

Alternatives for Improving Roadway Services in Fairfax

From: viennatrails@aol.com

Sent: Tuesday, January 25, 2011 7:04 AM

To: Owolabi, Robert O.; jeff.parnes@gmail.com

Subject: Comments about Alternatives for IRSinFC

Dear Robert and Jeff-

I have some thoughts on this topic that I would have shared with the group, but unfortunately I can't attend the discussion. So here goes:

The biggest issue here is what is stated on page 1: "As a state agency, VDOT may not have the resources available to respond to specific local requests." This, of course, is mainly because VDOT does not receive enough funding from state coffers to supply Fairfax County's needs.

While there are clear advantages to having local control of some transportation functions, as we do now with some bus stops and pedestrian facilities (and there are some others which would be helpful, such as controlling the setting of speed limits) - without complete control of all functions, it would be foolhardy for the county to assume any more of its own transportation funding. It is absolutely a slippery slope if Fairfax County does what is stated on p. 30: "the county could provide VDOT with additional funding on an annual basis with specific direction on maintenance activities to receive enhanced treatment." VDOT would be more than happy to have us come up with our own funding - but where would that process end? With further confusion over payment and responsibility, we could stand to be in a much bigger mess than we are in today - and end up paying more every year.

In fact, VDOT and Fairfax County should sit down and calculate exactly what the county ideally needs in terms of services - right down to how many mows per year. When that number has been determined, state legislators should ensure that VDOT is fully funded to meet the county's needs. If current funding streams aren't enough to pay for it, additional funds need to be located. In this process, the allocation of funding through the CTF, HMOF AND MTF needs to be studied to make there are adequate resources for transit, bike and pedestrian infrastructure - not just for car lanes. For instance, in this session Kay Kory is requesting that the Mass Transit Fund go from 11 to 19% of total transportation funding. It is unclear whether active transportation such as pedestrian and bicycling receive their own stream of funding in any of the funds. If not, this should be addressed legislatively.

The General Assembly should change the policy of restricting the use of C and I tax revenue to transpo projects that simply increase capacity. It's ok to expand transit, but it is not sustainable for C and I used only to design and construct more roads. Money should also be available to provide infrastructure for alternate forms of transportation which reduce dependency on SOV and thereby decrease the need for more car usage of state roads.

There is strong potential that by changing the Code of Virginia, restrictions can be eased on some available tax revenue streams. These should all be explored for legislative possibilities:

--The meals tax: it is interesting to note that there are no restrictions on the use of revenues raised by a meals tax.

--The law contains a 5-year sunset provision on the local income tax for transportation. If this restriction were lifted, these revenues could be used to fund ongoing maintenance.

--The sales tax is also a potential source of funding for ongoing maintenance.

It would be helpful if VDOT would answer the following questions from its own perspective:

1. In order to provide more responsive service to Fairfax County, would it be possible for VDOT to change its districting to create a Fairfax County-only district rather than the current NoVa district? Ideally, to maximize service, the district could then be split into north and south county segments.
2. What is the status of discussions between Fairfax County and VDOT concerning the revision or creation of new urban standards? What is the timeframe for releasing a revised plan? Can TAC be privy to the discussion?
3. The Kansas DOT instituted a successful campaign to push for passage of an \$8B funding bill even though the state had a \$500M budget shortfall. After an aggressive 7-year fight - KDOT won out and the bill passed. Why can't VDOT be more proactive and less passive in fighting for its own future?
4. Can VDOT justify why the allocation per arterial lane-mile is the same for cities with high traffic volumes as it is for small cities?
5. Can VDOT justify why, if the road network in Fairfax County represents 4% of lane miles in the state and 12% of daily miles traveled, funding isn't proportionately allocated to Fairfax County?
6. What suggestions can VDOT itself make for the system to become more fair to Fairfax County?

-Jenifer