

# Transportation

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LOB #383:

## **TRANSPORTATION PLANNING**

### **Purpose**

The Transportation Planning LOB provides multi-modal transportation planning and analysis to develop and implement the transportation plan for Fairfax County. It also includes activities that evaluate and mitigate the impact of land development on the County's transportation system to improve mobility and accessibility for the users of the system, which leads to the provision of transportation facilities and services within the Board's policy framework.

### **Description**

The Transportation Planning unit of this LOB manages the transportation element of the county's Comprehensive Plan and provides a centralized location for continuing transportation planning activities in areas important to the county's economic success such as Tysons, Reston, Seven Corners, and Richmond Highway redevelopment. One example project is the Reston Network Analysis, which will be a foundation for the development of Reston around the new Silver Line Metrorail stations. Another key area of focus in FY 2017 and beyond will be the Richmond Highway corridor and planning activities important for implementing Bus Rapid Transit, and ultimately Metrorail, in this corridor. As the County matures and becomes more urban in nature, the consolidated functions of the Transportation Planning unit and the Site Analysis unit are necessary to ensure that transportation planning activities are multi-modal and comprehensive in nature.

The Site Analysis unit of this LOB performs and coordinates the functions of FCDOT related to the development of property in the county. Specifically, this unit analyzes the transportation impacts of proposed development applications (e.g., Rezoning, Special Exceptions, etc.), and identifies the transportation impacts of the proposal and actions which are needed to minimize these impacts. In addition, this unit negotiates and reviews proffers related to transportation, prepares (transportation) staff reports, and attends Planning Commission and Board public hearings on such applications, when needed. This unit also performs other activities related to land development implementation, such as evaluating and tracking the status of proffered transportation commitments and reviewing site plans and associated roadway, pedestrian, and bicycle facility waiver requests. Further, this unit is engaged in several continuous initiatives including Transportation Demand Management (TDM), urban street standards (USS), and evaluating parking reduction requests. Finally, this unit performs all duties associated with reviewing requests to abandon and vacate right-of-way in the County.

Together, the Planning and Site Analysis Units in this LOB are key to the County's coordination of transportation and land use activities.

### **Benefits**

Transportation is considered one of the most pressing issues facing Fairfax County. The Washington, DC metropolitan area continues to be ranked as one of the most congested regions in the country. Northern Virginia is the most congested region in the Commonwealth of Virginia as well as the economic engine for the Commonwealth. Fairfax County is the largest and strongest economy in the metropolitan region and desires to keep this strong economic status while maintaining a transportation system that connects people and places allowing residents and visitors mobility and accessibility in the county. Transportation planning in Fairfax County is based on the transportation element of the County's Comprehensive Plan, which provides the basis for planning future transportation systems and facilities that will allow the county to grow and continue to achieve economic success and a high quality of life for its residents. FCDOT conducts numerous transportation studies, particularly in activity centers and for major corridors that help define how transportation improvements are implemented. Examples of such recent and current studies are those for Tysons, Reston, Seven Corners, and the I-66 corridor.

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Improvements and mitigations identified by the Site Analysis staff and incorporated within rezoning proffers and conditions are intended to offset the impact of land development on the transportation network. Rezoning applications are submitted in areas throughout the County; therefore network impacts can be apparent both locally and regionally, depending on the size, scope, and location of the property proposed for development. Recommendations can lead to physical improvements to transportation facilities (streets, pedestrian facilities, bus facilities); transportation mitigations to reduce network trips (transportation demand management, parking supply management); and street design and engineering to accommodate multi-modal transportation goals and traffic capacity, safety, and operational improvements. These recommendations are designed to ensure that the county's transportation system continues to work, and is improved, even as additional development occurs.

Specific examples of where the LOB played an integral role in enhancing the economic development potential in the County are the planning for Tysons, Seven Corners, Richmond Highway, and Reston. Innovative planning and analysis for grids of (complete) streets, as well as the provision of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities and services provides for an attractive accessible environment and has proven to attract substantial new development activity.

## Mandates

This LOB is state mandated. The percentage of this LOB's resources utilized to satisfy the mandate is 51-75 percent. The specific federal or state code and a brief description of the code are listed below:

- Authority for comprehensive planning in Virginia is found in Virginia Code § 15.2-2223. State law requires that comprehensive plans be updated at least once every five years. The code also mandates that the plan designate the general and approximate location, character and extent of each feature shown on the plan and indicate where existing lands or facilities are to be extended, widened, removed, relocated, vacated, narrowed, abandoned or changed in use as the case may be. The code states that comprehensive plan must contain the following transportation elements:
- A transportation plan that designates a system of transportation infrastructure needs and recommendations that include new and expanded facilities. This portion of the Comprehensive Plan must be in conformance with the Commonwealth Transportation Board's Statewide Transportation Plan and the Six-Year Improvement Program. Localities shall consult with VDOT to assure conformance. During the 2013 General Assembly, legislation passed clearly indicating VDOT was required to provide comments to proposed changes to comprehensive plans within 90 days or less of submission of the plan to VDOT.
- Virginia Code §§ 15.2-2272, 33.2-909. Counties have been vested by the State with the authority to vacate and abandon roads from the secondary system of highways as well as the vacation of subdivision plats. The County is required to follow certain processing procedures to accomplish this. FCDOT is the lead agency to process these requests which require a public hearing before the local governing body.

## Trends and Challenges

Trends, both national and local, that affect this LOB include: transportation needs of an aging population, immigrant population and propensity of younger populations to drive less and for many to forgo auto ownership and rely on alternate means of transportation. As the County's future growth will primarily occur in the county's activity centers, mostly multifamily housing, rather than single family housing, will be built.

Urbanization of a number of areas of the County has led to a change in focus for transportation design and implementation. In the higher density urban areas, multi-modalism is strongly encouraged on streets that require an urban context. This has led to special street design standards for these areas and a change in approach from maximizing vehicle capacity to maximizing access for all modes of movement. A challenge

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in this environment is enhancing a transportation benefit within a minimal amount of space while addressing competing interests for that space.

As large tracts of open land for suburban-style development are no longer readily available, development in Fairfax County is trending toward infill or small lots and urbanization. Infill development presents challenges with addressing access and improvements. Frequently, these lots have limited or no access from existing development which frequently places pressure to access higher capacity roadways where additional points of entry will affect the operation, safety, and capacity of the facility. Also, the infill developments are often small in scale but larger in impact, thus placing a higher burden of cost on the development for mitigation.

A higher number of competing interests will continue to challenge development review and implementation. A generation ago, transportation was, by far, the most critical issue to be addressed with land development in the County and received the highest share of development costs. Now, a wide palette of public interests in the development review process competes for a limited amount of funding. This requires greater creativity and negotiation skills to ensure that transportation needs are met to offset the development impact and assimilate the development within the existing community and meet the planned goals for those communities.

Finally, new technologies, particularly those associated with connected and autonomous vehicles will in the future pose challenges and opportunities. Conventional assumptions (e.g., road capacity and safety) will change and it remains to be seen if there will be an overall positive or negative effect on the ability to implement County Transportation policies.

## Resources

Category	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Adopted
<b>LOB #383: Transportation Planning</b>			
<b>FUNDING</b>			
<u>Expenditures:</u>			
Compensation	\$1,643,348	\$1,744,461	\$2,405,914
Benefits	41,229	42,477	57,224
Operating Expenses	125,031	75,965	20,181
Work Performed for Others	0	0	(30,753)
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$1,809,608</b>	<b>\$1,862,903</b>	<b>\$2,452,566</b>
General Fund Expenditures	\$1,717,623	\$1,769,915	\$2,243,730
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$400</b>	<b>\$400</b>	<b>\$800</b>
General Fund Revenue	\$400	\$400	\$800
<b>POSITIONS</b>			
Authorized Positions/Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)			
<u>Positions:</u>			
Regular	25 / 25	28 / 28	28 / 28
<b>Total Positions</b>	<b>25 / 25</b>	<b>28 / 28</b>	<b>28 / 28</b>

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## Metrics

Metric Indicator	FY 2013 Actual	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Estimate	FY 2017 Estimate
Number of zoning applications	198	278	303	200	210
Number of site plan waivers	37	27	29	60	65
Number of street vacations/abandonments	7	9	6	8	8
Number of zoning implementation reviews	15	33	38	50	55
Number of planning studies	30	31	30	35	35

**Zoning Applications** – The Site Analysis Section is responsible for the transportation review of land use submittals to the Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) which include rezoning and development plan applications, Special Exceptions, Special Permits, and more specialized applications such as variances and agricultural and forest preservation proposals. Zoning applications have a variable rate of complexity that is not only related to the size and transportation impact of the proposal, but to its location and context. These circumstances create a dynamic review environment for any application which must also occur under legally mandated and DPZ established timelines. The Department’s multi-modal approach to the transportation network requires consideration and coordination to generally address vehicle, transit, pedestrian, and bicycle initiatives with review of the development’s impact.

**Site Plan Waivers** – The Site Analysis Section is responsible for the review of waivers of the Zoning Ordinance, Comprehensive Plan, and/or Public Facilities Manual as they relate to transportation facility standards or recommendations. Examples of roadway waivers include frontage improvements and service drives. As of April 2015, the Site Analysis Section is responsible for coordination of review of waivers for sidewalks, trails, and bicycle facilities. The waiver requests are submitted to the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES) as part of a site plan submittal. Site Analysis is required to complete their review within 45 days.

**Street Vacations/Abandonments** – The Site Analysis Section has lead responsibility for review and processing of street vacation and abandonment petitions. Under various Virginia statutes, the County has the ability to privatize secondary street rights-of-way through a vacation of a street shown on a subdivision plat and/or abandonment of dedicated or prescriptive right-of-way. Petitioners are required to file specific information pertaining to the area proposed for vacation and/or abandonment. Site Analysis team members initiate a review that includes coordination with other agencies and utility providers then a recommendation is made. If the petition is recommended for approval, revisions, if necessary, based on agency comments are completed and the proposal is administratively approved or taken to the Board for a public hearing.

**Zoning Implementation Reviews** – The Site Analysis Section is engaged in review and consultation for various post-zoning activities including proffer interpretations, proffer reviews associated with site plan submittals, site plan reviews, and parking reduction/shared parking requests. These efforts primarily involve the assurance that proffered commitments negotiated during the zoning process are implemented in conformance with the approved zoning. As part of these reviews, Site Analysis is responsible for developing solutions to unexpected difficulties in implementing transportation commitments and coordinating with multiple agencies as necessary.

**Planning Studies** – The Transportation Planning Section conducts transportation studies both to evaluate proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments and to implement the transportation plan. Studies associated with proposed amendments, such as the recent Seven Corners Plan Amendment, are critical to ensure that there is a balance between land use and transportation. Other studies, such as the Shirley Gate Extension Study and the Reston Network Analysis, are critical in advancing transportation improvements to the point at which they are ready to enter the design phase.