infrastructure were not sufficient to accommodate the tens of thousands of vehicles that travel the Richmond Highway corridor daily. Fort Hunt Road, the George Washington Parkway, Buckman Road, as well as Telegraph Road, Old Colchester Road, Lorton Road, Armistead Road, Pohick Road, Silverbrook Road, Rolling Road, and Ox Road are all overloaded with vehicles and their road surface is crumbling. Money is needed for these transportation infrastructure projects and the citizens of Fairfax County have been paying more than their share for decades.

In 2000, the Virginia General Assembly granted localities (the County) the authority to impose transportation impact fees for new development in order to generate revenue for the cost of reasonable road improvements that benefit the new development. By 2010, only one locality (Stafford County) had created and imposed transportation impact fees. Stafford County created and established transportation impact fee districts in 2003 and 2005, and identified specific road improvements as necessary to the new growth. U.S. Route 1 in Stafford County was widened to 6 lanes and development has not abandoned Stafford County.

NEXT ACTION STEPS

1. The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors should adopt a zoning ordinance to assess and impose impact fees on new development to pay all or part of the cost of reasonable road improvements.
2. After adoption of the transportation impact fee zoning ordinance, Fairfax County should enforce it and collect fees from new development.
3. In the next 20-25 years, Fairfax County should be able to fund transportation infrastructure projects through impact fees and draw new development to its main economic centers.