

Board of Supervisors Transportation Committee

February 27, 2018
Government Center, Conference Room 11

Board of Supervisors Members Present:

Sharon Bulova, Chairman
Penelope Gross, Mason District (Vice Chairman)
John Foust, Dranesville District (Committee Chair)
John Cook, Braddock District
Pat Herrity, Springfield District
Catherine Hudgins, Hunter Mill District
Jeff McKay, Lee District
Kathy Smith, Sully District
Linda Smyth, Providence District
Dan Storck, Mount Vernon District

County Leadership:

Bryan Hill, County Executive
Robert A. Stalzer, Deputy County Executive
Beth Teare, County Attorney

Transportation Advisory Commission (TAC):

Jeff Parnes, Chairman

Link to agenda and presentation materials:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/btc>

Supervisor Foust called the meeting to order at 1:38 p.m.

1. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the December 12, 2017, meeting were accepted with no changes.

2. I-66 Outside the Beltway

Susan Shaw, VDOT Megaprojects Director; Nancy Smith, Public Affairs Manager, FAM Construction; and Chris Doherty, Corporate Affairs Director, I-66 Express Mobility Partners, briefed the Board on the upcoming construction activities of the I-66 Outside-the-Beltway Project. The presentation is available at:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/sites/boardofsupervisors/files/assets/meeting-materials/2018/feb27-transportation-transform-66-outside-the-beltway.pdf>

Chairman Bulova asked where the bike trail will be located. Ms. Shaw replied that the locations for the bike trails vary. When the bike trail is close to the homes, the bike trail will be on the highway side, and when it is not close to homes, the bike trail will be on the backside of the

sound wall. She spoke about the discussions with the bike community on how to improve the bike trail. She stated that VDOT is still considering raising the bike trail in some locations, and examining the height of the barrier, the location of the fences, and other factors. She stated that there will be about two miles of bike trails that are on the highway side. Chairman Bulova asked if the fences are made of plexiglass. Ms. Shaw replied that they are currently envisioned to be a chain link fence, but VDOT is looking at other options.

Supervisor Smyth asked about maintaining the four existing I-66 lanes during peak hour; whether the peak directions are in one, or both directions. Ms. Shaw confirmed that four lanes will be maintained in both directions, and there will be no lane closures during peak periods in either direction, including the High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes. Supervisor Smyth requested that VDOT to work with the County regarding the stormwater management issues, the location of stormwater ponds, and the noise wall to minimize impacts to the neighborhoods. Ms. Shaw agreed.

3. Embark Richmond Highway Comprehensive Plan Amendment and Transportation Projects

Bob Pikora, A. J. Hamidi, and Vanessa Aguayo-Thomas (FCDOT); Barbara Byron (Office of Community Revitalization); and Meghan Van Dam (DPZ), updated the Board on the Comprehensive Plan Amendment, road widening and bus rapid transit projects. The presentation is available at:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/sites/boardofsupervisors/files/assets/meeting-materials/2018/feb27-transportation-embark-richmond-highway-update.pdf>

Commissioner Parnes of the TAC stated that the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens' Associations had contacted the TAC about their position on undergrounding utilities in the corridor. Mr. Biesiadny stated that there have been extensive and on-going discussions about the underground utilities in the corridor with both Mount Vernon and Lee District Supervisors, the Planning Commissioners, and the community. Chairman Bulova stated that the cost for underground utilities for a major corridor project like Embark would be enormously expensive, and it is not as simple as burying the power lines. She stated that other infrastructures would need to be addressed. Fairfax County has no prior examples of paying for undergrounding utilities when the County has made improvements to a highway or to a major roadway project. The developers have often paid for the cost of underground utility lines as part of redevelopment. To accommodate the request, it could delay the project, since there is currently no funding from the state or other sources to pay for the cost of undergrounding utilities.

Supervisor McKay stated that everyone supports underground utilities. However, he explained that to keep the project on schedule, and absent a significant financial investment from either the power company and the Commonwealth, the underground utility construction is not possible. He stated that the County will keep their options open, if someone could commit \$60 to \$70 million for undergrounding utilities. He stated that the road construction cost is at \$215 million with \$44 million secured, and the rest of the amount is to be secured.

Supervisor Smyth asked about the width of the right-of-way of the project and how pedestrians could safely cross it. The response was that a typical section is 178 feet, and it will be designed so pedestrians can safely cross the roadway. It would be a two-phase crossing for the pedestrians (two traffic cycle lengths to cross). Ms. Byron explained that staff is working hard to make sure

that the pedestrian crossings are safe and fit with the project. Supervisor McKay also explained that if the right-of-way is too narrow it will reduce the number of amenities, pedestrian and landscape buffers, the aesthetic elements, or even one travel lane.

Regarding the issue of why the project does not provide another lane, so buses can pass each other, Supervisor McKay explained that it would increase the right-of-way by a minimum of 14 feet, a significant impact to the business and properties along the corridor. The reason buses pass each other on a roadway is because they are behind schedule, or stuck in traffic. The Embark project provides buses with an exclusive lane, so in exception of emergencies, and with a proper schedule planning, buses should not expect to pass each other. Supervisor Storck agreed, but he would also like to explore the possibility of a bus passing another bus in a safe and controlled situation.

Supervisor Storck reiterated Supervisor McKay's comment that everyone is supportive of undergrounding utilities, but the issue is how to pay for it. He stated that he is committed to working as much as possible to find a way to make it happen, since this issue is important to the community. He hoped that there are ways to reduce the cost of undergrounding utilities, and stated that it will take all major partners like the federal government, VDOT, and others to come up with the funding.

Supervisor Cook stated that the Braddock Road Project cannot incorporate bus HOV-lanes with cross traffic and left turns. He asked how the Embark project team could make this work for the BRT system in this project. Mr. Biesiadny replied that there are certain streets that do not have full intersection configurations, only right-in and right-out access. In this situation, with the grid-street design, a bus can circulate by using the grid street, if they need to make a left-turn. There would also be pedestrian crossings at the full intersections, and there might be some at the other intersections as well, depending on the intersection characteristics.

Regarding the community engagement meetings, Supervisor McKay congratulated staff on the community efforts for the Comprehensive Plan process. He said that it does not include the many meetings that staff had when DRPT did their first analysis of the transit options along the corridor, or the VDOT meetings on VDOT components of the project, or the many other community meetings. He mentioned that Mr. Hamidi, representatives from the Smart Growth Coalition, some of the neighbors and he spent time walking through the corridor on Buckman Road. He stated that people need to be aware that this is a comprehensive, staff-intensive, collaborative project that involved many meetings with the HOAs, Chambers-of-Commerce, etc. The Planning Commission voted to approve the Comprehensive Amendment without a single no vote, because of the amount of outreach, the effort, and the collaboration of all County staff with VDOT, DRPT, and the community. Supervisor Storck agreed with Supervisor McKay, and stated that he also met with smaller communities to make sure that their voices were heard. He thanked the staff and all people that have worked on this project. Ms. Byron stated that staff have learned from the lessons of Tysons in terms of the collaborative effort among the departments and the flexibility that the Board has given to staff in their planning efforts. She believed that in the future, this approach can be used for other special planning efforts in the rest of the County. Commissioner Parnes suggested that staff create a method to measure themselves, and their performance on future forecasts. Mr. Biesiadny responded that staff have been tracking the outcome of the plan in Tysons and reports the growth of the development, the implementation of parks and schools, and other areas annually to the Board. Staff can do the same for the Richmond Highway Corridor.

Supervisor Foust asked about the status of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding. Mr. Biesiadny replied that staff have used a planning assumption of just under 50 percent of the funding for the BRT project from FTA. This level meets the current federal guidelines for the New Starts program. Staff is monitoring the discussions about changes to the New Starts program. With the Comprehensive Plan Amendment, the BRT project is in the best position to compete against other projects around the country in the New Starts program. He reported that staff has had two positive meetings with FTA staff. If the rules change, the County will be able to adjust the project to continue to be competitive. At the moment, Mr. Biesiadny said that staff anticipates 49 percent of planning funding from the federal government. Supervisor Foust congratulated staff and Supervisors McKay and Storck on their efforts.

The Embark Project, with the Plan Amendment, will be presented to the Board at its meeting on March 20, 2018, for consideration following the public hearing.

4. Silver Line Phase 2 Implementation

Mark Canale, Chief, Special Projects Division, FCDOT, updated the Board on the construction progress of the Silver Line Phase 2 Project. The presentation is available at:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/sites/boardofsupervisors/files/assets/meeting-materials/2018/feb27-transportation-dulles-rail-silver-line-update.pdf>

Commissioner Parnes asked how the north side of the Herndon Station will be ready for the Silver Line Phase 2. Mr. Canale replied that the Town of Herndon is an active participation in the meetings with the County, MWAA, and the contractor. The group meets every two weeks. They have incorporated different design features for the north side of the station. For example, the walkway, lighting, stormwater retention, and the operation of the pavilion were designed to meet their comprehensive plan requirements. County staff is working with the Town of Herndon to ensure that everything is fully integrated. Supervisor Foust stated that he saw a presentation done by the Mayor of the Town of Herndon and confirmed the collaborations.

Chairman Bulova noted that Phase 2 of the Silver Line is going smoothly without any major issues like Phase 1. Mr. Canale said that it is a total team effort between the contractor, MWAA, Loudoun County, the Town of Herndon, and Fairfax County. They have worked through many issues, and that cost has not been a factor yet. So far, the construction is on schedule and everyone is working hard to address any issues that arise. Chairman Bulova stated that lessons learned from Phase 1 was to make sure that everything would operate well before the system is ready to open.

The meeting adjourned at 2:57 P.M. The next BTC meeting is scheduled for May 8, 2018, at 1:30 pm.