

# VIENNA STATION IMPROVEMENTS STUDY

Comments of July 12, 2005 Public Information Session

## Background

In coordination with Fairfax County and through ongoing public involvement, WMATA is currently conducting two studies of Vienna Station: Improvements Study and Parking Study. The comments below arose during the first of two public information sessions on improvements to the Station. For further information and to schedule a community briefing, please contact Michael Wing, Land Use Planning Aide to Providence District Supervisor Linda Smyth at 703-560-6946 or TTY 703-207-9407; or write to 8739 Lee Highway, Fairfax, VA 22031; or e-mail via 'Contact Us' at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/providence>.

## 1. Comments Relating to the Vienna Station and Site

- 1.1. There should be a new mezzanine at the western end of the station platform with pedestrian bridges across I-66.

**WMATA Response:** The capital and operating costs of this option are significant and might be justified in light of long-term needs of the station. Since the focus of the Improvements Study is for the near-term relief of the evening platform congestion, the foremost option to date is to add a new stair between the existing mezzanine and platform.

- 1.2. There is a need for more vending machines for SmarTrip transactions, especially if WMATA wishes to encourage SmarTrip use.

**WMATA Response:** WMATA has a current program to convert 98 of the existing vending machines to SmarTrip Express machines, which will handle both cash and credit cards. At Vienna Station, there will be eight SmarTrip Express machines and three standard machines. For general information, at Vienna Station, nearly 80 percent of the peak-hour Metrorail customers use SmarTrip cards.

- 1.3. Parking is an issue at the Vienna Station. By 8:30 a.m. all parking spaces are filled. What will occur when the 650-spaces of the southwest temporary lot are displaced by redevelopment? Why not increase the parking capacity?

**WMATA Response:** In addition to the Improvements Study, WMATA is concurrently conducting a parking study for a third park-and-ride structure in the southeast quadrant. This study will include analysis of traffic impacts as well as locations for temporary parking during construction. The proposed third structure might be 1300 spaces for replacement of the temporary lot spaces and curbside spaces, or 1500 to 2100 spaces for additional capacity.

- 1.4. The parking program is behind the curve. Without sufficient parking at Metrorail stations, patrons tend to park in the neighborhoods. A model for increasing access to Vienna Station without park-and-ride expansion there is the Herndon-Monroe park-and-ride structure.

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Parking could be expanded at Stringfellow Road with feeder buses to and from Vienna Station.

**WMATA Response:** In addition to the current parking study, Fairfax County and WMATA are considering satellite park-and-ride facilities with express feeder buses to Vienna Station. The County, in particular, has a study of special bus ramps to and from I-66 to serve Vienna Station.

- 1.5. As part of the WMATA evaluation of station capacity, there is a need to consider the peak hour demand under both normal passenger circulation and emergency evacuation. There is regulatory direction on evacuation.

**WMATA Response:** This study will address emergency evacuation, but primarily on a qualitative basis. For example, the regulations permit 'areas of refuge'; these could be the areas between the tracks beyond the two ends of the station platform.

- 1.6. There is a need to encourage other modes of access in lieu of automobiles. These include improvement of bicycle access facilities and feeder bus service.

**WMATA Response:** These two modes are part of the Improvement Study.

- 1.7. Because the bicycle racks are full and outdated at the Vienna Station, there is a need for a newer rack design and more lockers. Metro staff introduced the idea of bicycle stations.

**WMATA Response:** These aspects are part of the Improvement Study and will be coordinated with Fairfax County's Non-Motorized Transportation Committee. For information, WMATA has installed a new type of rack at Franconia Springfield Station.

- 1.8. The geometry at the entrances to the park-and-ride structures cause confusion and vehicular conflicts. There is a need for better signage.

**WMATA Response:** This comment has been brought to the attention of WMATA's Parking Branch. The final report of the Improvement Study will include a discussion of this issue.

- 1.9. There is a need for better bicycle access. There ought to be dedicated bike lanes on Saintsbury Road, even if roadway lanes must become narrower. On the north side, there is a need to improve pedestrian access, where the higher traffic volumes make crossing of Virginia Boulevard difficult. On south side, Saintsbury Drive should be a calm roadway.

**WMATA Response:** Bicycle access is now part of the Improvement Study and will be coordinated with Fairfax County's Non-Motorized Transportation Committee. WMATA will also coordinate with VDOT on its study of Virginia Center Boulevard. Since the design for the reconstruction of Saintsbury Road

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shows 11-foot wide lanes, it is unlikely that a dedicated bike lane could be developed. The study will consider a bike route along the east-west road of MetroWest.

- 1.10. The Improvements Study should include a discussion on the operating standards and criteria for a station in order to provide an understanding of how the station functions.

**WMATA Response:** The final report of the Improvements Study will include the suggested discussion.

- 1.11. There are no problems of crowding at the Vienna Station in the morning. The problem is during the evening peak period.

**WMATA Response:** The Improvements Study is focusing on the addition of a new stair to relieve the evening platform congestion and will also evaluate the circulation in the mezzanine area, which contains the fare gate array, vending machines and kiosk.

- 1.12. What has VDOT agreed to do in the vicinity of the Vienna Station?

**WMATA Response:** The Improvements Study, through its final report, will categorize the VDOT program of improvements in the vicinity of Vienna Station and the improvements by the MetroWest development.

- 1.13. Will this study speed up building the third parking structure?

**WMATA Response:** Concurrent with the Improvements Study, WMATA is conducting a Parking Study in coordination with Fairfax County. The guidance of the Parking Study is to provide a third structure prior to or soon after the closure of the southwest temporary lot.

- 1.14. A question was raised regarding whether any studies on bicycle access have been done at the Vienna Station or at any other station.

**WMATA Response:** At the County level and the regional level, there are ongoing programs of improving pedestrian and bicycle routes and facilities. WMATA will coordinate with these programs as part of the Improvements Study. The final report of the Improvements Study will include a description of those programs, the past and ongoing studies, and a record of that coordination. The responsibility for implementation of routes, however, is with Fairfax County and VDOT.

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- 1.15. Please place a bike lane on the north side of the station, where there is sufficient room.

**WMATA Response:** As stated above, bicycle access is now part of the Improvement Study and will be coordinated with Fairfax County's Non-Motorized Transportation Committee. WMATA will also coordinate with VDOT on its study of Virginia Center Boulevard.

### 2. Comments Related to Metro West Development

- 2.1. The funds from any sale of WMATA-owned land to the MetroWest development should be a source for improvements of Vienna Station.

**WMATA Response:** The Improvements Study will develop a capital funding strategy. WMATA places the proceeds of land sales into an account that is share among the WMATA Compact jurisdictions and, therefore, would not be fully available for the station improvements.

- 2.2. There were concerns that the proposed pedestrian crossing of Saintsbury Drive between MetroWest development and Vienna Station would be at-grade and could have unsafe elements.

**WMATA Response:** At its expense, the MetroWest development will reconstruct Saintsbury Drive and the southside bus facilities. As part of these improvements, the pedestrian crossing of Saintsbury Drive will become an advanced connection with signalization, special markings and raised pavement.

- 2.3. There was a concern regarding the traffic study for the MetroWest development with respect to the inputs used to analyze the traffic impacts.

**WMATA Response:** The traffic impact studies by MetroWest and Fairfax County have considered various aspects of the development and station. The WMATA Parking Study will conduct a traffic analysis, using the prior studies of the MetroWest and the County as a starting point.

- 2.4. There was a concern regarding how the MetroWest development might negatively affect regular station customers.

**WMATA Response:** WMATA does not foresee negative impacts to its customers from the MetroWest development. One might consider the improvements by the MetroWest development and the benefits of its proximity to Vienna Station. The MetroWest development will reconstruct Saintsbury Drive, increasing its capacity and safety for its new function as a VDOT collector road. The improvements will include a continuous canopy for the station customers at the southside bus platform and an advanced pedestrian crossing of Saintsbury Drive. MetroWest itself will offer retail businesses, such as a dry cleaner and drugstore, which may be convenient for the station customers.

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- 2.5. There was a concern regarding a potential overflow of MetroWest residents and patrons into station's park-and-ride structures.

**WMATA Response:** WMATA will request an answer from the Fairfax County Department of Planning and Zoning in regards to MetroWest parking. It is WMATA's understanding that MetroWest would build parking capacity for its proposed offices that is higher than that required by County regulations.

### 3. Comments Related to System Capacity

- 3.1. Train capacity of trains is an issue now and will get worse in the future. At what point does the Dulles Corridor Metrorail Extension impact the Vienna Station?

**WMATA Response:** WMATA is addressing train capacity through its current procurement of 184 new rail cars. By December 2006, 20 percent of the peak period fleet will be 8-car trains. By December 2008, 33 percent will be 8-car trains. Opening year for the Dulles Corridor Metrorail Extension to Wiehle Avenue is 2011. At that time, the supplemental service at Vienna, Dunn Loring and West Falls Church Stations will be shifted to the Dulles Corridor line. However, despite that shift, the number of cars serving Vienna Station will be approximately the same as today 2005, due to the additional cars in the 8-car train service.

- 3.2. With respect to Metrorail stations in the system's core, Farragut West Station is beyond capacity in the evening peak direction towards Vienna. How will suburban redevelopment impact these core stations? What is the status of underground pedestrian connections between Farragut North and Farragut West and between Metro Center and Gallery Place?

**WMATA Response:** The above response on 8-car trains addresses the train capacity in the evening peak period, outbound to Vienna Station. With respect to the underground connections between core stations, WMATA has identified these as projects in its 10-year Capital Improvement Plan. However, the projects are unfunded at this time. The connections would provide a degree of relief to the train and platform crowding by reducing transfers.

- 3.3. There is a need to broaden the Improvements Study to address train crowding along the inner Orange Line. The initial program of 8-car trains will help but there ought to be funding for all 8-car trains. WMATA should be measuring pass-bys at stations such as Farragut West and Court House.

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WMATA should consider the big picture. The 8-car train program will be for 33 percent of the peak period fleet. Latent demand may consume that extra capacity. Where does the region go from there? So, WMATA needs to address broader system capacity issues.

**WMATA Response:** WMATA's Core Capacity Study evaluated how WMATA might respond to market demand. The initial outcome has been the Metro Matters program that funds 8-car train operations for 33 percent of the fleet and support facilities. The next effort will be identify funding sources for additional cars and support facilities.

3.4. What is the possibility of express trains on the Orange Line?

**WMATA Response:** Express trains would need a third track in order for the express train to by-pass the local trains. A third track for the Orange Line is presently cost-prohibitive.

## 4. Comments Related Bus Service

4.1. Would constructing bus ramps to and from I-66 in order to serve Vienna Station require demolition of any houses?

**WMATA Response:** Bus ramps connecting the I-66 HOV lanes directly into the Vienna Station have been a concept within Fairfax County and VDOT for many years. Construction would likely be within the I-66 right-of-way and on existing Metro property, and would not require demolition of any houses. Design details of how to construct the ramps and integrate the ramps into the station area are under development by Fairfax County in coordination with VDOT. However, funding has not been identified. These bus ramps would provide an opportunity to address the higher demand at the station by providing increased bus feeder service to and from the west.

4.2. Has any consideration been given to express bus service from the Vienna Station to downtown? This could bring some relief to the Orange Line. Arlington County operates such routes.

**WMATA Response:** Another WMATA study, the Regional Bus Study, has suggested such bus relief routes. The proposal has been under review by the WMATA Compact jurisdictions, which would be funding sources for such service.

4.3. Are there plans to increase bus service between Vienna and Reston, Tysons, Fair Lakes to accommodate the reverse commute of certain MetroWest residents?

**WMATA Response:**

At this time, there are no plans to increase the existing bus service between Vienna Station and the identified points in order to accommodate the MetroWest development.

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4.4. Is there any interest from private bus routes?

**WMATA Response:** Private bus operations for commuters are public-subsidized. The long-haul commuter buses transport people into the core in the morning and return them back in the evening. There is low cost-effectiveness for continued operations during the day.

### 5. General Comments

5.1. There is a creditability problem if the decision-makers on project selection and funding do not use the system often during peak periods to make informed decisions.

**WMATA Response:** The WMATA Board of Directors, the WMATA staff and the officials and staff of the jurisdictions are and strive to be familiar with the operations and issues of the three WMATA systems: Metrorail, Metrobus and MetroAccess.

5.2. Has any consideration been given to allowing bicycles on Metrorail during peak periods?

**WMATA Response:** For the safety, comfort and convenience of all Metrorail customers, WMATA does not allow bicycles on Metrorail during peak periods because there is not enough space on the rail cars during the peak periods. WMATA's Bike-on-Rail Guidelines, at [http://www.wmata.com/metrorail/bikes\\_guidelines.cfm](http://www.wmata.com/metrorail/bikes_guidelines.cfm), offers the following exception: 'Folding bicycles and non-collapsible bicycles of all types that are folded or disassembled, respectively, and enclosed in carrying bags, cases or boxes are deemed "luggage" items and are permitted inside railcar at all times. The carrying bags or cases shall be made of sturdy material such as canvas, nylon or leather-type materials.'