



# County of Fairfax, Virginia

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

## Board of Supervisors Transportation Committee

February 4, 2020

Government Center, Conference Room 11

### Board of Supervisors Members Present:

Jeffrey C. McKay, Chairman  
Walter L. Alcorn, Hunter Mill District (Committee Chairman)  
Kathy L. Smith, Sully District (Committee Vice-Chairman)  
James R. Walkinshaw, Braddock District  
John W. Foust, Dranesville District  
Rodney L. Lusk, Lee District  
Daniel G. Storck, Mount Vernon District  
Dalia A. Palchik, Providence District  
Pat Herrity, Springfield District

### Board Members Absent:

Penelope A. Gross, Mason District (Vice Chairman)

### County Leadership:

Bryan Hill, County Executive  
Rachel Flynn, Deputy County Executive  
Beth Teare, County Attorney

### Transportation Advisory Commission:

Jeffrey M. Parnes (Chair)

Link to agenda and presentation materials:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/board-supervisors-transportation-committee-meeting-feb-4-2020>

Supervisor Alcorn called the meeting to order at 3:08 p.m.

### 1. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the December 10, 2019, meeting were accepted with no changes.

### 2. I-495 Northern Extension Project

Susan Shaw and Abraham “Abi” Lerner (VDOT) briefed the Committee on the status of the [I-495 Express Lanes Northern Extension Project](#). The project extends the Express Lanes from the existing terminus just north of Tysons to the George Washington Memorial Parkway. Ms. Shaw

stated that a comparison between build and no-build scenarios indicates the project's benefits over the future evening peak period traffic volumes without the project. The I-495 NEXT is an independent and stand-alone project that is being coordinated with Maryland's plans for the Beltway to ensure both projects are compatible. VDOT and Transurban are partners in the I-495 Northern Extension project. A public hearing will be held on March 12, 2020. Public comments will be received through March 30, 2020. The environmental assessment decision and Interchange Justification Report approval are expected by June 2020.

Chairman McKay asked how the I-495 Regional Transit Study and the I-495 Northern Extension Project relate to each other in term of transit options. Ms. Shaw replied that the I-495 Regional Transit Study is considering the type of bus service that could use the Express Lanes. Chairman McKay asked whether the conversation with Maryland included completion of the Express Lanes on the Maryland side of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. Ms. Shaw replied that Maryland has announced that they will extend their study to the bridge. Regarding a public meeting at Langley High School in McLean, Chairman McKay asked if the public would have another opportunity to provide comments. Ms. Shaw replied that there is only one meeting scheduled due to the size of the project, but she offered to meet with any interested organizations. She will meet with the transportation committee for the McLean Civic Association during the week of February 10 to discuss this project.

Supervisor Foust stated that the project is a necessary piece toward solving the congestion problem at the American Legion Bridge. He asked for the timeline of construction on the Virginia and Maryland projects. Ms. Shaw stated that under the best-case scenario, VDOT and TransUrban could have the Virginia project under construction in 2021 with a three-year construction period. Maryland would have likely to start their project later than the Virginia project. With the complexity of the Maryland bridge, it could take more than four years of construction. This is a very preliminary schedule. There could be as much as a two-year gap between the opening of the Virginia and Maryland projects. However, there could also be some possibilities for innovations in terms of coordinating the schedules for the projects. Supervisor Foust stated that he was concerned about the delay of the timing of the Maryland project. The traffic congestion problem at the American Legion Bridge will be worse by 2025 without Maryland's Express Lanes. Supervisor Foust stated that it will become a huge problem without the coordination with Maryland. He asked why there was a rush to push forward with this project while there is nothing confirmed on the Maryland's side. He stated that he supported the project, but the timing must be right. Ms. Shaw stated that Maryland is evaluating their options.

Supervisor Herrity advocated for a mass transit system to carry people across the river quicker and more efficiently. Supervisor Walkinshaw asked if the community grant program that Transurban funds will be available to the communities and organization affected by the project. He urged VDOT to advocate that issue with Transurban. Commissioner Parnes asked about the restriction on left-turn lane from Georgetown Pike onto I-495. Mr. Lerner replied that there are no restrictions under any build scenarios.

### **3. Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's FY 2021 Budget**

Todd Wigglesworth, Brent Riddle and Michael Felschow (FCDOT), briefed the Committee on the status of the [Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's \(WMATA\) FY 2021 Budget](#). The General Manager's FY 2020 budget objectives include:

- Proposed budget within mandated three percent cap
- Offer initiatives to further improve service and the customer experience
- Increase non-fare revenue to help minimize increases in customer fares and reductions in service levels
- Enhance fare options to increase ridership and establish an Extra Service Fund to support unplanned and unfunded events of regional significant.

The proposed Metrorail and Metrobus service changes, proposed fare changes, and service changes in Fairfax County were discussed. Mr. Riddle recommended against the free bus to rail transfer and the \$2.00 flat fee on weekends, as a trade-off for keeping Metrobus routes in Fairfax County that were proposed for elimination. The public hearing dates in Northern Virginia were to be determined. Metro is anticipated to adopt the budget on April 23, 2020.

Chairman McKay stated that the WMATA FY 2021 budget proposal is “a bad deal for Fairfax County.” He stated that he supported all staff recommendations. The proposed increase in the max fare will generate \$34.75 million, but jurisdictions like Fairfax County will pay for most of the fare increase while the District of Columbia will receive most of the benefits. The trade-off of taking service away from current riders to benefit future riders is not fair from the regional perspective. Mr. Wigglesworth explained that the Metrorail and Metrobus’ full transfer discount is a loss of \$19.0 million in systemwide revenue impacts, which would result in a \$3.0 million loss of revenue to the County plus \$1.4 million of local revenue for the Fairfax Connector that was not included in the WMATA budget, for a total of \$4.4 million in lost revenue for the County. Chairman McKay stated that Fairfax County Board of Supervisors must weigh in as part of the WMATA budget process. Staff will draft a letter for the Board to send to the WMATA General Manager and the WMATA Board to convey the Board’s concerns, including the impacts on Fairfax County.

Supervisor Lusk stated that he supported staff recommendations, especially to maintain Route S80 and S81 routes (Transportation Association of Greater Springfield [TAGS] Circulator routes) for access and connectivity in the Springfield area.

Supervisor Palchik stated that she was concerned about the recommended elimination of extra Orange Line trains from West Falls Church to New Carrolton and bus routes like Metrobus 3T. She asked if there are any costs or savings associated with converting some of the routes to Fairfax Connector service. Tom Biesiadny, FCDOT Director, replied that there would be operating cost savings by converting the bus routes; however, there will be a capital cost for the vehicles. Staff is studying the options and will make a future recommendation.

Supervisor Foust asked how the proposed fare increase by 10 cents would reduce 1.8 million trips. Mr. Biesiadny replied that by increasing the base fare from \$2.25 to \$2.35, WMATA estimated that the annual trips reduction will be 1.8 million trips. Supervisor Foust raised concerns that by generating \$5.6 million in revenue, WMATA would have lost 1.8 million trips. Mr. Biesiadny noted that it is a balancing act, because typically the increase in the base fare affects the inner jurisdictions like Arlington and D.C. the most, and the increase in the mileage

rate or the tiers affect the outer jurisdictions like Fairfax County. The WMATA Board could choose to increase the base fare up to the maximum proposed 10 cents. Mr. Wigglesworth stated that WMATA has a formula that shows anytime there is an increase in fare, the ridership will decrease. Supervisor Foust stated that he opposed the WMATA recommendations.

Supervisor Herrity asked for confirmation that for Route S80 and S81 ridership is less than half of a passenger per revenue trip. Mr. Biesiadny replied that those routes are an all-day circulator service, so the midday ridership is probably low compared to the peak of the peak ridership. Staff will study options or adjustments to the service and focus on the highest ridership areas. Supervisor Herrity stated that since the Franconia-Springfield Metrorail Station was shut down, he asked staff to revisit the ridership numbers.

Commissioner Parnes asked if the Metrobus 5A would be running until the Silver Line is complete. Mr. Biesiadny replied that the proposal keeps the 5A route running until Silver Line Phase 2 opens.

Supervisor Walkinshaw questioned the accuracy of the Metrobus' ridership numbers based on the automated passenger counters or the fareboxes, particularly the Metrobus Route 29W. He stated that many riders informed him that the fareboxes were often not working. He was concerned that WMATA decided to cut a route based on inaccurate information. Chairman McKay asked if the Justice High School students use would be counted on Route 3A. Mr. Biesiadny replied that students would use a SmartTrip card on a Metrobus and Fairfax Connector bus, so the ridership data should reflect the students' usage. Chairman McKay stated that a proposed elimination of any route that connects to a Metrorail station like the Route NH2 is a loss of ridership to the rail station. He questioned whether WMATA had factored that into their calculation. Mr. Biesiadny replied that the recommendation was to remove the segment from Huntington Metrorail Station to King Street. It will still operate from King Street to National Harbor, but not provide service south to Huntington Metrorail Station. Chairman McKay stated that location for the budget public hearing has not been set and asked if it is required for WMATA to advertise the date and location. Mr. Riddle confirmed that WMATA has not set a date or location for the budget public hearing, and it is required by the WMATA Compact.

#### **4. Bus Transformation Project**

Todd Wigglesworth, Brent Riddle, and Michael Felschow (FCDOT), briefed the Committee on the status of the [Bus Transformation Project](#). The project was initiated to address declining bus ridership during the past several years. The goals and objectives of the project were: to improve regional connectivity, rider experience, financial stewardship, sustainable economic health and access to opportunity and equity. The project's recommendations include providing frequent and convenient bus service, bus priority on roadways and excellent customer service experience. Fairfax County continues to implement the initiatives that support the Bus Transformation Study recommendations. Additional recommendations could be implemented if funding becomes available.

## **5. County's Pedestrian and Bicycle Program**

Chris Wells, Nicole Wynands and Lauren Delmare (FCDOT), updated the Committee on the status of the County's Pedestrian and Bicycle Program ([ActiveFairfax Transportation Plan](#)). Among the listed key project goals were

- Reconcile the Bicycle Master Plan, Countywide Trails Plan, and regional connectivity in Area Plans
- Bring the planned bicycle and trails network recommendations up to current standards
- Provide implementation, policy, and active transportation program recommendations.

Several outreach partners were identified, including the Board of Supervisors; Planning Commission Transportation Committee; Transportation Advisory Commission; Trails Sidewalks and Bikeways Committee; and other key stakeholders. A proposed timeline would start with the hiring of an on-call consultant in spring 2020 to provide recommendations and framework for successful outreach. In summer/fall 2020, staff will study current conditions and regional travel patterns and perform audit of local and state policies. Community engagement is expected to be held in fall 2021/winter 2022. Staff will update or develop of goals and objectives, conceptual countywide active transportation system and systematic safety action plan. The Board interim endorsement of active transportation goals, objectives and planning framework is anticipated. A final update of the program, proposed Comp Plan amendments and Board adoption of ActiveFairfax Transportation Plan are anticipated.

Supervisor Lusk commended staff for a quick response and stated that he would commit his office and himself to be a part of the public outreach. He recommended having translators at the meetings. He also noted the use of technology to prevent tragedies and protect citizens who walk and bike in Fairfax County. Mr. Wells stated that his team will present additional information at the May meeting.

Supervisor Palchik asked staff to provide her office a tool kit to use for public outreach. She recommended staff also work with the school and student advisory councils. She asked staff to have budgetary recommendations and a timeline. On working with the surrounding jurisdictions, she noted that staff have been working with them to connect projects. She asked staff to advise her office about potential trail and park projects that are in the pipeline.

Chairman McKay stated that as part of community engagement, he recommended staff to solicit feedback from transit riders, especially the high school students who use the Connector buses. Supervisor Alcorn suggested using available crowd sourcing technology to collect data. Supervisor Stork asked what impact this program would have on existing initiatives related to bicycle and pedestrian and active transportation projects like the Huntley Meadows alternative trails. Mr. Biesiadny replied that existing projects will continue, and the Huntley Meadows alternative trails will also be incorporated into this program. Given the Board's approval, staff was able to advance the ActiveFairfax Transportation Plan sooner than expected. Supervisor

Stork asked if the recommendations would include the costs for projects. Mr. Biesiadny replied that the recommendations to the Board will include costs and priorities.

## **6. Silver Line Phase 2 Implementation**

Tom Biesiadny briefed the Committee on the status of the [Silver Line Phase 2 Project](#). Regarding Phase 1, the design for Old Meadow Road realignment is complete, and roadway construction will resume in February 2020 and is scheduled to be complete in June 2020. The Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) is working to complete work on the VDOT punch list. Phase 2 is 98 percent complete. Package A (work on rail line, system, and stations) is 98 percent complete. Package B (work on the rail yard at Dulles) is 98 percent complete. Site inspections and walkdowns are ongoing. The scheduled weekend shutdowns of the Wiehle Reston East Station for testing of Phase 2 will continue.

MWAA and Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) have identified significant issues with the concrete panel deficiencies, fouled ballast at Dulles Rail Yard and concrete ties/cross-level deficiencies. Discussions on remediations are ongoing.

The construction of the Herndon Station Garage is 100 percent complete. The construction of the Innovation Center Station Garage is 96 percent complete. The projected completion is February 2020. The Wiehle-Reston East Station will be closed on 11 weekends to allow for integration between Phase 1 and Phase 2. There will be alternative bus service on those weekends. The total budget for Phase 2 remains unchanged at \$2.778 billion.

The meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m. The next Transportation Committee meeting is scheduled for May 12, 2020, at 3:00 p.m.