



County of Fairfax, Virginia

To protect and enrich the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods and diverse communities of Fairfax County

March 31, 2025

Transportation Advisory Commission

Mr. Robert Pikora
Senior Transportation Planner
Fairfax County Department of Transportation
4050 Legato Road, Suite 400
Fairfax, VA 22030

Mike Champness
Chair
(Dranesville)

**Subject: Transportation Advisory Commission (TAC) Comments on the
Transportation Section of the Comprehensive Policy Plan**

Dear Bob,

Christie Garton
Vice Chair
(Fairfax Area Disability
Services Board)

The TAC has welcomed the opportunity to work with you on the revision of the transportation section of the Fairfax County Comprehensive Policy Plan. We are grateful for the time you and Taylor Waymire have taken to appear before us, and the efforts you made to provide a mapping of current Policy Plan provisions with TAC Work Plan Focus Areas.

Roger Hoskin
Secretary
(Mason)

Rather than provide detailed comments on existing Policy Plan Objectives and Policies, the TAC has chosen instead to provide general observations and recommendations we believe should be woven into your revisions. After much deliberation and discussion, the TAC would like to provide you with the following inputs, which were approved for release at our March 18 meeting. We have also provided you the raw comments provided by individual Commissioners so that you can use the inputs as independent source material for your consideration.

Adwoa Rey
(At-Large)

Kevin Morse
(Braddock)

Keith Foxx
(Franconia)

Shiva Pant
(Hunter Mill)

Peter Weyland
(Mt. Vernon)

Karen Campblin
(Sully)

While the TAC understands and supports the strategy you have articulated that the revised Policy Plan must apply to all parts of Fairfax County as a county wide plan, it is important that the different characteristics and needs of varying parts of the county will need to be considered as the plan is implemented. As a result, the TAC believes that the Transportation Element of the Policy Plan should acknowledge that its implementation will require a context sensitive approach balancing key policy factors such as land use and transportation plans, economic development priorities, One Fairfax and equity, safety, and environmental considerations in different areas of the County.

Sonya Breehey
(Providence)

The TAC believes that Fairfax County now has tools at its disposal that should be incorporated into the Policy Plan to meet mobility needs using this context sensitive approach. In particular, the Comprehensive Transportation Analysis (CTA) offers to balance transportation needs by analyzing road designs needed for different parts of the county. The CTA map provides a powerful tool to target planned improvements and should be used whenever and wherever County planners need to differentiate across different land use categories. Parking Reimagined directly addresses parking needs, but it should also be paired with curbside management tools to get a fuller

Eric Thiel
(Springfield)

Transportation Advisory Commission
c/o Fairfax County Department of Transportation
4050 Legato Road, Suite 400
Fairfax, VA 22033-2895
Phone: (703) 877-5600 TTY: 711
Fax: (703) 877-5723



picture of the competing demands for valuable curb space in the public right of way, such as on-street parking, pick-up/drop-off, deliveries, active transportation and transit facilities, etc. Finally, the Active Fairfax Transportation Plan, which includes an updated active transportation network for trails, sidewalks, and bikeways, and program recommendations for Safe Streets for All, Safe Routes to School, and Complete Streets, also contains important policies that should be incorporated in the Transportation Element of the Policy Plan.

Transit Oriented Development and 15-Minute Neighborhoods

The TAC recommends incorporating into the Policy Plan the goal of establishing 15-minute neighborhoods as part of the County's Transit Oriented Development (TOD) goals and its Urban Design Standards efforts. It is important for TOD goals to also support moderately dense communities in the County that have less transit access by encouraging more local trips by walking or biking within 15 minutes of one's home.

Inclusive + Robust Outreach

Inclusive community outreach and involvement are key to helping ensure accessibility and more equitable voices are involved in the process. This will allow for Place Making to be tailored as needed across Fairfax County, allowing "Every Place to Make its Own Someplace." We believe using an established and repeatable analytical framework as embodied in the CTA, coupled with extensive and inclusive outreach embodied in One Fairfax, will also aid the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors as they weigh many factors in making decisions that cross location boundaries and Magisterial Districts.

Address All Modes of Transportation

An essential element of localized transportation options analysis includes an assessment across multiple mobility options. These includes Metrorail, Fairfax Connector, Commuter Rail, bus rapid transit, public and private buses, passenger vehicles (single occupancy and shared), commercial cargo vehicles, light motorized vehicles, and active transportation modes.

Telework + Transportation Demand Management

Not to be overlooked is also the movement of ideas rather than people via telework, virtual meetings and conferences, etc. While this option is not available to all residents and workers in Fairfax County, where it is feasible recent history has shown that it can have a significant effect on lessening road usage and traffic congestion mitigation. As the County continues to encourage and assist a shift away from the use of single occupancy vehicles and lessening the total number of vehicle miles traveled in the County, it will be important to identify effective Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies to retain and encourage teleworking and other ways to move ideas rather than simply move people, even in the face of the federal government's Return to Work orders, and while being mindful of the potential negative effects on the Fairfax County commercial tax base of a growth in the number of under-utilized buildings.

Climate + Carbon Reduction

The TAC recommends including language to the Transportation Element reflecting the county and region’s climate goals related to transportation, including the Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP). Included among these are the growing use of electric vehicles and the level of support Fairfax County should provide to encourage or fund an expanded network of charging stations. It will be important to identify where Fairfax County involvement can make an important difference, and what actions must be addressed cooperatively with others, accomplished via cross-governmental arrangements, or public-private partnerships. It will be important to monitor widely discussed possible changes to the federal National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) program and other electric-vehicle funding through the Inflation Reduction Act and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to assess the potential effects on current and anticipated Fairfax County plans in the electric vehicle area.

Policy Barriers

The TAC recommends that the Policy Plan urge Fairfax County to search for areas where existing regulations or policies are inhibiting or in some cases even preventing the adoption of innovative transportation policies, compelling TOD options, or the siting of important transportation infrastructure—such as charging stations—and then create guidelines that will remove these restrictions. As a further example, where road design restrictions are inhibiting achieving important County design goals, Fairfax County can take advantage of flexibility provisions within the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Design Guidelines to secure Design Exceptions and Design Waivers. If these avenues are not able to provide the flexibility Fairfax County seeks, it may prove advantageous under certain circumstances and as a last resort for Fairfax County to own sections of roads currently owned by VDOT so that the County can apply its own design standards where the presence of “non-standard” roads would be an important component of achieving desired Placemaking and/or Complete Streets improvements.

Enhanced Transit + BRT

Metrorail has been a central element of the region’s mobility strategy for almost 49 years. With the completion of the Silver Line to Dulles Airport there are no firm plans to further expand Metrorail in Fairfax County for the foreseeable future. This means in the near term; the most affordable and efficient way Fairfax County can improve rail and bus public transit is to work to ensure there is an efficient and speedy network of widely accessible buses and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). This offers to better serve those who are transit dependent while continuing to encourage riders who are able to shift away from the use of single occupancy vehicles, lessening vehicle miles traveled in the County. To that end, Transit Oriented Development (TOD) should be extended beyond rail stations to include Bus Rapid Transit routes and commercial corridors with high frequency buses. Buses and BRT should be closely tied to TOD planning and be paired with expanded micromobility connections using universal design principles to address mobility challenges. The TAC will look at this issue in the coming year and urges the Policy Plan to discuss the importance of ensuring that frequent bus and BRT routes are well planned and well used.

Research White Papers

We believe the papers are important contributions to this policy development effort and highlight many critical issues. The “Comprehensive Transportation Analysis” paper, “Activating & Completing Fairfax County Streets” paper, and the “Policy Plan Amendment Draft Land Use Vision and Goals” paper were particularly insightful. At the same time, the TAC felt the “Microtransit, Micromobility & Autonomous Vehicles” paper would be improved if after each element was defined the element was then discussed separately, and in more depth, before they are discussed collectively as ways to expand public transportation options. It appears that the eventual development of shared fleets is the intent of the paper; if this is so, the language in the paper should reflect this more clearly.

The paper also does not adequately develop and compare use options. For instance, the paper touts that autonomous vehicles “present an opportunity to address traffic congestion, improve road safety, and provide equitable transportation options for individuals unable to drive, including the elderly and people with disabilities.” While this is undoubtedly true if they are shared fleets, it is also possible that increased use of autonomous vehicles could perpetuate individual ownership and use that worsens traffic congestion and puts constraints on available parking spots. These less desirable outcomes must be incorporated into the planning process so that appropriate policy prescriptions can be developed before usage goals can be adopted.

The paper also doesn’t address the potential for personal ownership of e-bikes and e-scooters, which offer to expand the distances people can travel using micromobility and, paired with safe infrastructure, could be a game changer in the suburbs and not just in urban areas. If we had a better understanding how these options could be used, it would be possible for Fairfax County to establish goals to promote and expand personal micromobility use, and for shared bicycle fleets as well. The TAC is also planning to discuss microtransit, micromobility, and autonomous vehicles in the coming year, and we will of course invite you to please join us at your convenience for this important discussion.

To close, please allow me to mention a few Policy Plan items that the TAC believes need to be balanced to help guide the eventual implementation of the Policy Plan, as follows:

- The need to maintain local mobility and adequate through-put of passing vehicles contrasted with the effects upon all modes of street traffic stemming from “road diets” and other changes aimed at improving Placemaking and/or improving vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian safety. If too much traffic is diverted from existing vehicle travel routes onto larger streets, the effect on overall traffic flow could begin to resemble the centralized traffic patterns that are driven by cul-de-sacs.
- Meeting the demand for the construction of new transportation infrastructure contrasted with the need to also maintain existing infrastructure. This challenge can be acute with active transportation infrastructure which has been traditionally underfunded compared to road maintenance.

- Constructing transportation infrastructure improvements that can help lead to higher property values contrasted with the potential displacement effects of the higher property values on the ability of current residents to remain in place. It may turn out that this issue is better addressed in County land use planning sections of the Comprehensive Policy Plan.
- Including policy goals and recommendations in the Transportation Section of the Comprehensive Policy Plan contrasted with ensuring that where appropriate these elements are “cross-referenced” with other sections of the Policy Plan. Key transportation goals and policies should also be included in other County policy plans in areas such as but not limited to climate, housing, public health, public safety, and One Fairfax equity strategies.
- Understanding the evolving present contrasted with anticipating the emerging future. Fairfax County has been and should continue to be a fertile test-bed for demonstrating new transportation tools and technologies.

Thank you again for your willingness to include the TAC in your Policy Plan update effort. We are also very grateful that the Fairfax County Planning Commission has welcomed and encouraged the TAC to become involved, a sentiment that we will also express to them separately. TAC Vice Chair Garton and I look forward to seeing you at the Planning Commission Policy Plan Committee Meeting on May 8th, but please feel free to contact me sooner if you would like to discuss the TAC inputs. Good luck to you and Taylor as you finish up your important work!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Champness". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Mike Champness
Dranesville District Representative and Chair
Fairfax County Transportation Advisory Commission