



County of Fairfax, Virginia

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

Board of Supervisors Transportation Committee Meeting Minutes

February 1, 2021

Board Auditorium, Government Center

Board of Supervisors Members Present:

Jeffrey C. McKay, Chairman
Penelope A. Gross, Mason District (Vice Chairman)
Walter Alcorn, Hunter Mill District (Committee Chairman)
Kathy L. Smith, Sully District (Committee Vice Chairman)
James Walkinshaw, Braddock District
John W. Foust, Dranesville District
Rodney Lusk, Lee District
Daniel G. Storck, Mount Vernon District
Patrick S. Herrity, Springfield District

Board Members Absent:

Dalia A. Palchik, Providence District

County Leadership:

Bryan J. Hill, County Executive
Elizabeth Teare, County Attorney

Link to agenda and presentation materials:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/board-supervisors-transportation-committee-meeting-feb-1-2022>

Committee Chairman Alcorn called the meeting to order at 1:31 p.m.

1. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the December 14, 2021, meeting were accepted with no changes.

2. WMATA Blue, Orange and Silver Study

Mark Phillips, Acting Director of Strategic Planning; and Greg Potts, Virginia Government Relations Officer, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), briefed the Committee on the WMATA Blue/Orange/Silver (BOS) Corridor Capacity & Reliability Study. The BOS Study was launched in early 2019 to identify solutions to address ridership, capacity, service, and reliability needs along the Blue, Orange, and Silver lines primarily due to system

capacity constraints at the Rosslyn Tunnel. Future growth in jobs and households are likely to increase crowding in trains and stations, and the existing system will not be able to meet the demand. WMATA's BOS Study explores strategies for long-term environmental and economic sustainability. The study specified that any proposed solution needs to further four goals:

- To provide sufficient capacity to serve ridership demand.
- To improve reliability and on-time performance.
- To improve operational flexibility and cost-efficiency.
- To support sustainable development and expand access to opportunity.

The study identified a range of options to address corridor-wide concerns by identifying six preliminary alternatives. The study is ready for additional public engagement and input.

Committee Chairman Alcorn asked the presenters to confirm that for any Orange Line extension, the selected alternative(s) must improve the bottleneck at the Rosslyn Tunnel. Mr. Phillips confirmed any Orange Line extension to Centreville would add capacity to the system, and the condition at the Rosslyn Tunnel must be addressed to accommodate such an extension.

Committee Chairman Alcorn asked about the status of the other potential improvements that are not shown in the BOS Study. Mr. Phillips replied that any proposed solutions must meet the four goals listed in the BOS Study. He noted some good potential projects that were not advanced, because they did not address the four goals. If any project did not meet the four goals, it was removed from the list of alternatives. Committee Chairman Alcorn asked why financing was not addressed in the Study. Mr. Phillips replied that financing is critical and would be addressed in a future phase.

Chairman McKay asked what would happen once WMATA has a final alternative and how the funding would work. Mr. Phillips stated that before applying for the federal funding, WMATA would have to complete project development for design and engineering, the environmental review process, and have a funding agreement among the jurisdictions. It could take five to ten years for this process.

Chairman McKay asked what would happen if the Virginia General Assembly were to pass a bill to direct the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) to study an exclusive corridor. He noted that this study could be exclusively in Virginia and not related to any of those preliminary alternatives. Mr. Potts responded that all jurisdictions need to work together toward a regional solution. Mr. Phillips stated that he thought the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) would not support the BOS Study if there were two competing solutions. Chairman McKay noted that under the No-Build scenario, the treatment of the Blue Line was inequitable. If WMATA selected one of the alternatives, he questioned how the Peak Service Plan (in 2040) for the Blue Line would change. Mr. Phillips explained that under the No-Build scenario, in 2015 or 2016, WMATA had a six-minute peak service before they moved it to an eight-minute service because of the capacity constraints. To run 10 to 11 trains an hour, WMATA had to scale back the Blue Line. In 2040, the Orange Line may be reduced instead of the Blue Line, but it would be a decision by the WMATA Board. The Lower Capital Cost Alternative in 2040 would have the same service plan, because it does not increase the rail capacity. The other four alternatives to building a new line would allow WMATA to have a six-minute peak service. All preliminary alternatives except for the Silver Line Express would allow a maximum capacity of additional 16 trains per hour in the peak direction. The Silver Line

Express will allow a maximum new capacity of 26 trains per hour in the peak direction. Chairman McKay stated that he wanted people to understand that unless the main core (the bottleneck at the Rosslyn Tunnel) is fixed, adding more trains to the system will not help to reduce the headways. He expressed the desire to continue the engagements between WMATA and local governments such as Fairfax County, so people have an opportunity to comment on the selection of alternatives before they go to the WMATA Board.

Supervisor Walkinshaw questioned why Alternative 3A, “New Blue Line to Greenbelt,” which would construct a new tunnel at or near the Rosslyn Tunnel, was included in the alternatives, but the extension into Virginia of Orange, Blue, or Yellow Line did not make it to the list of priorities. Mr. Phillips replied that one of the rationales behind all six alternatives, especially the four new rail extensions, is that they would connect to an existing rail yard and a functional terminal on either end. There is no option to build a rail yard in downtown Washington, D.C., or across the Potomac. The Blue Line through downtown D.C. and to Greenbelt and College Park in Maryland would serve equity purposes and connect to the existing rail yard. Supervisor Walkinshaw stated that WMATA could presumably build a rail yard at the end of an Orange Line extension in Virginia. Mr. Phillips noted that they would need to connect to a rail yard on either side of the line. Supervisor Walkinshaw stated that he still questioned why the Maryland extension was chosen and the Virginia extension was not. Alternative 3A and the Virginia extension would build a tunnel at or near Rosslyn and presumably would have solved the capacity issues for the Virginia extensions. After some discussions, Supervisor Walkinshaw and Mr. Phillips agreed to continue the conversation offline.

Supervisor Storck asked how the bus rapid transit (BRT) development would fit into WMATA's long-term planning regarding the Yellow Line. Mr. Phillips stated that the capacity issues with the Blue and Yellow Lines are important; however, the Rosslyn Tunnel has a higher priority. He further explained that the problems and solutions for the Yellow Line are future efforts. He said that WMATA would need to study the overall capacity as part of long-range planning for the Green and Yellow Lines. Supervisor Storck asked about the process to include this into the WMATA work plan. Mr. Phillips explained that the WMATA planning office would study the systemwide issues that Supervisor Storck raised.

Supervisor Smith asked if any of those alternatives would address the capacity issues at the Rosslyn Tunnel, which will enable the extension of the Orange Line to the west. Mr. Phillips replied that all four alternatives would do that. The Lower Capital Cost alternative would also address it, if enough people would voluntarily switch from rail service to BRT or commuter bus options.

3. Active Fairfax Transportation Plan

Chris Wells, Active Transportation Program Manager; Nicole Wynands, Active Transportation Planner; and Lauren Delmare, Active Transportation Engineer, Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT); updated the Board on the Active Fairfax project milestones, draft recommendations, and community engagement efforts for the Safe Streets for All Program.

Committee Chairman Alcorn stated that Fairfax County is remaking its transportation system which previously focused mainly on automobiles to a system that accommodates pedestrians,

bicyclists, and active transportation modes. He noted that the Board would decide on any specific project improvements. Tom Biesiadny, FCDOT Director, stated that staff would incorporate Board input and public comments into the Plan before bringing the recommendations for project prioritization to the Board for consideration.

Chairman McKay stated that there are issues with VDOT's buy-in to the pedestrian initiatives. He asked about challenges with VDOT's buy-in to the urban street guidelines developed for Springfield and Tysons. Mr. Wells replied that for most of the construction design issues in Fairfax County, VDOT has partnered with the County. However, some state policies and state codes may not allow implementation of some of Fairfax County's approaches. Chairman McKay stated that some specific projects have local and state-level issues. He was interested in addressing the high-level issues that may require legislative actions and that may take some time. Mr. Biesiadny noted that the current VDOT Northern Virginia office has been very receptive and cooperative with the County on the types of changes proposed. Chairman McKay said that he was concerned with things beyond the local VDOT office's flexibility and needed legislative changes. He asked staff to provide the criteria for the prioritization of areas with the highest needs when staff returns to the Board with a proposed process. Committee Chairman Alcorn stated that VDOT's objections to the changes might be due to the federal standards. He asked how the new federal reforms or initiatives would benefit the County. Mr. Biesiadny replied that as the changes come from the federal level to the state level, we may see more flexibility, including how some of the federal funds are used.

Supervisor Lusk stated that he was in support of the Plan. He said that slowing speed is critical, having safe intersections, mid-block crossing along Richmond Highway, prioritizing areas with highest needs, street lighting, pedestrian, and bicycle issues, especially for the Richmond Highway corridor, are essential. He was also supportive of the Safe Streets for All Program.

Supervisor Foust expressed concern that the Plan did not seem to have many outreach events. Mr. Wells replied that Supervisor Foust's office staff participated in many of the events. There were two virtual meetings, neighborhood and community service inputs, and a roundtable with stakeholders and advocates. He said that there was good feedback from the community, and they expressed the urgency to have the County improve pedestrian and bicycle safety. Supervisor Foust agreed that it was critical to address the issue with urgency. He said there was also an issue with VDOT, and he suggested having an Ombudsman in Fairfax County deal with VDOT at a higher level to address the problems.

Supervisor Gross stated that there is a problem with the length of project implementation. She noted that it took 14 years to have an asphalt trail along Annandale Road, and the County is now working on a project on Sleepy Hollow Road that was originally identified in 1986. She asked a question regarding mid-block crossing coming from the new national roadway safety strategy from the U.S. Department of Transportation. Mr. Wells replied that mid-block crossing is a safety issue where people cross the road for convenience. He noted that installing additional pedestrian signals on a roadway with traffic signals would be the solution. On an unsignalized roadway, there are standards for unsignalized crosswalks and other elements such as a median refuge, signage, rapid flash beacon signals, adequate sight distance, etc. There is a need to balance human nature and origins and destinations. He said that it is a matter of engineering the design correctly and changing mindsets. Fairfax County has had a car-centric approach that focused on not impeding the flow of traffic. As the County prioritizes pedestrian safety, drivers

will have to adapt as the roadway design changes to slowing down traffic and making pedestrians feel safer crossing the roadways. Supervisor Gross stated that the education piece is very important for the drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

Supervisor Storck concurred with Supervisor Gross that it took too long to complete a trail project. He stated that he would like VDOT to do more for the County. He commended Claudia Llana, Transportation & Land Use Director for Fairfax and Arlington Counties, VDOT, and her team for their assistance to accelerate the works done in the Mt. Vernon District. He expressed interest in the Safe Routes to School issue with the Fairfax County Public School (FCPS). Mr. Wells explained that FCDOT staff is aware of the problem. The position in FCPS is a grant-funded position through the non-infrastructure part of the transportation alternative program. The application process has been restructured to favor infrastructure funding. FCPS did not apply for funding from the federal SRTS non-infrastructure program in the most recent application cycle. As a result, federal matching funds for the program will cease at the end of the 2021-2022 school year, impacting FCPS programs that have been in place since 2013. The person in the position, Sally Smallwood, is also retiring. Mr. Wells explained how the program works and its benefits for the schools, students, and communities. FCDOT has been working with FCPS on the infrastructure side, such as building sidewalks for schools. Supervisor Storck stated that he wanted to bring the issue to the attention of the Board. Committee Chairman Alcorn thanked Supervisor Storck for bringing the SRTS issue to the Board. He also acknowledged Ms. Llana and thanked Steven Welch, Assistant Director, Transportation & Land Use, for his work with the County. He stated that the issues are not with VDOT personnel but the policy and structure of the agency. He thanked FCDOT staff for their great work for the County.

4. Fairfax County Parkway/Franconia-Springfield Parkway Priorities

Thomas Burke, Senior Transportation Planner, FCDOT, briefed the Committee on prioritizing recommendations for the Fairfax County and Franconia-Springfield Parkways Alternative Analysis and Long-Term Planning Study. The proposed criteria for the prioritization process are public support, safety, right-of-way impacts, cost estimates, congestion relief/operations, and vulnerability index. Staff presented short, mid-term, long-term priorities, and scenarios for alternative criteria weighting.

Chairman McKay stated that the prioritization process was on track. He recognized the importance of the prioritization and ranking of the projects. However, he emphasized that the Board must have the flexibility to push forward a project if conditions such as funding, redevelopment, community support, etc., calls for immediate action.

Supervisor Smith stated that she was very frustrated with the rating of the planned interchange at Franklin Farm Road, because the rating does not represent the community interests with that intersection. She thought that the rating should be higher than 3 for public support. She asked how the congestion relief method was done. Mr. Burke replied that they studied the intersection, the upstream and downstream effects of the intersection, and the areas near the interchange. Supervisor Smith questioned the rationale for equating high cost to a lower rating for a project. A project may be expensive, but it may be necessary to the community.

Supervisor Herrity asked how congestion relief for trails has a ranking of 2 out of 5. Mr. Burke replied that staff viewed trails as a benefit in congestion relief. If the County has an enhanced bicycle and pedestrian network of facilities, people are more likely to use them, thus reducing the number of single-occupancy vehicles. After discussions with Supervisor Herrity, staff reduced the ranking to 2. Supervisor Herrity questioned the ranking of trails and stated it was not applied consistently to all projects. He concurred with Supervisor Smith about the unfair connection between high cost and lower ranking. He asked Mr. Burke to restudy the Burke Centre Parkway and the Franklin Farm projects regarding trail ranking and usage for congestion relief. He concurred with Chairman McKay's comments on the flexibility needs. He would rate safety and congestion relief higher than the other factors.

Supervisor Foust asked how climate change was factored into the project prioritization to reduce the carbon footprint. Chairman McKay asked Mr. Biesiadny to respond formally to Supervisor Foust's question. Supervisor Foust stated that staff had done a very good job of presenting the projects.

Supervisor Walkinshaw stated that the ranking from 1 to 5 was subjective in some ways. He explained how the Burke Centre Parkway interchange has very little congestion relief, because the interim solution allows left turns from the southbound flow of the Fairfax County Parkway into Burke Centre Parkway. Therefore, he thought it provided the least congestion relief and should not rank higher than trails.

5. Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project Update

Martha Coello, Special Projects Division Chief, FCDOT, provided an update on the construction and testing progress of the Dulles Metrorail Silver Line Phase 2 project. Phase 1 still has some outstanding work on the Dulles Toll Road to be completed in the calendar year 2022. Phase 2 is almost complete. Current activities include operational readiness testing with WMATA and the completion of punch list items. Fairfax County activities include punch list verification, maintenance, operations agreement, and land conveyance with WMATA. Staff anticipates securing the Board's approval of the recommended Silver Line Phase 2 bus service plan by winter/spring 2022.

Committee Chairman Alcorn asked if the "heat tape" deficiency is the same as tapes keeping the pipes warm at home. Mr. Biesiadny said that the concept is generally the same but more technical.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:10 p.m. The next Board Transportation Committee will be scheduled for March 1, 2022, at 11:00 a.m.