



# 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 Meeting Minutes**

**June 29, 2021**

**Government Center, Board Auditorium**

### **Board of Supervisors Members Present:**

Jeffrey C. McKay, Chairman

Penelope A. Gross, Mason District (Vice 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:** None

### **County Leadership:**

Bryan Hill, County Executive

Beth Teare, County Attorney

Link to agenda and presentation materials:

[Board of Supervisors Transportation Committee Meeting: June 29, 2021 | Board Of Supervisors \(fairfaxcounty.gov\)](#)

Committee Chairman Alcorn called the meeting to order at 3:19 pm.

### **1. Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the May 25, 2021, meeting were accepted with no changes.

## 2. Active Fairfax Safe Streets

Chris Wells, Active Transportation Program Manager, FCDOT, updated the Committee on the framework for a Fairfax County Safe Streets for All Program designed to address systemic transportation safety issues with a focus on vulnerable road users and equity. The draft document was developed as a stand-alone initiative and part of Phase I of the Active Fairfax Transportation Plan. The County's strategy is in line with VDOT's "Toward Zero Deaths" program. Key principles of the document include shared responsibilities from transportation planners to pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicle operators to prevent crashes that result in serious injury or death and to make the transportation system safe for all users. Locations of pedestrian and bicycle crashes were presented showing the high-risk corridors. Key safety target areas provide ways to achieve the safety goal. Board consideration is anticipated in September 2021.

Committee Chairman Alcorn noted that the Draft Safe Streets for All Program Plan document is available online. He suggested that each Supervisor inform their constituents about the document and ask for feedback. Supervisor Smith asked if the County has the legal authority to reduce the speed limit on local streets in residential and business districts to 15 mph. Tom Biesiadny, Director, FCDOT, stated that the General Assembly passed legislation authorizing local governments to reduce the speed limit on residential streets. However, the County has not received guidance from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) regarding this issue. Once the guidance becomes available, staff will bring the matter to the Committee for a detailed discussion. Supervisor Smith had a question about the benefits of lowering the speed limit to 15 mph and the level of police enforcement.

Supervisor Gross suggested adding an education and a communication plan to the document. Supervisor Palchik asked about the progress of the speed camera program. Noelle Dominguez, Coordination Section Chief, FCDOT, responded that FCDOT and FCPD staff are working on a memo regarding the speed camera program to be shared with the Committee soon. Supervisor Lusk asked how the recommendations on Complete Streets would help to improve the two intersections in the Lee District where the fatalities occurred in June 2021. He asked if crash data could be compiled into a GIS map to show the crash locations over a period of time. Mr. Wells responded that one of the recommendations for the proposed program included an interactive digital map. Supervisor Foust suggested that staff prioritizes and work to improve dangerous locations first. Supervisor Walkinshaw stated that he is working with Chairman McKay to draft a letter from the Board to the General Assembly's special session in August to outline the County's priorities. The letter will come forward as a Board Matter with priorities that were previously identified by the Board. Supervisor Herrity noted that there is a large list of unfunded priorities. He questioned the 15-mph speed limit for residential streets, lack of ability to track usage of the facilities in general, and use of "an outside-in street design approach." Mr. Wells stated that some of the recommendations will take decades to implement. The document categorizes best practices that other jurisdictions have used and presents them to the Board for consideration. The outside-in approach is based on the limited right-of-way while maximizing

the space to serve the communities at and near the activity centers. Supervisor Herrity suggested not having a one-size-fits-all approach. Supervisor Storck asked for a timeframe of the Plan. Mr. Wells stated that the timeframe does not reflect the priority or impact of a recommendation. He asked for the Board's feedback on the best ways to move forward. Supervisor Storck asked if there are estimated costs for the Plan. Mr. Wells stated no estimates are available, because at this stage they may not be accurate. Mr. Biesiadny stated that based on the feedback, staff could provide the Committee a prioritized list with some indication of costs. Supervisor Palchik recommended including community centers in the recommendation for Safe Routes to Parks and Schools. She recommended having shovel-ready projects and continuing to pursue funding.

### **3. Proposed Spot Improvement Screening Framework**

Gregg Steverson, Deputy Director; Neil Freschman, Section Chief; Vanessa Holt, Engineer IV; and Don Moyer, Transportation Engineer, FCDOT, briefed the Committee on the proposed Spot Improvement Screening Framework Program. The Board and FCDOT offices receive many citizen requests for new transportation projects, particularly intersection improvements and pedestrian projects. The steps for the spot improvement process include a framework to develop a list of multimodal "spot improvement" locations for future projects, a screening process to create a database of priority locations, and a prioritized project list to focus resources on the highest priorities when funding is available. Staff is seeking Board feedback on proposed factors to be included in the framework, the recommended pilot area in Annandale, and future steps on screening and projects.

Committee Chairman Alcorn recommended that staff maximize public input. Chairman McKay stated that he appreciated the equity components of the program and suggested that staff not overcomplicate the screening process. He noted that congestion mitigation was not on the list of criteria. He said that congestion mitigation causes significant safety issues that are difficult to account for. Gridlock on major arterials could lead to dangerous driving habits, cut-through traffic, etc., elsewhere. The problems with pedestrian and vehicle crashes are often the byproduct of something else that happened nearby. He asked staff to find a way to account for the issues with congestion mitigation. Ms. Holt replied that she will discuss with her team how to approach the issues. Supervisor Foust stated that the process for developing the Program is staff-driven and lacks community input. It is a step backward as compared to the process of the Transportation Priorities Plan (TPP) which had countywide community outreach and feedback. Mr. Biesiadny responded that staff uses better techniques and tools as compared to the TPP process in 2014. Moreover, staff is still seeking inputs from the Supervisor offices and the community. For example, equity as a consideration is included in this Program, but it was not included in the TPP process. Mr. Biesiadny confirmed that it does not change the decision process for the Board, and community voices are very important for the success of the Program. Supervisor Palchik thought that it was a step forward. She mentioned equity engagement for the communities as an important component of the process. She wanted to see the Program moving forward as expeditiously as possible. She mentioned that the funding for walkways, district

capital funds, and district-specific funds are used to move forward smaller but needed projects. Supervisor Gross asked how the screening process will incorporate different languages in the Annandale area and the lighting issues. Ms. Holt stated that the Program uses MWCOG data that contains diversity information. Annandale was selected for a pilot project, because it is an equity emphasis area and has a high fatal or severe injury crash rate. Committee Chairman Alcorn concurred with Supervisor Gross regarding the importance of inclusive community inputs and needs.

#### **4. Fairfax Connector Electric Bus Implementation**

Mr. Biesiadny briefed the Board on the status of the electric bus implementation for the Fairfax Connector. He outlined the implementation challenges for electric bus including the replacement ratio, vehicle storage, charging space limitations, facility constraints, electric bus range, bus manufacturers' capacity to meet growing demand, electrical grid issues, upfront capital needs, etc. The operating range for electric buses is estimated to be approximately 155 miles per charge. The systemwide percentage of routes operating by the Connector less than 150 miles per vehicle per day is about 37 percent. Current FCDOT activities to ensure a successful transition to zero-emission bus technology includes training, networking with peers, the all-electric autonomous pilot test project in the Mosaic District and preparing to purchase eight buses for the West Ox Garage as Phase 1 implementation. The estimated timeline for developing a scope of work for technical expertise is from 18 to 24 months. Connector staff can extend the life of the diesel buses from 12 to 15 years. Staff is exploring the purchasing of ten used buses. No diesel bus purchases will occur after FY 2024 without further Board discussion. Staff is working to identify ways to transition to electric buses more quickly.

Committee Chairman Alcorn asked for the number of diesel buses that the County has purchased the last three years. Mr. Biesiadny replied that the Connector has not purchased any replacement buses for the last three years, because of the Connector staff's efforts of extending the life of the buses from 12 to 15 years. Committee Chairman Alcorn stated that in the next three years the County would have to replace about a third of the fleet and suggested staff begin exploring the idea of purchasing used buses. He asked staff for an update next year to review the strategies and progress of the program. Chairman McKay stated that he appreciated the efforts that staff has made for the Connector. He stated that the process needs to be reviewed every year and the progress of electronic bus technologies needs to be monitored. Staff stated they will update the Committee on a yearly basis. Supervisor Storeck concurred with the yearly review, and he hoped that the County could move forward quickly. Supervisor Foust requested that staff present the options for the Committee to make a decision. Supervisor Walkinshaw asked if staff could reduce the 18 to 24 months estimated timeline for the developing scope of work for technical analysis. Mr. Biesiadny stated that staff could aim for 18 months or sooner to complete the scope-of-work process. He explained the limitations and challenges at the Herndon and Huntington garages for installing the charging stations, and the impact on their capacity.

## **5. Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project Update**

Martha Coello, Special Projects Division Chief, FCDOT, provided an update on the Dulles Metrorail project. Regarding Phase 1, the Old Meadow Road realignment still has a minor punch list work remaining. The VDOT punch list work is expected to be completed in fall or winter 2021.

Phase 2 is 99 percent complete. Package A (work on rail line, system, and stations) is expected to be done by September 2021. Package B (work on the rail yard at Dulles) is expected to be done by August 2021. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) needs approximately six months after substantial completion to complete testing and open the system. Substantial completion is anticipated by Labor Day 2021.

A list of ongoing issues was presented to the Committee showing issues that are unresolved, underway, or completed/resolved. The Herndon Station Garage was completed in April 2019. The Innovation Center Station Garage's substantial completion date was June 2020. A limited amount of punch list work is ongoing for completion of the Innovation Garage. The Committee was briefed on the Silver Line Phase 2 bus service plan on December 8, 2020. The Board's consideration of a recommended plan is anticipated in September 2021. Staff asked the Committee for any further guidance to address the outstanding construction quality issues.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:40 p.m. The next Board Transportation Committee is scheduled for September 28, 2021, at 3:00 p.m.