



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

June 14, 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, Lee 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:

[Board of Supervisors Transportation Committee Meeting: June 14, 2022 | Board Of Supervisors \(fairfaxcounty.gov\)](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/committees/transportation-committee-meeting-june-14-2022)

Committee Chairman Alcorn called the meeting to order at 3:16 p.m. Before the meeting started, Supervisor Palchik announced that she will leave early today for the memorial services for the two students killed in a high-speed crash as they walked home from school on a sidewalk near Oakton High School. She has been working with local and state agencies and the School Board to schedule a community meeting to discuss short and long-term safety improvement measures for Blake Lane. Among the proposed safety measures are photo speed cameras in school crossing zones and highway work zones; the school bus stop arm camera program; and driving education. She thanked Committee Chairman Alcorn and Chairman McKay for their support in improving safety, especially around schools. Chairman McKay stated that Fairfax County is increasingly becoming a pedestrian and bicycle-friendly place, and drivers need to adhere to the speed limit. He stated that at the beginning of the school year, there will be many opportunities to improve the pedestrian issues, especially around the schools. He was hopeful that the school bus stop arm camera program that the County has championed for a long time will improve

safety, even as a pilot program. He stated that it would take VDOT, public safety officials, and the public together to improve pedestrian safety.

1. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the March 1, 2022, meeting were accepted with no changes.

2. Silver Line Phase 2 Implementation

Martha Coello, Special Projects Division Chief, Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT), updated the Board on the current activities of the Dulles Metrorail (Silver Line) Phase 2 project. Recent activities include operational readiness testing; safety and security certification activities; and completing punch list items for track, stations, and yards. However, there is still no update on the Operational Readiness Date (ORD).

Committee Chairman Alcorn said the Board was waiting for the Phase 2 ORD announcement. Bryan Hill, County Executive, stated that he was in constant contact with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), the Metrorail Safety Commission and Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA). He said that he was expecting to hear some news about the ORD within two weeks.

3. Fairfax Connector Electric Bus Pilot Project

Dwayne Pelfrey, Transit Services Division Chief, FCDOT, updated the Committee on the Fairfax Connector Electric Bus Pilot Project. He reiterated the Board's goal of being carbon neutral by 2040, and Fairfax Connector's goal to transition to 100% zero-emission buses (ZEB) by 2035. He noted that staff is working to implement the ZEB bus pilot program by the end of 2022.

Chairman McKay asked for the timeframe of the pilot program and when the County will have the data from the program. Mr. Pelfrey responded that the pilot program would last about two years, and data will be available almost immediately. He recommended using more than one bus manufacturer in addition to the initial 12 buses the County is purchasing. Chairman McKay asked about the outcome of the pilot program. Mr. Pelfrey stated that electric buses would run every type of route, terrain, and demand to study the effect on vehicle range. Chairman McKay asked about Alexandria's DASH program and whether any data coming from DASH was a surprise to staff. Mr. Pelfrey said, "not at all." Committee Chairman Alcorn recalled a report from the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) that the DASH program had some challenges with colder weather and the hills in Alexandria. They also bought buses from two bus manufacturers and were having compatibility problems. Mr. Pelfrey responded that the issues were with the chargers which have not always communicated with the buses properly. He said that bus manufacturers are using different technologies. However, this is changing. He said he wanted to test different manufacturers and technologies before recommending which type of bus to purchase for the balance of the fleet.

Mr. Pelfrey noted that cold weather had an impact on vehicle's range. He said that one way to address the situation would be to install diesel-power auxiliary heaters on the buses to keep the passengers warm. The first phase of buses will not have a diesel heating system, but the second

phase could have that. He mentioned that hydrogen technology might solve the range issues associated with longer routes.

Supervisor Storck asked when staff would have sufficient data to move forward with more bus purchases. Mr. Pelfrey stated that the data would be available very soon based on the computer model. However, the real question is the phased construction of the infrastructure. He stated that when he updates the Committee next year, he will have a better answer.

Supervisor Storck asked why the life cycle of the school bus is 15 years as compared to the Connector bus of 12 years. Mr. Pelfrey replied that the Connector bus is heavier and in a different class than the school bus. It also costs as much as four times more than a school bus. Mr. Biesiadny stated that Connector staff have extended the life cycles of Connector buses from 12 years to 15 to 16 years by performing a mid-life overhaul. Supervisor Storck asked questions about hybrid buses and the carbon emission ratio between hybrid and diesel buses. Mr. Pelfrey stated he would provide the Supervisor with the carbon information.

Supervisor Walkinshaw asked for the increased cost of diesel over the last six months. He stated that there are choices like hydrogen, but the concern was its cost, the infrastructure to produce hydrogen, and its emissions. Mr. Pelfrey noted that the fuel costs are high right now. He stated that staff would not know more about the electricity rates until the County meets with Dominion Energy regarding the demand requirements. The County will meet with Washington Gas about hydrogen issues later this week.

Supervisor Foust stated that his concerns were with climate change and the impact of the emissions from buses on air quality. The County has set a goal of zero net carbon emissions by 2040. He wanted staff to show the best- and worst-case scenarios. Supervisor Herrity asked about the operational costs. He stated that staff is right to look for other options like fuel cells, and to move forward carefully. Supervisor Palchik reminded us that while we need to reduce emissions, we must also maintain ridership.

4. Confederate Road Names

Tom Biesiadny, Director; Noelle Dominguez, Chief Coordination Section; and Robin Geiger, Head of Communications, FCDOT, briefed the Committee on the Confederate Road Names efforts. The County conducted a survey of business owners and residents in the corridors. The survey revealed the preferred new name for Lee Highway is Route 29 and Lee-Jackson Memorial Highway is Route 50. Respondents were concerned about the potential costs to their businesses. The Board would need to pay for the cost of any changes in signage. These costs are estimated to be from \$1.0 million to \$4.2 million.

Chairman McKay asked if staff has done a study to replace Lee Highway and Lee Jackson Memorial Highway with just the route numbers, i.e., Route 29 and Route 50, versus other names. Mr. Biesiadny replied that staff did a test mailing to send regular mail via US Postal Service to Fairfax County facilities on both Lee Highway (Route 29) and Lee Jackson Memorial Highway (Route 50). Instead of using the road names, staff used the route numbers. Over several months of testing, those letters have never arrived. He stated that letters would not be delivered consistently without Board action to officially change the roadway names. If the Board were to make the changes, the existing signs would have to be removed and replaced. There will be a

cost associated with that. In their marketing materials, those businesses may use route numbers to describe their location to the customers. With new names, they will have to educate the customers about their whereabouts.

Chairman McKay asked whether approval by the Commonwealth Transportation Board would be needed if the County wanted to change road names to Route 29 and Route 50. Mr. Biesiadny replied that the CTB would need to act. In addition, the changes would need to be implemented at the post office and its computer system. Chairman McKay asked if the post office would have a plan to recognize that, for example, someone addressing a letter to a business on Lee Highway will automatically get it to Route 29. Mr. Biesiadny stated that staff would have to do more research on that issue. Chairman McKay noted that changing the names to just route numbers is the least invasive option and less dramatic changes in terms of lifestyle and marketing for the people who live, work and commute in those corridors.

Supervisor Palchik said she supported removing the Confederate names and replacing them with the route numbers. However, she stated that the County needs to look at the surrounding jurisdictions and not create confusion for drivers with the changes.

Supervisor Herrity asked about the extended outreach of the Route 50 geographic area and whether the residents were asked if they wanted the road name changes. Ms. Geiger stated that postcards were mailed out to the residents in the area, and flyers were distributed directly to the businesses in the corridors. Mr. Biesiadny explained that the Task Force had done a countywide survey about the name changes. However, staff did not want to repeat the work already done by the Task Force. Supervisor Herrity asked if the businesses were asked about the loss of business, because he had heard complaints from Arlington County businesses regarding the change of Lee Highway to Langston Boulevard and Google map issues. Mr. Biesiadny stated that no questions about the loss of business were asked on the extended outreach.

Supervisor Foust asked for the legal cost of name changes for the corridors' residents and businesses. Mr. Biesiadny stated that, for example, the apartment complexes on the corridors might want to change the rental documents at renewal time. Similarly, business owners might need to update their legal documents to show the new road name whenever they renew the contracts or leases.

Supervisor Lusk stated that he supported the name changes to the route numbers. He said that small and minority-owned businesses would need financial assistance for the changes.

Supervisor Smith stated she was open to changing Route 29 and Route 50. She asked for an explanation of the grant program to cover the cost. Ms. Dominguez described the grant program offered by a neighboring jurisdiction. The program consists of three levels: Level 1 provides \$500 for all eligible businesses; Level 2 provides up to \$4,500 as reimbursement for eligible expenses; and Level 3 provides up to 75 percent modification costs and not to exceed \$30,000. She noted that the baseline was Level 1 for \$500, but anything above that would have to be reimbursed to the businesses for eligible costs.

Supervisor Walkinshaw stated that he supported reimbursement for demonstrated costs up to some numbers but was opposed to just writing a check to every business. He noted that the current situation was confusing due to each jurisdiction's different names for the road. He said

he would support changing the name to Little River Turnpike for Route 50 because of its history. The battle of Chantilly during the Civil War took place on Little River Turnpike (which is today Route 50). It would create a continuous name from Loudoun County up to Fairfax City where it is named Main Street.

5. Fairfax Connector Transit Ridership Incentive Program

Kala Quintana, Head of Marketing, Fairfax Connector, FCDOT, and Susan Shaw, Management Analyst II, Neighborhood and Community Services Department, briefed the Committee on the Fairfax Connector Transit Ridership Incentive Program (TRIP). The CTB awarded Fairfax County approximately \$5.49 million for a three-year half-fare pilot program. FCDOT is working with other County agencies to implement the Fairfax Connector TRIP pilot program.

Supervisor Walkinshaw asked if there was a way to track the base mode of transportation a user had used before getting this free or reduced bus fare. Committee Chairman Alcorn stated that he supported the program and suggested staff consider the possibility of incorporating the bus fare card and the library card. Supervisor Gross questioned how the user's security and privacy could be protected. Ms. Quintana responded that they use a vendor to distribute 10,000 specially programmed SmartTrip cards through coordination with Transportation Options, Programs & Services (TOPS). The SmartTrip cards are trackable but only valid for three years. The cards look like the regular SmartTrip cards. Only the department of Neighborhood and Community Services (NCS) has access to the user database. Supervisor Gross asked a hypothetical question of someone searching for a rider based on their history of using the SmartTrip information. Ms. Quintana replied that it could be done, but it requires a subpoena from the court to access that information. Mr. Biesiadny added that the only thing that was being tracked was when someone used the card to get on a bus, but it would not track where that someone gets off the bus (because there is no need to swipe the card to get off the bus).

Supervisor Storck asked staff's expectations for the outcome of this program and how to measure the usage. Ms. Quintana replied that she hoped that the customers using their cards on Fairfax Connector instead of Uber, Lift, or taxi services. However, the users will have the flexibility to do what they want. She stated that staff expected a transportation mode shift from the users of the program. Mr. Biesiadny noted that staff will be tracking ridership and how frequently the cards were used. He stated that during the pandemic, when the fares were suspended, the Connector saw people taking more trips. With gas prices as high as they are, he thought this tool would help people to be more mobile and have better access to jobs, activities, schools, and other things that they otherwise may not have been able to afford. Through surveys, staff can ask for the user's prior modes of transportation. The monthly report will show the number of trips taken by the individual. The goal would be to get everyone who currently is an existing TOPS cardholder to also use a SmartTrip card for their travel activities. The program will start with approximately 2,500 participants in the TOPS program and hopefully will grow over the next three years. Staff anticipates valuable lessons learned and will make some adjustments during the program.

6. Free Student Bus Pass Program Update & Expansion Efforts

Kala Quintana and Saul Cieza, Communication Specialist II, FCDOT, briefed the Committee on the Free Student Bus Pass Program update and expansion efforts. The program has over two

million student trips taken as of May 2022. Staff is preparing for Metrobus expansion in September 2022 to Annandale High School, Davis Center, Falls Church High School, and Marshall High School.

Chairman McKay asked how the bus pass process would work and whether the program has gotten cooperation from the schools. Ms. Quintana stated that her counterpart, Michelle Phillips, at FCPS transportation, has been wonderful to work with. The application process has been streamlined. The permission form is available on the FCPS website as well as the individual school's website. Students can download the permission form for their parents or guardians to sign and turn it in to the school to get a pass. When a 7th grader receives the card, they could potentially keep the same card until they graduate or leave the school system. Chairman McKay stated that he has the same goal as Committee Chairman Alcorn mentioned previously, that a student could use a single card that works with the library, bus, and other things. Chairman McKay commended staff for working on a phenomenal program with remarkable growth in ridership and demand. He said that the challenge was to make it convenient for everyone and to reach out to middle school students and other schools that may not be enrolled in the program.

Supervisor Gross stated that she was pleased with the arrangement with Metrobus, because the schools in the Mason District are not served by the Fairfax Connector. She mentioned the excitement and success of the program at Justice High School. She started to advocate for Annandale High School because of her neighbors. It took a long time, but she was pleased to see that Annandale High School and other schools are being included in the program with Metrobus in September 2022. She recommended staff contact the Korean Community Service Center and other nonprofits or faith-based organizations for potential services as the program expands.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:51 p.m. The next Board Transportation Committee is scheduled for September 30, 2022, at 11:00 a.m.