



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 13, 2022

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, Franconia 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
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-13-2022>

Committee Chairman Alcorn called the meeting to order at 11:13 a.m. Chairman McKay made a preliminary motion allowing for remote participation in the Transportation Committee meeting of December 13, 2022, by Supervisor Herrity. The motion was seconded by Committee Chairman Alcorn and unanimously approved by the Committee.

1. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the December 13, 2022, meeting were accepted with no changes.

2. Silver Line Phase 2 Implementation

Martha Coello, Chief, Special Projects Division, Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT), and Tom Biesiadny, Director, FCDOT, updated the Board on the current activities of

the Dulles Metrorail (Silver Line) Phase 2 project. The Phase 2 revised budget was \$3.028 billion, with a remaining contingency of \$53.3 million. The Silver Line Phase 2 opened for revenue service on November 15, 2022. Ashburn and Dulles are the busiest new stations. Bus service changes for Reston and Herndon have been successful as customers adapted to the new route changes. The work on Package K, which includes the installation of sidewalks on Sunrise Valley near Reston Parkway and the Wiehle southside bus bay removal, is ongoing. FCDOT continues to work with the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) on Package K items and facility turnover.

Committee Chairman Alcorn said it was great news that the Silver Line Phase 2 has opened, and the region will benefit from the positive impact. He noted that the items on Package K were in the Hunter Mill District and mentioned the land use application for the Site-Specific Plan Amendment (SSPA) process. Chairman McKay asked for more detail on why the bus bays are being removed and whether they will be relocated somewhere else. Mr. Biesiadny replied that most of the buses using these facilities were Loudoun County buses. Now these buses serve the stations in Loudoun County, and the bus bays are surplus. The bus service has been realigned, so local service around the Reston area will use the bus facilities on the north side of the Toll Road.

3. Implications of Free Fares on the Fairfax Connector

John Zarbo, Transit Services Section Chief, and Tom Biesiadny, FCDOT, briefed the Board on the impact of free fares on the Fairfax Connector. The existing fare reduction programs include a reduced fare program for seniors and passengers with disabilities (half-fare) discount; children ages four and under ride free (up to two with fare-paying adult); the free student bus pass for Fairfax County middle and high school students riding on all Fairfax Connector routes and Metrobus for selected schools; free transfers to and from WMATA bus and rail service; and the Transit Ridership Incentive Program (TRIP) half-fare discount for economically-disadvantaged residents which will be implemented in February.

Various transit half- or free-fare programs have been implemented throughout the region. Nationwide, most agencies that offered fare-free service during the pandemic have since reimplemented fares. Some agencies are looking at various fare-free pilot programs or conducting studies. Mr. Zarbo noted that the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) awarded Fairfax County approximately \$5.49 million for a three-year half-fare pilot program, and the County share is roughly \$4.2 million over the three-year period. The pros and cons of Fairfax Connector free fares were highlighted and staff presented several details regarding free fares for all Fairfax Connector riders. This showed the revenue loss, from approximately \$9 million annually starting in FY 2024 and increasing to \$13 million annually in FY 2030 (assuming the BRT service would also be fare-free).

Staff recommendations include:

- 1) Continuing the free fare programs for students on Fairfax Connector routes and Metrobus routes for the five selected schools
- 2) Reduced fare program for seniors and passengers with disabilities
- 3) Free transfer to and from WMATA bus and rail service
- 4) Free fares for children under four years old.

A pilot for the TRIP program with 50% off Fairfax Connector fares, which is expected to launch in February 2023 for a three-year period, was also recommended. The final recommendation was to consider eliminating fares for children between five and 11 years old, accompanied by a paying adult.

Committee Chairman Alcorn stated that a comprehensive free fare for the Connector proposal excluded free fares for Metrobus and asked for the costs if the County would cover the Metrobus service for the routes in the County. Mr. Biesiadny replied that it would be approximately \$12 to \$15 million. It was noted that the District of Columbia has proposed eliminating Metrobus fares. Chairman McKay said that he supported staff recommendations. He said he was concerned about the over-capacity and service degradation issues that might come as the result of free fares. He endorsed the free fares for children aged five to 11 and questioned the reasoning for the policy of limiting the number of children that can ride free with a paying adult to two. Mr. Biesiadny replied that he thought it was a historical policy that could have been set at the beginning of the Connector service.

Chairman McKay emphasized that if the County wants to build a base for future transit riders, we should consider allowing children from five to 11 years old to ride free. He noted that staff would need to study the impacts of the pilot program on ridership and existing capacity for future adjustments and considerations. He brought up a concern about the federal transit benefit. If the County went full free fares, then the County would not recoup that federal money. Mr. Biesiadny confirmed that thought. Supervisor Palchik said that she was unfamiliar with the federal transit benefit and asked staff for an explanation. Mr. Biesiadny responded that the federal government and some private companies give their employees a subsidy to pay for their transit fares. So, the County indirectly receives federal money for the Connector service. If the County were to make the Connector fare-free, the revenues that would otherwise come from the transit benefits would be eliminated, and the County would be responsible for the full cost of the Connector service.

Supervisor Lusk asked staff to study the fare-free option for the Richmond Highway Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system for those with economic disadvantages based on income. He wondered how it would work on the BRT system. Mr. Biesiadny replied that since the Connector will run the BRT buses, any Connector fare policy would apply to the BRT system.

Supervisor Walkinshaw asked staff for the information about how much ridership decreased when fares were reinstated after the pandemic. He stated that if the County were to go fare-free, both Metrobus and Connector should be included from an equity perspective. He questioned whether staff could determine from the fare box revenue the amount from SmartTrip benefits. Mr. Biesiadny replied staff would have to examine and report back to the Board. Supervisor Palchik asked for the monthly amount for transit benefit. Mr. Biesiadny replied that the Board recently increased it for County employees from \$120 to the federal maximum of \$280 per month.

4. Introduction to Additional Measures of Effectiveness (AMOE)

Gregg L. Steverson, Deputy Director, FCDOT, briefed the Committee on the introduction of additional measures of effectiveness (AMOE) for transportation projects. He said that the current transportation analysis process focuses primarily on vehicles by using level of service (LOS) and vehicle delay or queuing as the primary measures of effectiveness (MOEs). These measures can

often result in recommendations to widen the roadways. However, they also create the perception that other modes are not valued (even though they are). The proposed AMOE will make traffic analyses more multi-modal, show the impacts of improving one mode on the other modes, and facilitate more conversations about modes and modal emphasis. An AMOE working group includes members of FCDOT, VDOT, the Health Department, and the Department of Planning and Development (DPD). Staff has completed many of the tasks and initiated discussions on the tier structure and modal emphasis. The remaining tasks include working on Board feedback, development of a User's Guide, outreach efforts, and coordinating with VDOT.

Committee Chairman Alcorn stated that this is an important program and asked staff to study where the AMOE can be most effectively applied in which areas of the County. He mentioned that the Transportation Advisory Commission (TAC) is also interested in a joint meeting with this Committee on the topic of AMOE at a near future meeting.

Chairman McKay asked about the evaluation process and expectations for the private sector for development in the County. Mr. Steverson responded that the evaluation process would be similar to the standard traffic impact analysis; however, it would be a more encompassing multi-modal analyses. Chairman McKay asked about the projected usage for bicycle and pedestrian projects and how one would assess the effectiveness of those projects where the facilities are not even in existence. Mr. Steverson responded that staff will first measure the comfort level of the facilities and whether or not it makes sense for the pedestrians to use them. He said that there might be ways when doing trip generation analysis to determine pedestrian and bicycle usage. He thought discussions with the traffic consultant community would be helpful in determining the proper strategies to capture that information.

Chairman McKay requested information on staff time and reasonable expectations for conducting these analyses. He emphasized that these evaluations must not cause unnecessary delays in the review process. Mr. Biesiadny stated staff would not design a process that would delay or burden the development process. Mr. Steverson noted that he plans to contact some of the traffic consultants to determine the time and cost for them to complete the study.

Supervisor Palchik asked about the timing of when staff would work with larger stakeholders and a potential pilot program. Mr. Steverson stated that FCDOT is using some of the measures on current projects to better understand the impacts on those projects. The User's Guide will be critical to guiding future analyses. He said staff wants to have discussions with the people whom the process might impact to gather their feedback. He wants that staff would continue to look for ways to improve the measures as the process is implemented.

Committee Chairman Alcorn stated that this measuring tool could be very important to keep up with the County's policies and goals. He recalled an example in the Reston Town Center that, under the normal process, resulted in widening the road and adding turn lanes. The AMOEs may help to identify additional alternatives in terms of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Supervisor Foust stressed that higher speeds often resulted in accidents or fatalities. Some jurisdictions outside of Virginia eliminated the LOS as the criteria. He asked if staff had studied those jurisdictions to see the outcome of their new strategies. Mr. Steverson responded that Montgomery County, Maryland, is doing something similar to what Supervisor Foust mentioned. While they are still using the LOS, they also use some measures from pedestrian-based and

bicycle-based measures. He said that it allows staff to have a group of metrics for different areas in the County to emphasize the needs of that community. Supervisor Foust said that many developments surround the transit station areas. It is essential to have those tools to make sure that the County will have the best pedestrian and bicycle facilities in place while not impacting the development process. Mr. Steverson noted that staff does not want too many measures that could complicate the process, and that it is important to keep the right balance of measures while not prolonging the review process.

Supervisor Lusk stated that he supported the program. He asked if the outreach effort would include the environmental groups and how to use technology to help with best practices.

Supervisor Gross said that ordinary citizens do not understand the planning process, technical jargon, and planning time. She asked staff to add the length of time as projects are planned to show how long it takes for it to be completed. She recommended that staff communicate with the community directly in simple and easy-to-understand terms and avoid technical jargon. Mr. Steverson stated that early in the process, there is a need to establish the modal emphasis suitable for the area through communication with the community. Supervisor Walkinshaw noted that it can be challenging to rank the modal emphasis, and he looks forward to more discussion with staff.

Supervisor Walkinshaw also observed that the same technique that determines vehicular trip generation does not work in a multi-modal context. It does not appear that there is an accepted industry standard for how many pedestrian trips a new single-family detached home would generate or how many pedestrian trips a new sidewalk connection would generate within a quarter of a mile of a particular population or facility. He asked if quantitative techniques exist for the multi-modal impact of new development. Mr. Steverson responded that while the rates for pedestrian trips that a new single-family detached home for the multi-modal impact may not be available now, if we continue to do the analysis and verify against the actual numbers, we will eventually have that specific rate for the County.

Supervisor Storck stated that he wanted to see an urban corridor in the tier structure instead of the Community Business Center (CBC). He said the Richmond Highway corridor is more like an urban corridor than a CBC. Mr. Steverson stated that staff treated the CBC in the suburban center very similarly to the transit station areas in the Tysons Urban Center in modal emphasis. Supervisor Storck asked how VDOT would react to this new concept. Mr. Steverson replied that he thought VDOT staff understood the multi-modal concept. Mr. Biesiadny stated that VDOT is changing and adapting to the multi-modal concept. However, there is still work to do. Having VDOT staff as part of the discussion was critical to moving the process forward.

Supervisor Herrity reiterated the concerns on the development process. He stated that there is no standard for all bicycle and pedestrian facilities across the County, because it depends on the connection and surrounding areas. He suggested having flexibility depending on the situation. He stated that the County has built many structures, but people have little or no use for them.

5. Update on Fairfax County's Residential Cut-Through Permit Program

Due to the time constraint, this presentation was postponed to the next meeting. A hard copy was handed out to the Committee members for information. Committee Chairman Alcorn asked Mr. Biesiadny to put it on the agenda for the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:34 p.m. The next Board Transportation Committee is scheduled for January 31, 2022, at 11:00 a.m.