



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

**December 12, 2023, at 1:30 pm
Conference Room 11, Government Center**

Board of Supervisors Members Present:

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

Board Members Absent: None

County Leadership:

Bryan J. Hill, County Executive
Rachel Flynn, Deputy County Executive
Elizabeth Teare, County Attorney

Link to agenda and presentation materials:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/board-supervisors-transportation-committee-meeting-dec-12-2023>

Committee Chairman Alcorn called the meeting to order at 1:32 pm.

1. Approval of Minutes

The October 17, 2023, meeting minutes were accepted with no changes.

2. Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Megaprojects Update

Michelle Shropshire, VDOT Megaprojects Acting Director, and Charlie Warraich, VDOT Megaprojects Deputy Director, updated the Committee on the Megaprojects in Northern Virginia. The Megaprojects include the Northern Virginia Regional Express Lanes network with 94 miles in service on I-95, I-395, I-495, I-66 inside and outside the Beltway; three miles under construction (I-495 Northern Extension and I-95 Express Lanes/Opitz Boulevard Ramp); and 11 miles under study (I-495 Southside Express Lanes and I-95 Bi-Directional Study).

The I-66 Express Lanes opened ahead of schedule in 2022. They provide toll-free travel for HOV3+, motorcycles, and bus transit. Revenues from single occupancy vehicles will support additional transit in the corridor.

The 495 Express Lanes Northern Extension Project (495 NEXT) is a 2.5-mile extension of I-495 Express Lanes from Dulles Corridor interchange to George Washington Memorial Parkway near the American Legion Bridge. The project is under construction and on track to be completed in 2026.

The 95 Express Lanes Opitz Boulevard Ramp Project is under design. It will be a reversible ramp from the Opitz Boulevard bridge to the I-95 Express Lane. Construction began in October 2022; final project completion is expected in late 2024.

The 95 Express Lanes Bi-Directional Project would add about 11 miles of new capacity and counter-peak direction travel on existing I-95 Express Lanes between Franconia-Springfield Parkway in Fairfax County and Opitz Boulevard in Prince William County. The project is expected to increase counter-peak direction capacity by enabling efficient travel in both directions along the I-95 corridor and reduce congestion for all travelers on the toll or general-purpose lanes. The project will be included in Visualize 2050, the regional Transportation Planning Board's long-range plan.

The 495 Southside Express Lanes Study is an environmental study to potentially extend the Express Lanes system on the southern section of I-495 across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. The project is an 11-mile section of the southern section of the I-495 (Capital Beltway) between the Springfield Interchange in Fairfax County, VA, and the MD 210 interchange in Prince George's County, MD. The final environmental assessment (NEPA decision) is expected by late 2024.

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) I-495 Southside Capital Beltway Transit Study is a separate transit and transportation demand management (TDM) study. DRPT conducts this study, and their recommendations will be forwarded to VDOT's I-495 Southside Express Lanes Study.

Committee Chair Alcorn asked for the timing for the implementation of rail across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge on the I-495 Southside Express Lanes Study. Ms. Shropshire stated that by 2024 or 2025 details about the agreements would be available. Chairman McKay stated the importance of having future transit provisions available for the Bridge, as the last portion of the Beltway does not have transit options. He strongly supported the Bi-Directional Project because of the demands in both directions. He emphasized that constructing the I-495 Southside and I-95 Bi-Directional projects should not happen simultaneously. He asked whether the traffic disruption would happen to the general-purpose lanes or the Express Lanes travelers.

Chairman McKay also asked about complaints for the I-66 Outside the Beltway project, where three or more people were riding in a vehicle and were not detected and received incorrect billing. Ms. Michelle Holland, Megaprojects Communications Manager, VDOT, replied that it was not a technical issue but a lack of staffing resources for human verification when complaints

were coming in. When the staffing is sufficient, they can keep up with the verification process, reducing the number of complaints.

Supervisor Storck asked if the rail option on the Woodrow Wilson Bridge is a commitment, and whenever it is ready, if rail will be implemented as described in the comprehensive agreement. Ms. Shropshire confirmed that rail is in the comprehensive agreement and will be ready to be implemented in the future. The agreement is enforceable. Traffic improvements are observed on parallel streets when the Express Lanes are built. VDOT is also studying the traffic flow of vehicles getting on and off the system and the levels of service. The improvements will be funded by the project as required. Supervisor Storck urged VDOT to study and be flexible about transit payments for transit improvements.

Supervisor Gross stated that the Board has been an advocate for future transit options on the bridge. She emphasized that any future Express Lanes must be bi-directional because reversible lanes are not working well. She observed that the movable barrier proposed for the bi-directional lanes is not very efficient, and extra effort is needed to separate the lanes.

Supervisor Foust asked for the status of Maryland's progress related to the American Legion Bridge (495 NEXT project). Ms. Shropshire said there have been news releases about budget cuts in Maryland. However, VDOT continues coordinating with Maryland regarding the American Legion Bridge to move forward with the project development phase. She did not have the details of their budget plans. Supervisor Foust expressed his frustration and said that every ramp and road that VDOT is building now in the area is with the assumption that Maryland will widen the Bridge. He asked for the status of VDOT's reforestation plan. Ms. Holland said they expected the contractor's reforestation plan in 2024 and will engage with the community to develop the plan. Supervisor Foust stated that VDOT owed the community the plan to show how reforestation would work.

Supervisor Walkinshaw asked how the 495 Southside Express Lanes Study and the 95 Express Lanes Bi-Directional Project would capture those existing transit users who would switch and begin using the Bi-Directional Project. Ms. Shropshire said that VDOT will do a detailed traffic analysis for the Bi-Directional Project, but she was unsure if it would capture that level of detail. Supervisor Walkinshaw stressed the importance of knowing where the users are coming from or their mode of transportation and whether this project would have an impact on the transit network in the area.

Gregg Steverson, Acting Director, FCDOT, expressed his appreciation for Supervisors Gross and Foust for their leadership and work on transportation. This was their last transportation meeting as Members of the Board of Supervisors.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:33 pm. The next Board Transportation Committee is scheduled for February 13, 2024.