



County of Fairfax, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 6, 2013

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Stella Koch, Chairman *Stella M. Koch*
Environmental Quality Advisory Council

George Lamb, At-Large member *George W. Lamb*
Environmental Quality Advisory Council

SUBJECT: EQAC comments on the Countywide Dialogue on Transportation

The Fairfax County Department of Transportation recently briefed EQAC on the process and the information provided to the public regarding the identification and prioritization of transportation projects for funding. We are writing to provide you with our thoughts about this effort.

In the EQAC Annual Report on the Environment, we present Land Use and Transportation as an integrated section. Decisions in one area inherently affect the other, and the best overall decisions for the environment happen when they are considered together. As such, we suggest that transportation be considered in the context of strategic countywide directions. These include a focus on revitalization districts and multi-modal connectedness between districts and across the County, and the current Fairfax Forward planning methodology.

In our 2013 Annual Report on the Environment, we recommended the following:

This year the General Assembly passed legislation raising additional revenue for transportation. As the county enters a community dialogue to prioritize the allocation of these funds, EQAC recommends that the county provide priority for non-motorized/multi-modal transportation options. The county has been developing a comprehensive bicycle master plan that is ready for implementation. This complements requirements for pedestrian facilities in mixed-use centers. Proper implementation of the non-motorized/multi-modal master plan needs to include:

- *Implementation of the bicycle master plan. Bicycle paths provide healthy and effective options to move about the county and between connected destinations.*

Environmental Quality Advisory Council (EQAC)
c/o Department of Planning and Zoning
Planning Division
12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 730
Fairfax, Virginia 22035-5509
Phone 703-324-1380 TTY: 711
Fax 703-324-3056
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/eqac/

- *Expanded bicycle parking guidelines modeled on successful programs such as the new secure bicycle parking facilities at Silver Line stations and other county park-and-ride/transit facilities.*
- *Funding for implementation of both capital and non-capital elements of the county's bicycle master plan.*
- *Implementation of an outreach and education program for encouraging/promoting bicycling as a transportation mode. This could be called "Bike Fairfax!"*
- *Engagement of the private sector. One example of this can be seen in New York City, where CitiBank underwrites 100 percent of the cost of a bikeshare program. This could work today in several suburban and transit centers.*

EQAC commends the Department of Transportation for its outreach efforts. However, we are writing you today because we are concerned that the information provided during the outreach was unclear in the extent to which the integration with land use goals has been considered and the extent to which benefit/cost assessment results have considered this integration.

In reviewing the list of proposed transportation projects, we feel that several related and additional points should be addressed:

- Projects identified on the "Fairfax County Unfunded Transportation Projects" list have an associated benefit/cost ratio identified on the list. This is informative, but we learned that the formulas used to generate the cost benefit differ between modes. As such, the benefit/cost ratios for a road project and a pedestrian or bicycle project cannot be compared. They can only be used to analyze projects in the same category, not with projects in other categories. While we understand that it is FCDOT's intent to only compare the benefit/cost ratios of projects within categories and not between categories, we feel that the presentation is highly misleading and the benefit/cost ratio information should be listed in separate columns for different categories of projects.
- Road projects are considerably more expensive than other multi-modal projects on the list. There should be consideration given to the relative importance of each mode as part of the total solution, not taken as isolated projects. The total cost to implement Phase I of the Countywide Bicycle Master Plan, for example, would be much less than the estimated costs of many of the road projects on the list, and it is possible that this may hold true for Phase II as well. We feel that some proportion of the new transportation funding should be dedicated to non-road projects.
- Interconnectedness to transit areas and mixed-use centers needs to be emphasized as a priority. There should be more focus on how a project enhances the value of the Comprehensive Plan, and less focus on the individual projects.
- The projects do not include an initial assessment of ecological value or impact. We understand that a formal impact analysis is required once the plans moved into detailed assessment. However the ecological impact should be considered as an initial criterion to aid the public in this dialogue.

We appreciate and applaud the dialogue process. The County has evolved an inclusive and thoughtful process for adopting changes and building towards the future. We hope that the selected projects complement the strategic vision and improve the total quality of life for County residents.

We hope that you find these comments helpful and we stand ready to address any questions you or County staff may have.

cc: Edward L. Long, Jr., County Executive
Robert A. Stalzer, Deputy County Executive
David J. Molchany, Deputy County Executive
Thomas P. Biesiadny, Director, Department of Transportation
EQAC file, November 2013