



# 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

November 10, 2020

1:35 PM

Government Center, Conference Room 11

### **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

Rachel Flynn, Deputy County Executive

Beth Teare, County Attorney

Link to agenda and presentation materials:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/board-supervisors-transportation-committee-meeting-nov-10-2020>

Supervisor Alcorn called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m.

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

The minutes of the June 30, 2020, meeting were accepted with no changes.

## 2. I-495 Express Lanes Northern Extension (I-495 NEXT) Project

Rob Cary, Chief Deputy Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT); Susan Shaw, Regional Transportation Program Director, VDOT; and Abi Lerner, Associate Manager of Special Project Development, VDOT, briefed the Board on the 495-NEXT project. Topics included environmental and traffic assessment findings; public meetings and public hearings; discussion of identified concerns such as noise walls, trails, trees, Scotts Run, impacts of COVID-19, Dulles Toll Road ramps; I-495 Regional Transit Study; and a schedule with key milestones and next steps.

Committee Chairman Alcorn thanked VDOT for the opportunity to provide comments on the project. Chairman McKay asked for an explanation for the 2025 scenario without the Maryland project which indicates, *“a 4 to 6 minutes increase in the travel time on the northbound general-purpose lanes”*. Ms. Shaw replied that the analysis indicates that there will be more traffic congestion in the evening peak period in the general-purpose lanes. Traffic on the Express Lanes will experience better travel times than the general-purpose lane traffic. Mr. Cary stated that VDOT is actively looking at ways to address this issue. Regarding sound walls, Chairman McKay asked if there are any sections that have no sound walls. Ms. Shaw replied that there are some areas located near the George Washington Memorial Parkway ramps without sound walls. The section is approximately a couple hundred feet long. Chairman McKay noted that the issue of drainage impacts on Scotts Run is a major concern. He asked what standards VDOT is using for this project. Ms. Shaw stated that the area is extremely constrained for stormwater management options, but VDOT is committed to installing as many ponds as possible and is looking to purchase stormwater management credits. She also stated that VDOT is looking to provide stormwater management controls beyond the standards required by the state. Regarding the I-495 Regional Transit Study, a joint study between the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) and Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), Chairman McKay asked how the project would accommodate potential transit options. Mr. Cary stated that Virginia Secretary of Transportation Shannon Valentine has made it very clear that she does not want this project to preclude anything. Chairman McKay asked if VDOT would have sufficient time to work on the study recommendations. Mr. Cary confirmed that they would have enough time to consider the options.

Supervisor Herrity asked if buses would be used under the transit options. Mr. Biesiadny replied that buses will be would benefit from the Express Lanes, but the project does not provide any funding for the transit.

Supervisor Foust stated that no urgency exists for this project to be completed, because Maryland is behind on their project. He stated that congestion in the general-purpose lanes will not be solved until the Maryland project is complete. He questioned the judgment of not waiting for the transit study to be done before proceeding with this project and noted that there has been no outreach to the community regarding the transit study. He stated that there is only one scheduled public meeting in late November, and the transit study will need to have recommendations by the

end of the year. In addition, he stated that having transit options to connect Virginia and Maryland is essential for the Tysons area to be successful.

Supervisor Foust also questioned the value of the traffic studies and how the project would work, since the ramps to and from the Dulles Toll Road Interchange will not be complete until 2045. He asked if VDOT has worked with the impacted communities regarding trails. He questioned whether people's properties will be taken by VDOT for the project. He stated that no outreach, no discussion, and no details have been proposed to the community regarding this issue. He questioned the design and compared it to the Springfield Interchange, but to be placed on top of the residential areas. He emphasized that the transit must be done with a rail option to be considered before VDOT can build the project. Ms. Shaw stated that Maryland is in the procurement process for their project, and their schedule shows that the project could be completed in 2027. She said that VDOT is looking for solutions to address the congestion issues. Regarding the I-495 Regional Transit Study, Ms. Shaw noted that the Board Transportation Committee was briefed on February 4, 2020, and a link to the study was provided. DRPT has reached out to key stakeholders, including Fairfax County staff. Supervisor Foust recommended waiting for Maryland's contractor selection process to be completed and having the transit options before advancing this project. He stated that any solutions will require Maryland's cooperation.

Chairman McKay asked VDOT about any consequences of delaying this project. Mr. Cary stated that VDOT will follow up with a response to Chairman McKay's question and reminded him that the benefits of project include a reduction of cut-through traffic even before the Maryland project being completed.

### **3. County Staff Comments on the I-495 NEXT Project**

Martha Coello, Chief, Special Projects Division, FCDOT; Catherine Torgersen, Planner IV, Storm Water Planning Division, DPWES; Joseph Gorney, Planner III, Zoning Evaluation Division, DPD, briefed the Board on the County staff comments on the Environmental Assessment Reports on the 495-NEXT project. Ms. Coello discussed their reviews and recommendations regarding issues with traffic impacts, stormwater, environmental, transit, trails and connectivity, and next steps. Staff requested for Board comments and feedback on the draft letters and will submit a Board item for consideration on December 1, 2020.

Supervisor Herrity stated that there is a balance between having the project ready when Maryland completes its work and the issues raised at the meeting. Committee Chairman Alcorn stated that the Board needs to ensure that Maryland can complete their project and not to create congestion on this section of I-495. He asked how the public-private partnership was determined for this project. Ms. Shaw replied that it was done under the comprehensive agreement with TransUrban as an enhancement of the existing Express Lanes.

Supervisor Palchik stated that she also would like to have a response to Chairman McKay's question about the consequences of the delay of the project. She stated that she was shocked to

find out that there is no commitment to a transit option. Without a transit option, she stated that she will not support this project. Supervisor Foust stated that public meetings need to be done and incorporated into this project. One public meeting is not enough. Mr. Biesiadny stated that staff would like to receive Board comments by Monday, November 16, 2020.

#### **4. Update Electric Buses Overview**

Tom Reynolds, Section Chief, Transit Services Division, FCDOT, briefed the Board on electric buses. The briefing included a discussion of the increasing interest in electric buses and the County's electric pilot program among regional transit systems, and the new vehicle technology with details on the advantages, challenges, and solutions. Fairfax Connector has an ongoing partnership with Dominion Energy with autonomous vehicle pilot program and will make recommendations for a formal pilot proposal with funding from state and federal sources.

Chairman McKay stated that as technology advances, a need exists to pursue options provided by electric bus pilot projects. He asked about the cost estimate of \$3.8 to \$4.3 million for a four-bus pilot program and support infrastructure, the time to prepare a pilot program, and any purchases on a regular schedule that can be deferred. Mr. Biesiadny stated the estimate is a gross cost estimate. Staff will look for grants, and already have some funding allocated in a bus replacement program. He stated that staff will present to the Committee a financial plan and the details on time and locations for the pilot program to the Board by mid-2021. Chairman McKay stated that he was in support of the program.

Supervisor Lusk stated that he was excited to have the program. He asked if there are buses that can use solar to run the air conditioning. Mr. Reynolds replied that there is no bus that uses solar to run air conditioning. Supervisor Herrity asked for the life-cycle costs and the labor costs. He stated that it was important to conduct a pilot program. Supervisor Walkinshaw stated that there are some circulation routes that could use electric buses. He stated that the benefit of electric buses includes fuel/electricity and maintenance costs. He recommended placing the pilot buses in areas that have a high percentage of asthma cases for health reasons. Supervisor Palchik stated that she was in support of the pilot program and Supervisor Walkinshaw's health recommendation. She stated that the school system could use electric buses. Supervisor Storck asked about fuel cell buses and the demand for electric buses. Mr. Reynolds responded that the hydrogen fuel cell technology has improved, but still is not particularly viable. It is considered as future technology. It is better than battery/electric fuel, but there are requirements for the fueling infrastructure. The demand is rising, but there should not be a problem with buying an electric bus.

#### **5. Silver Line Phase 2 Implementation**

Due to time constraints, the Silver Line Phase 2 Implementation was given as a handout for review to the Board. Supervisor Foust asked about the completion of Package A (rail, operating systems, and stations) and Package B (rail yard). Ms. Coello stated for Package A, the contractor has secured equipment needed to complete work. Regarding deficient items, Ms. Coello stated

that the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) is working on each issue to determine its own resolution. Mr. Biesiadny stated that after substantial completion, the project will be turned over to WMATA for testing and acceptance. WMATA will test the system, train their operators, and will address any issues that they found during this time. Supervisor Foust asked about the WMATA's FY 2022 budget that funds the operation of the Silver Line. Mr. Biesiadny stated that by spring 2021, the WMATA Board will adopt its budget. Committee Chairman Alcorn stated that the FY 2021 budget contains sufficient funds to operate the Silver Line in FY 2022.

The meeting adjourned at 3:06 p.m. The next Transportation Committee meeting is scheduled for December 8, 2020, at 9:30 a.m.