

Fairfax County Parkway and Franconia-Springfield Parkway Alternatives Analysis and Long-Term Planning Study

Summer 2020 Question and Answer Summary by Meeting Date

Public Meeting #1 (July 29, 2020 - 11:45 AM – 1:15 PM)

How were people chosen for the survey? I have a house that is in the impact zone and I never received one, or any info on this, for that matter.

Response: Fairfax County Department of Transportation previously held two rounds of public outreach with this being the third. Each of the first two rounds included in-person community meetings and online surveys, open to all residents and stakeholders throughout the region. Individuals were not specifically selected to take the surveys. The County publicized the surveys through news releases, social media, Fairfax Alerts, NextDoor alerts, emails to those participating in prior meetings, and Board of Supervisors newsletters. The current outreach effort is similar with our online survey now open for the public to provide input through Monday, August 31, 2020.

Fairfax County Parkway and Sunrise Valley Drive is missing a crosswalk on the south side of the intersection. This is needed sooner than later. Bicyclists do not use the existing crosswalks. It is dangerous for them to use Sunrise Valley Drive left turn lanes eastbound to cross Fairfax County Parkway.

Response: This concern can be addressed through short-term improvements. FCDOT is currently performing a near-term improvement project that is expected to include the 4th crosswalk.

I would like to see more about the recommendation for the Huntsman Boulevard intersection. Please provide additional information.

Response: Huntsman Boulevard experiences a lot of congestion and processes high turning volumes. It was heard from the community that a grade-separated interchange was not the preferred solution. The “quadrant intersection” was identified as a potential at-grade solution. This would create a secondary connection to Huntsman Boulevard through Huntsman Court and a new connector behind the Huntsman Square shopping plaza. All left turns would be eliminated at the main intersection which will help to improve traffic operations. More information on quadrant intersections can be found at VDOT’s website:

http://www.virginiadot.org/info/innovative_intersections_and_interchanges/qr.asp

How were the surveys conducted? Response: The online surveys for all three rounds of public outreach were created in a web-friendly format with pre-populated responses to certain questions, as well as free-form response options. The online surveys were designed to mimic the community meetings, hosted by Fairfax County Department of Transportation (boards, maps, etc.). Paper surveys were made available at the in-person meetings in the Fall 2018 and Spring 2019, in addition to the online form.

Do your cost estimates account for loss of property tax income? Response: The cost estimates presented as part of this study reflect the recommended improvements only. Because this is a Comprehensive Plan study and improvements could be implemented over 40+ years, the impact to adjacent properties would vary depending on when each project is prioritized and funded and moves forward. One effort to be completed as part of this study will be the prioritization of the study recommendations.

The online corridor segment map is very difficult to see street level impacts. Is there a better quality map, or is there a way to search by address to see possible impacts? Response: The maps online are what is currently available. The scale is similar to the Comprehensive Plan Transportation Plan Map on the County website (https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planning-development/sites/planning-development/files/assets/documents/maps/transportation_plan_map.pdf). If you have specific questions about a certain location or address that cannot be discerned with the available maps, please feel free to contact the Project Manager at Fairfax County, Thomas Burke, at (703) 877-5600 or Thomas.Burke@FairfaxCounty.gov.

Can you provide additional information on the Fairfax County Parkway and Sunrise Valley Drive intersection? How do the right-of-way impacts vary? HOV feeders were also suggested as a potential solution. How have you integrated node improvements and feeder options to understand the impacts on FCP, specifically on the south side? Response: Details have not been finalized regarding the potential concept and impacts at the Fairfax County Parkway and Sunrise Valley Drive because design has not begun. The HOV feeder would likely begin at or near Sunrise Valley Drive, but that is still to be determined. Right-of-way impacts would be considered as options are identified and once design begins.

Did your study's modeled traffic volumes take into account the "new normal" with more people working remotely? Response: This study has been ongoing since 2017 and did not initially anticipate the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on travel patterns and volumes. The model does include an assumption for teleworking, but is based on pre-COVID data and conditions. It does not take into account current COVID conditions. This is a long-term planning study and, should new travel patterns emerge, the County can revisit the plan and adjust accordingly.

Huntsman and South Run have significant bicycle and pedestrian traffic. The new intersection will need to be bicycle and pedestrian friendly. Response: Comment noted.

Will the presentation and recording of this meeting be posted online? Response: The presentation and recording of one of the virtual community meetings is currently posted to the project website (www.fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/study/fairfax-county-parkway).

Were trails added to the north side of the Parkway in the vicinity of the Burke Centre Library between Route 123 and Roberts Parkway? Response: Trails on both sides of the Parkways, in their entirety, are included in the preliminary recommendations. The County is seeking input from the public on whether you all support this recommendation.

Trails are really important. How far off the roadway will they be? Separation is important for safety.

Response: Trail separation is a design consideration that would be addressed later, once projects obtain prioritization and funding. Any design would use current standards that would provide as much separation as possible for safety.

What are the COVID impacts on the funding stream? Response: This is a Comprehensive Plan study and it is not cost constrained. Allocating funding is not part of this process. The future impacts to funding are not known at this time.

Can you make recommendations that make trail crossings safer at intersections? There are safety issues (blind spots), such as Route 123. Response: The previous VDOT Existing Conditions study also included over 300 improvements, many related to pedestrian and bicycle crossings at existing intersections. The County has also just begun the Active Fairfax planning effort that is looking at bicycle and pedestrian facilities, countywide, and will include the Parkways to identify programs, policies, and locations to improve trail safety. If there are existing issues at a specific location, please email the Project Manager at Fairfax County, Thomas Burke, at (703) 877-5600 or Thomas.Burke@FairfaxCounty.gov, or submit a comment to the online survey noting any specific locations of concern.

Is the flyover at Burke Centre Parkway going to replace the time of day turn restriction being implemented by VDOT? Response: Yes. The initial Parkway widening by VDOT will include the at-grade time-of-day turn restriction. While the fly-over would eventually replace the time of day turn restriction, identifying the flyover in the Comprehensive Plan is just the first step toward implementing the improvement. The fly-over would need to be prioritized and funded before design would begin.

Have you performed any study to understand how the implementation of the turn restriction at Burke Centre Parkway will impact other roadways, including Roberts Parkway? Response: VDOT did some evaluation of the impacts to parallel facilities as part of the Fairfax County Parkway Widening Design project, but this study did not evaluate impacts to parallel facilities.

Public Meeting #2 (July 30, 2020 - 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM)

How was the decision made to go with Concept 2 for Segment 3 (maintain 4 lanes from Route 123 to Hooes Road)? There are five problematic intersections (including Roberts Parkway, Lee Chapel Road, and Old Keene Mill Road, in addition to Huntsman Boulevard) that affect the traffic flow. Response:

To begin, we feel the ongoing VDOT project to widen the Fairfax County Parkway, from US 29 to Route 123, including a grade-separated interchange at Popes Head Road, is going to have far reaching benefits in terms of relieving traffic flow, even in Segment 3. Beyond that, the process used to develop preliminary recommendations was described in the presentation and considered many factors including traffic analysis results, public input, and other study goals. Based on the public input for this segment, County staff is trying to accommodate the desire to maintain the four-lane cross-section, by including an innovative intersection strategy at Huntsman Boulevard and other intersection improvements at other locations along this segment. Our traffic simulation model, which takes all network changes into account and provides forecasts for traffic operations in the future, shows that things can work. As mentioned in the presentation, the four-lane recommendation for Route 123 to Hooes Road will depend on results of our final models runs. Meanwhile, the County encourages you to provide input on the preliminary recommendations to help further refine the recommendations.

Sunrise Valley Drive has been identified to maintain the existing recommendation for a planned interchange. A Single Point Urban Interchange (SPUI) could potentially create a greater problem with left-turn conflicts. What is the planned configuration? Response:

The comprehensive plan is a long-term plan and does not specify a certain interchange configuration, only that we are recommending an interchange. This study evaluated a SPUI as the assumed configuration for analysis purposes only. Please note that we showed success in making traffic flow better with the SPUI, as Parkway trips become grade-separated and free flow and were removed from the traffic signals. However, once funding is identified and the project moves into design, there would be further review and alternatives analyses with additional community outreach before finalizing the configuration.

Could you provide more information about the quadrant intersection recommended at Huntsman Boulevard? Response: See similar question and response from the July 29 meeting.

Public Meeting #3 (August 4, 2020 - 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM)

How are you weighing the opinions of commuters (from other counties) as compared to Fairfax County residents who live along or near the Parkways and will be impacted negatively by widening and increased traffic? Response: The past surveys, and current survey, are open to the public, regardless of residence. At this point, the project is not isolating responses from residents of different areas within the county or region. The input will be used, along with the technical analyses, to refine the final recommendations.

Were additional multi-modal options considered, such as bus rapid transit or light rail to connect with Metrorail? Response: A previous County study had evaluated high quality transit options along the Parkways. The density of the corridor is relatively low and the land patterns do not support light-rail or bus rapid transit services. This study looked at how to best accommodate transit, in general, and the potential benefit of HOV lanes for transit services.

What statistics exist regarding use of the current trails? I travel the parkway frequently and rarely see many pedestrians or bicyclists. What justification exists to provide trails on both sides of the parkway? Response: The County is always looking to improve multimodal facilities throughout the County. The Fairfax County Parkway trail connects to the Washington & Old Dominion Trail, the future I-66 trail, and other regional trails. Based upon feedback from the public, and input from staff, it was identified as a meaningful improvement to provide a trail along both sides of the Parkways. The use of the trails is also influenced by the type of adjacent land uses, so there may be locations with varying degrees of use; some higher and some lower. However, there has been positive support for trails on both sides, but the County welcomes further feedback through comments and/or the online survey.

What assumptions did you include for increased transit service? Response: The County transportation models include planned future transit service, including the planned Fairfax Connector route, from the future Herndon Metrorail station to the Franconia-Springfield Metrorail/VRE station.

Did you assess climate impacts as part of the concepts? It seems critical to assess if the County wants to meet its climate goals. I appreciate the bike/ped components, but more needs to be done for transit and shifting away from solo driving. Response: The County is supportive of reducing dependency on single occupant vehicle travel. Radial facilities, like the Parkways, however, are not as conducive to moving transit as corridors that extend out from the employment centers, like the Dulles Toll Road, I-66, and I-95. It is important to balance accommodations for transit, in context with the surrounding land uses of a facility. It is important to balance the climate impact consideration with congestion created by the configuration of the network.

Many employers are experiencing significant overhead cost decreases and increased productivity as a result of employees working from home during the pandemic, and many are considering making such arrangements permanent. How does that impact your plans? Response: Based upon tools that are available, the analysis was based upon commuting patterns, pre-COVID-19 conditions. This is also a long-term planning study, so if it is determined that new travel patterns emerge, there may be consideration for adjusting assumptions.

Can you please explain how transit queue jumps work? Response: Queue jump lanes allow buses to enter a right-turn lane well in advance of the traffic signal to bypass congestion occurring in the general-purpose traffic lanes. Buses would then be able to take advantage of a special transit only signal display at the intersection to bypass or “jump” ahead of the congested traffic.

Have you taken into account the changes in traffic patterns that may require other road work/changes? For example, what impact would these options have on roads like Rolling Road, Old Keene Mill Road, Burke Centre Parkway, etc.? Response: The focus of our analysis was on Fairfax County Parkway and Franconia-Springfield Parkway, not crossing or parallel roadways. The traffic forecasts assumed the current Comprehensive Plan as the baseline, including all future widening and other improvements, so any associated traffic shifts would be accounted for.

When do you plan to widen Route 123 to six lanes? The speed limit on Route 123 is already too fast for this section of Route 123, south of the Fairfax County Parkway interchange, which includes many residential communities. Response: Widening Route 123 is included in the current Comprehensive Plan and we are not recommending any change. It is not, however, part of the County’s Transportation Priority Plan (covering the next 6 years). At this point, there is no funding identified to widen Route 123, south of the Fairfax County Parkway, and improvements have not been scheduled.

Are intersections with the Parkways evaluated based on safety for non-car users, such as pedestrians, and bicyclists? Response: VDOT and FCDOT completed an existing conditions study that was completed in 2017 that focused on localized, short-term improvements. This current study is considering long-term improvements and is considering adding more trails, connections, and potential interchanges that would improve safety of non-car users. When the long term improvements are eventually prioritized and funded, they would be designed with safety as a guiding factor.

What is the timeline for adding a trail on the other side? If it impacts electrical line spacing will line burial be part of the project? Response: This study will likely result in an update to the Comprehensive Plan. After that time, prioritization and funding would be needed for any of these projects before a schedule could be established. Relocation of overhead electrical transmission lines could be considered at the time of design, but cannot be determined at this stage of the project.

Are your presentations slides available to share with our HOA? Response: The presentation is available on the project website.

One participant mentioned the speed limit on Route 123. Drivers on the Parkway routinely exceed the speed limit by as much as 20-25 mph. What will the speed limit be on the widened Parkway and how will it be enforced? Response: At this point, changing the speed limit has not been discussed and is not anticipated. More details on the roadway design features and speed would be addressed during the design phase once funding is identified.

I have attended several prior public meetings. It is obvious the bicycle lobby has been well represented. How much weight do these public comments have on the ultimate decisions? Response: The County takes all public comments seriously and we do our best to incorporate feedback into the study recommendations. Every comment and point of feedback will be reviewed. The first round of meetings and presentations generated 15,000 comments, which fed into later stages of the project when additional outreach generated more than 1,500 comments. The comments and responses do have an impact on future recommendations, which is why it is important to get as much feedback as possible.

What is the benefit of removing the Boudinot Drive interchange and what benefit will that have? Response: This interchange was recently completed and does not experience any congestion, nor does the analysis indicate that there will be future congestion. Since the interchange has been constructed, the County staff is recommending the removal of interchange improvements from the Comprehensive Plan. This recommendation will not result in any modification to the interchange.

Have any studies been done in relation to the lane expansion and effects on property values? Response: This study is being performed at the Comprehensive Plan level. It is unknown when these improvements might be prioritized and funded, nor implemented, so we are not able to estimate property value impacts at this time.

Adding a second trail is included into 2 of the 3 concepts. Does that mean that a second trail is highly likely to move into the final recommendations? Response: Based on public input and County policies, County staff believes the second trail is highly supported by the community and there are many technical reasons to include it. However, the recommendations are not final, which is why we encourage all to complete the online survey and provide input.

For the additional express bus service mentioned, has Metrobus confirmed they can and will support new service along the Parkways? Currently there is not enough parking at the Gambrill Road and Sydenstricker Road lots (Pre pandemic). Response: The planned route would operate under Fairfax Connector, not WMATA (operator of Metrobus). Therefore, WMATA has not been part of this process. As far as the park and ride lots, the County notes the concerns at the existing park and ride lots and understands that accommodating increased transit service will lead to the need to address park and ride lot capacity and consider new stand-alone and/or shared use park and ride locations along the corridor.

Has the interchange design proposed for Huntsman Boulevard been implemented anywhere in the local area that we can evaluate what it looks like? Same question queue jumping for buses? Response: A quadrant intersection has not been implemented nearby in this area, yet. This configuration is relatively new for Virginia and there are 2 locations so far. More information about quadrant intersections can be found on VDOT's website: http://www.virginiadot.org/info/innovative_intersections_and_interchanges/qr.asp).

There are examples of queue jumps in this area. One location is in Arlington County, at the N. Glebe Road and N. Henderson Road/N. Quincy Street intersection, along the southbound N. Glebe Road approach.

With Huntsman Boulevard, why does moving the left turn down a little bit help traffic? Won't it just move the back-up down to the other (new) light and create the same issues? Response: Please see the VDOT website (http://www.virginiadot.org/info/innovative_intersections_and_interchanges/gr.asp) for more information on the operational benefits on quadrants.

In Segment 3 you made no mention of Lee Chapel Road at Fairfax County Parkway. I am aware that Lee Chapel Road is planned to be widened, further increasing the shortcuts between Fairfax County Parkway and Route 123. Traffic now makes it difficult to maneuver in/out of the South Run development. Response: This study used the Comprehensive Plan as its baseline and assumes all the associated improvements, including the Lee Chapel Road widening. Our transportation models and analysis show that the intersection of Fairfax County Parkway and Lee Chapel Road performs adequately.