



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

**September 17, 2024, at 1:30 p.m.
Conference Room 11, Government Center**

Board of Supervisors Members Present:

James N. Bierman, Jr., Dranesville District (Committee Chairman)
Walter L. Alcorn, Hunter Mill District (Committee Vice Chairman)
Jeffrey C. McKay, At-Large (Chairman)
Kathy L. Smith, Sully District (Vice-Chairman)
James R. Walkinshaw, Braddock District
Rodney L. Lusk, Franconia District
Andres F. Jimenez, Mason District
Daniel G. Storck, Mount Vernon District
Dalia A. Palchik, Providence District
Patrick S. Herrity, Springfield District

Board Members Absent: None

County Leadership:

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

Link to agenda and presentation materials:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/board-supervisors-transportation-committee-meeting-sept-17-2024>

Committee Chairman Bierman called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

1. Opening Remarks

2. Approval of Minutes

The Committee approved the September 17, 2024, meeting minutes.

3. Climate Benefits of Transit in Northern Virginia

Xavier Harmony, PhD, Senior Program Manager, Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC), updated the Committee on the climate benefits of transit in the region. The study provided an overview of how transit generally benefits the climate, summarized Northern Virginia policies that intersect transit and the environment, and quantified climate benefits of transit and recommendations for the region. In short, transit helps mitigate transportation emissions. Northern Virginia's share of transportation emissions is higher than the average of the

Washington, D.C. region. Public transit in Northern Virginia reduces 120,000 to 160,000 metric tons of CO2 annually. All bus fuel types, even diesel buses, are a much greater environmental option than using cars. Electric buses are essential for the future, but diesel buses are already a better climate option than cars today. The jurisdictions and transit agencies in the region can learn from each other's policies. The study recommendations included three goals: short, medium, and long-term: 1) increased ridership, 2) increased the amount of transit in the region, and 3) transition to zero-emission buses.

Chairman McKay asked for clarification about the short-term goal (to increase ridership) and the medium-term goal (to increase the amount of transit in the region). He said they are often related, as the only way to increase ridership is to increase the region's transit amount. However, the study listed them as two separate goals. Chairman McKay asked for the best strategy to achieve the two goals together. Dr. Harmony responded that the increase in ridership and transit usage are closely related. It takes a lot of money to build up the infrastructure to accommodate the increase in transit usage. However, there are other strategies, such as marketing strategies and building more bike lanes and bus stops near transit stations. When larger employers start to require people to return to the office, more people would use transit again.

Supervisor Smith stated that after hearing the presentation, she thought the County would not need to rush to purchase more electric buses due to the technological changes and the cost of setting up the infrastructure to support electric buses. She asked Dr. Harmony for the "*right strategy*" regarding the buses and technologies. He stated that the cost of electric buses (and the supported infrastructure) is high, which often leads to the question, "*Are we doing the right thing?*" He said that we still have time to figure out the best strategy and do not have to make a rush judgment.

Supervisor Lusk asked why the study used the 2017 data cited in Key Finding #1: "*The use of public transit in Northern Virginia reduces 120,000 to 160,000 Metric tons of CO2 annually.*" Dr. Harmony responded that it was when the latest regional travel survey from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC) was available. However, they are working to obtain updated numbers. Supervisor Lusk asked for photos or images from the study that he could use for his newsletter. Dr. Harmony confirmed that he could share them with Supervisor Lusk.

Supervisor Palchik thanked Dr. Harmony for bringing his presentation to the Committee. She asked if there were any specific studies on last-mile connections. Dr. Harmony said that he was working on a last mile connection study. Supervisor Palchik asked why commuter and heavy rails impact emissions per passenger mile more than other types of transit mode. Dr. Harmony explained that it is due to the length of the trip. The longer the trip in transit, the fewer the emissions because that person was not using a private vehicle.

Committee Chair Bierman said that Randy Clarke of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) has been talking about how buses have led to a massive comeback for Metro, and a bus full of people indicated that many vehicles are off the road.

4. Comprehensive Transportation Analysis – Discussion of the Implementation of Additional Measures of Effectiveness into Transportation Studies

Tim Kutz, Senior Transportation Planner, Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT), discussed the purpose and need for implementing the Additional Measures of Effectiveness (AMOE) work into Comprehensive Transportation Analyses (CTAs), as well as the project schedule, terminology, and the process. Five area types include 1. urban centers and transit station areas (TSAs) 2. suburban centers and community business centers (CBCs) 3. suburban neighborhoods 4. low-density and 5. industrial areas. Based on the context-sensitive approach, each project type will undergo analysis for the framework of measures and thresholds. A study may be approved when the transportation impacts meet the thresholds. If it exceeds the thresholds, staff will develop mitigation package plans. Existing measures include vehicular level of service (LOS)/Delay), vehicular volume to capacity ratio, and vehicular queuing. The additional measures include pedestrian level of comfort/gap analysis, pedestrian delay, bicycle level of traffic stress/gap analysis, transit access, transit ridership, vehicle miles traveled (VMT), and crashes. For example, the pedestrian delay and level of comfort (PLOC) were analyzed for critical intersections in the Tysons area. The bicycle level of traffic stress was analyzed for the McLean Central Business Center. Transit access points and transit ridership data were overlaid on a GIS map. The vehicular crash data and vehicle miles traveled were plotted to analyze the pattern as shown in the Mason and Providence District areas.

Chairman McKay stated that it has been four and half years since the project began. He wanted to know if this tool and the associated data were ready to analyze when a tragic incident occurred at an intersection and to provide a menu of options for the County to consider improving safety. Mr. Gregg Steverson, Acting Director of FCDOT, stated that the spot improvement program is a better strategy to tackle that sort of instance, as it looks at historical data along with equity to develop a menu of options. Chairman McKay repeated his question by asking how to use it to reprioritize and reconsider some of the short-range and long-range capital transportation improvement projects. Mr. Steverson responded that staff were preparing to bring forward the Transportation Priority Program (TPP) and the process of prioritizing smaller projects with available funding.

Chairman McKay noted that some schools in the County lack basic infrastructure like sidewalks leading to the schools. He asked how the pedestrian level of comfort could help translate into specific improvements that need to be made around Fairfax County Public School facilities. Safety improvements will help children walk and bike to school or access transit. Mr. Steverson stated that the tool will enable staff to identify the need for improvements and will codify and assign a number to the issues. Chairman McKay responded that the most important thing was the issue of equity. He thought this tool and its quantitative data would help the County address equity issues and identify needs that must be fixed. The tool should remove equity barriers from the decision-making process.

Supervisor Smith asked staff to clarify the entitlement process for someone coming in with a project and whether they would have additional requirements. Mr. Kutz stated that based on the average daily trips a site would generate, there are specific metrics that they are required to do according to the CTA. The Site Analysis's website lays out the requirements clearly for developers at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/traffic-impact-analysis>.

Mr. Steverson added that staff were conversing with the traffic consultant community because they are responsible for preparing the analyses for developers. The development community is excited about the potential for understanding the trade-offs instead of doing everything or getting caught in situations where they could not fix everything. Jeff Hermann, Site Analysis and Transportation Planning Division Chief, FCDOT, confirmed to Supervisor Smith that the conversation with the industry was going well. They were excited because it gave them more options for mitigating their development in advance.

Supervisor Walkinshaw was excited and shared that these metrics were working well on the Route 29 Corridor Study that reconfirmed the community's feelings about not being able to walk or bike there safely. He asked staff if they assume that a suburban center like Fairfax Center will be treated differently, as Tysons or Reston are walkable to a Metro station. Mr. Kutz said that he agreed with Supervisor Walkinshaw's points. He stated that in planning for future needs, they will examine and prioritize the need for people to walk and bike but not ignore the fact that people will continue to drive. That continues to be the primary mode of transportation. There will be conversations about trade-offs while searching for the most appropriate solutions.

Supervisor Alcorn asked about the Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT's) acceptance of the project. Mr. Kutz said that VDOT has been involved in the process since the beginning and has been very responsive to every step. Staff made it clear to VDOT that this is the new way the County is gearing toward new development; however, the County will comply with VDOT standards as required. Supervisor Alcorn asked if the AMOEs are consistent with new federal standards VDOT is slowly implementing over the next few years. Mr. Hermann confirmed that those federal standards are the same as those of our AMOEs.

Supervisor Alcorn stated that the new federal standards will benefit transit-oriented development (TOD) areas. He asked if staff had considered reexamining the categories and areas on the map because of variations within the categories. The differences can be illustrated by comparing the Mosaic District and Route 28 District. Mr. Steverson responded that they had discussed the differences between specific areas. He emphasized the need to analyze based on predetermined metrics and the flexibility to look at the result and make necessary improvements to reflect the situation. Supervisor Alcorn recommended that staff present the map and the type of areas to the Board for discussion. He also said that for areas where pedestrians and bicycles are the top priority mode, staff needs to make it clear to the public that vehicles are not the priority. He asked staff to illustrate the transition area clearly on the map.

Supervisor Palchik stated that she represents very few "low density residential areas," and the transportation options in the Providence District previously favored vehicle usage. She was open

to suggestions for more pedestrian priority and thought the project was going in the right direction.

Supervisor Herrity asked if staff has the mode share by area (current and projected numbers). Mr. Steverson responded that staff would get back to the Supervisor. The Comprehensive Plan has some future information about reducing vehicular trips but not specifically about mode share.

Committee Chair Bierman summarized the commentary from each Supervisor. Chairman McKay wanted to use the tool to identify and fix the problem areas. Chair Bierman stated at the beginning that what is good for McLean might not be suitable for Centreville and the context-sensitive approach in the five area types. He discussed that downtown McLean will never have mass transit options like the Tysons area. He recalled his predecessor, who brought forward over \$100 million worth of projects over six years to make the County more walkable. However, at the FCDOT open house, five potential pilot programs for McLean (to make downtown McLean a walkable downtown) were presented, but there has not been a decision about any of them and they are not sure if any will be put in place. He's hearing from the community that they want to make McLean a little bit better and move in that direction. That is why having this information in the toolkit is so important. They need to know the metrics; so that if a project may slow down traffic slightly, but will make pedestrian safety that much better, we can weight those items.

5. Preliminary Discussion: Local Authority for Setting Speed Limits

Vanessa Holt, Engineer IV, Traffic Engineering Division, FCDOT, briefed the Committee on the history and overview of HB 1071 regarding how the County can reduce speed limits for local roads. In 2021, the General Assembly passed legislation authorizing local governments to lower speed limits; however, VDOT determined that the legislation does not apply to the state highway system. Most roadways in Fairfax County are in the state highway system. In the 2023 and 2024 Legislative Programs, the County requested authority to reduce speed limits. HB 1071 passed and became effective on July 1, 2024. The legislation amends the Code of Virginia to allow local governments to reduce speed limits to less than 25 mph but not less than 15 mph on any highway (within their boundary), including those in the state system if the highways are located in a business district or residential district. At the October meeting, the Committee will hear the in-depth discussion on how other jurisdictions reduced their speed limits, implementation parameters in Fairfax County, VDOT guidance, and input from other County departments.

Chairman McKay stated that this was something that the County had asked the General Assembly and was granted the authority to slow the speed limits, and we need to follow through on that authority. However, he thought this had a very limited application in the County. Chairman McKay supported a pilot program. He pointed out many potential issues with lower speed limits, such as the burden of law enforcement, interactions with existing speed cameras, and topographical areas where speed can easily be over 25 mph. He recommended looking at locations where there were failed applications in the Residential Traffic Administration Program (RTAP) to see if the pilot program could help those who wanted slower traffic. He emphasized looking for the best areas for the pilot program to be successful. Staff will make

recommendations to the Board once they have the data and results and whether the Board wants to implement them in other areas of the County.

Supervisor Jimenez supported the pilot program idea and suggested having an equity perspective so the residents can feel that the County is doing this fairly and justly.

Supervisor Walkinshaw stated that applying the slower speed limit should be uniform to the community. He suggested having this in the tool kit for the RTAP program.

Supervisor Herrity supported the pilot program and wanted to proceed cautiously. He said that he was very interested in enforcing the speed limit.

Supervisor Alcorn suggested doing multiple pilot programs in different areas of the County. He suggested making visual effects to make motorists slow down, not just changing the number on the sign. He asked if VDOT has updated its RTAP guidance. Ms. Holt said that she was not aware of that. He wondered how public outreach is done and how the public consensus is acquired.

Supervisor Palchik agreed with the pilot program and suggested staff look at the City of Falls Church, where they have done outreach for a 20-mph speed limit.

Committee Chair Bierman concluded the discussion by saying he supported the pilot program idea and agreed with Supervisor Walkinshaw's suggestion to include this in the RTAP tool kit. He said he was more interested in how these changes would affect the RTAP program.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:56 p.m. The next Board Transportation Committee is scheduled for October 29, 2024.