Transportation Committee

Overview Vision Statement

To encourage the citizens of Mount Vernon District to create a vision of what should be implemented for transportation infrastructure within 25 years that enhances quality of life and promotes a strong and growing economy throughout the entire region.

The Committee strives to encourage citizens by conducting outreach activities to promote public participation. A vision without a plan is just a dream. The issues that follow are presented as the start of a plan to realize a vision; to spark interest, dialogue, and further analysis into the future as Mount Vernon District evolves. As we proceed to disseminate our vision for the Mount Vernon District, we must assure that we continue to provide an appropriate road map for implementation, adjusted to the changing circumstances which at present we cannot predict, though we know it will take a concerted and sustained effort by all of the stakeholders. "

The Committee is proposing 16 transportation oriented issues for inclusion in the overall vision for the future of the Mount Vernon District. However, these issues are clearly interrelated with aspects other than transportation. We must assure that a proper integration occurs for mutually supportive progress in the realm of planning and zoning, land-use and the environment - all supported by a synchronized development of an appropriate transportation infrastructure.

Inventory

What we have

- A legacy provided by past and present citizenry and elected officials who had a vision to establish a transportation template from which to build and improve. This legacy includes modes such as rail, bus, multi-lane roadways, and bicycle/pedestrian pathways.
- Citizens and elected officials who understand the importance of a highly efficient transportation system and its impact on future sustainment of our quality of life.
- Potential for solving the most difficult transportation challenges based on the demonstrated knowledge, interest and passion of an informed populace.

What we need

Based on projecting current practices, the following assumptions pertaining to transportation conditions 20-25 years in the future are used to propose improvements in the infrastructure. Action, diverging from current practices, must be taken soon to invalidate these assumptions.

- An outer Beltway has not been constructed.
- Desired residential and commercial developments have been stymied in view of the lack of progress to expand existing transportation infrastructure.
- Road developments in support of BRAC and the Army Museum have not been completed, to include the widening of Route 1 to 6 lanes in the Fort Belvoir vicinity; additionally, the increased traffic from the south and due to BRAC has caused an increase of Level Of Service (LOS) F intersections (LOS is a measure of a road's effectiveness to operate in an efficient manner. LOS F results in forced flow; very low speeds; volume exceeds capacity; long delays; stop and go traffic;

delays at signals more than 80 seconds).

- The extension of rail transit from Huntington due south has not been achieved.
- The pricey HOV tolls on Interstate 95 may not reduce congestion on the Interstate and thereby will not succeed in absorbing traffic from Route 1 or the George Washington Memorial Highway.
- The establishment of committed funding sources to support upkeep and expansion of road systems within the Mount Vernon District has not been achieved.
- Alternate energy sources to gasoline powered vehicles have not reduced the proportion of vehicles per household and have not reduced air pollution.
- The establishment of local walkable communities and the expansion of bike trails have reduced local traffic volume but advantages gained have been nullified by the expansion of residential developments to our south with continuing commuting demands to the DC area.
- The death rate due to pedestrian/vehicular encounters as well as vehicular accidents has not been reduced.
- Prolonged commuting time and frequent traffic gridlock bestows a negative perception of the Mount Vernon District.

ISSUE #1

Bicycle and Pedestrian Considerations

COMMITTEE POSITION

Support safe pedestrian and bicycle transit to reduce road congestion and promote healthy living, including the planting of trees to shade sidewalks and trails. Encourage bicycling and walking to school, work, shops, and public transportation.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

Creating communities conducive to walking and alternative modes of low tech, non-motorized, transportation, such as bicycling and roller-skating, especially in suburban areas like Mount Vernon that is close to a dense metropolitan area, should be an important goal of transportation policy at all levels of government. A variety of instruments can be used to advance that goal, from zoning ordinances to subdivision ordinances, protocols for local or state takeovers of privately built streets and trails, and permitting procedures to connect private facilities to public networks. Mount Vernon is home to many neglected trails and has the potential for many more. Specific issues that need to be addressed include the following:

1. Improve and complete Historic Potomac path.
2. Install sidewalks/trails in areas that currently have none, with priority on providing safe pedestrian access to public transportation.
3. Install crosswalks, possibly with pedestrian-safe islands, in areas with predictable pedestrian traffic (e.g., Post Office, Shopping Center, Parks, etc…) where the absence of the crosswalk is a safety hazard.
4. Upgrade, as appropriate, pedestrian walkway lighting, especially for access to public transportation.
5. Maintain bicycle trails to limit hazards to the cyclists. Additionally, do not permit the use of pedestrian walkways as bike trails. For the safety of both pedestrians and cyclists two separate pathways are always required.
6. Complete/connect the gaps in the current trail systems and bicycle lanes on the streets.
7. Encourage the installation of benches along walkways, especially in areas near senior residential communities and locations providing services and resources to seniors.

NEXT ACTION STEPS

- Promote incentives that support low tech transportation as they are likely to be more effective than mandates in fostering changes to current policy and practice. A number of specific steps to be considered but the priority should be to always include bicycle and separate pedestrian routes on all new, reconstructed, or expanded roadways, along with bicycle facilities in new subdivisions.
- Urge connectivity of existing trails and sidewalks as a high priority.
- Promote biking to school. However, safety must be the over-riding consideration. School principals must assure that connectivity of proper, safe bike paths exist within their respective area of responsibility, before youth are encouraged to bike to school.

ISSUE #2

Extend Rail Traffic Southward on Highway #1

COMMITTEE POSITION

The need for some form of rail traffic to alleviate the current congestion on Highway #1 is recognized by the residents of the Mount Vernon District, but not necessarily by VDOT. Interplay of rail and busses to form a connecting grid is deemed imperative to assure smooth traffic flow within the District and on the County's highways. The extension of rail on Highway#1 may need to project into Prince William County.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

For the past ten years efforts to secure a Mass Transit Study for Richmond Highway has been thwarted – first one was funded, then funding was diverted and as of the end of 2010 it still has not been initiated. This study is needed to determine the most economical and operationally sustainable mode of rail to be constructed, as well as define its placement on Highway #1 (i.e. on which side of the highway or in the center between lanes). That, in turn, will permit the proper alignment of a six lane Route #1 from the Beltway to the Occoquan.

The rail options which should come into consideration are:

1. An extension of Heavy Rail (Metro) from Huntington due South. Extending Metro to the Kings Crossing would entail relatively little cost, since the tunnel is already extended in that direction and is presently in usage for marshalling subway cars. However, a further extension, underground as well as at ground level, is recognized as the most costly option.

2. Light Rail would be less expensive, but is limited by the maximum angle of elevation which may be applied; significant engineering efforts will be needed to overcome this problem along the route.

3. A more experimental way and probably the least expensive and intrusive is Monorail. This would take away the least amount of right-of-way; however it has not been an economical success in Las Vegas. In any event, the Mass Transit Study should provide a firm recommendation as to which option is most appropriate.

The extension of the Yellow Line to Fort Belvoir is currently in direct competition with an extension of the Blue Line from Springfield to Fort Belvoir. This is unfortunate, since on a long-range basis, both rail lines will be needed to accommodate the residential complexes along both the Route #1 and the I-95 corridors. Additionally, on a long-term basis, the residential expansions south of Fort Belvoir and extending into Prince William County will also require supporting rail transportation.

NEXT ACTION STEPS

- Provide priority to fund and execute the Route #1 Mass Transit Study, with an expanded mission to extend its vision further south.
- Develop a funding source to pay for future rail extensions, aimed at establishing a transportation grid, with North-South rail traffic and East-West bus traffic.

- The transportation grid will be significantly reinforced by connecting the rail lines from Huntington (the Yellow Line) and rail from Springfield (the Blue Line) at Fort Belvoir.
- Rail must be planned to continue due south from Fort Belvoir, where the Yellow and Blue lines meet, towards Fredericksburg and an inter-connection with VRE and AMTRAK.

ISSUE #3

Mass Transit – Transit Centers

COMMITTEE POSITION

In 20-25 years, the focus should shift away from moving vehicles to moving people from point A to point B. And, as a result, transit centers will need to be strategically located along major commuter roads.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

Mass transit along U.S. 1 still consists of buses to Tysons Corner, Huntington Metro Station, Fort Belvoir and Eisenhower Avenue with the 11Y Metro bus offering express bus service along the G.W. Parkway to downtown D.C. The extension of rail transit from Huntington due south along U.S. 1 has not yet been achieved. But, the pricey HOV tolls on Interstate 95 are adding more people to the bus transit system from Prince William County and other southern counties so that they can get to Fort Belvoir post and Washington D.C. and those people would like to work in office building that have not been built along U.S. 1, as would those folks who currently live along U.S. 1.

Future redevelopment or development along U.S. 1 should include transit centers where commuters can congregate in one area and several bus lines can pick-up passengers. These transit centers should be designed with structured parking in a large area where self-storage parking lots currently exist along U.S. 1 south of Gunston Road. This Gunston Road transit center would serve Mt. Vernon magisterial residents moving in new developments along Gunston, Old Colchester and Gunston Cove Roads. Kingman Road transit center should be built along the Fairfax County Parkway to serve those commuting to the Ft. Belvoir post and hospital. The Penn Daw transit center, closer to the current residential neighborhoods, should be built at the triangular area of land between Kings Crossing and the Penn-Daw shopping center. As U.S. 1 is developed to a denser, mixed use village at concentrated nodes, structured parking with electric car recharging stations should be built at each mixed use node (Woodlawn, South County, Hybla Valley/Gum Springs, Beacon/Groveton, Penn Daw and North Gateway Community Business Centers).

NEXT ACTION STEPS

- The Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan should be revised to reflect the future vision of U.S. 1 with several transit centers:

  1. In the undeveloped area south of Gunston Road, an area of land should be indicated as a structured parking transit center similar to Herndon-Monroe transit station that has 1,745 free parking spaces and enough bus routes to move people from east to west as well as North and South (the Herndon-Monroe transit center was built as a bus depot but will transition to a metrorail stop when the Silver line is completed);

  2. A transit center near Fort Belvoir's Tulley Gate or Kingman Road, similar to the Reston Transit, which has a bus depot arrangement with a Connector store and place to get out of the rain; and

3. The Penn-Daw triangle transit center should be a bus depot/rail stop transit center similar to that built in Shirlington (Arlington County).

- In the next 20-25 years, Fairfax County staff in the Office of Community Revitalization and Reinvestment should design and built transit centers to attract quality development to the U.S. 1/Richmond Highway Corridor.
- At the same time, VDOT and the FHWA should be constructing a metrorail line from Huntington Avenue (Kings Highway North) to the Occoquon River and beyond, to provide a transportation infrastructure that increases the ability for mass transit to move more people through the corridor with ease and thereby enhance the quality of developments within the District.

ISSUE #4

Transportation Construction Funding

COMMITTEE POSITION

Monitor and support the Northern Virginia Transportation Coalition efforts to secure sufficient funding to construct new roads and highways within Fairfax County.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

On the basis of current funding arrangements, over the next six years transportation revenues are expected to be reduced by $2.1 -$2.6 billion based on state estimates and AASHTO federal revenue estimates. State revenue for the next six years will be reduced by $1.5 billion. Gas tax revenues are declining because of population change, prices, the economy, and the cars that are being driven today and in the future. Motor vehicle sales and use tax collection started downward in FY 2004 and have now plummeted. Federal revenue is trending downward with its long-term future unknown. A one-time $8 billion Congressional bailout saved the current fiscal year funding. Federal gas tax faces the same challenges at the state gas tax and is 80% of the total federal highway trust fund. The six-year federal transportation spending authorization ends this fiscal year. Federal funding is increasingly unpredictable. The Commonwealth Transportation Board will be consulting with federal and state partners to determine best approach to estimating federal revenues for next six years. Existing policy goals will be followed – to complete project phases; bridges; multimodal; congestion relief; and to maximize funding from partners. Estimated reduction in insurance premiums revenues will mean that fewer bonds can be sold which will directly impact construction projects and designated projects. This review occurs each year in November/December timeframe.

The Commonwealth of Virginia cannot afford to administer and deliver transportation-related services, programs and projects the same way. The economic outlook in Virginia, United States, and internationally has continued to decline over the past two years. The transportation revenue outlook continues to be on the decline. Virginia must make fundamental structural changes to transportation administration, services, programs, and projects to address the long-term change to the Virginia revenue base. These reductions are in addition to the $1.1 billion reduction in state revenues last year.

NEXT ACTION STEPS

Fairfax County should support the efforts of the Northern Virginia Transportation Coalition as the Coalition intends to strive for:

1. Addressing the Commonwealth's $billion surplus to close the funding gaps for new construction in Northern Virginia.

2. Engaging our elected officials to work with the Federal government to share transportation funding costs under the Base Relocation Program.

3. Withdrawing the No-tax pledges on transportation funding, by candidates for public office, which are contrary to the best interests of the citizens of the Commonwealth and future economic prosperity.

4. Monitoring the progress of the Commonwealth of Virginia working together and doing whatever is necessary to secure significant, new, dedicated, reliable transportation revenues to erase Virginia's crippling transportation deficit, which threatens Virginia's long-term prosperity.

5. Sustaining a series of periodic Public Information meetings to keep residents of the County informed on the progress of new road construction activities in Northern Virginia.

6. Monitoring VDOT's reporting to the Governor, General Assembly, Commonwealth Transportation Board, and Fairfax County Board of Directors.

ISSUE #5

Transportation Maintenance Funding

COMMITTEE POSITION

Monitor and support the Northern Virginia Transportation Coalition efforts to secure sufficient funding to sustain the transportation network within Fairfax County.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

In 2009, The Northern Virginia Transportation Coalition recognized that greater investment in transportation infrastructure is essential to short-term economic recovery and long-term economic prosperity. Transportation-dedicated taxes and fees have remained virtually unchanged in Virginia since 1987. Documented unfunded transportation requirements exceed $100 billion, including more than $3.7 billion in structurally deficient bridges and $1 billion in interstate and primary highway repaving needs. Inadequate capacity and poor pavement conditions annually cost $4.7 billion or nearly $1,000 per licensed Virginia driver in accidents, operating costs and congestion-related delays. Virginia's Six-Year Improvement Program, which has experienced over $4 billion in cuts in the past two years, is not an accurate reflection of the Commonwealth's acute transportation needs. $400 million in Virginia's Transportation Trust Fund for construction is diverted annually to the Highway Maintenance and Operations Fund, and the annual growth factor for state maintenance funds to localities has been reduced from 4% to 3%, leaving fewer funds to meet growing needs. VDOT has already significantly consolidated operations and reduced personnel over the past 2 years. The revenue stream created by 2007 legislation to support $3 billion in transportation bonds over a ten-year period is currently capable of funding only $2 billion worth of bonds and is insufficient to support any bonds before 2010. Declining state revenues and expanding needs have increased Virginia's dependence upon federal funds at a time when the state soon will be unable to provide federal matching dollars, meaning that for every $20 in matching dollars the Commonwealth is lacking, it forgoes $80 in federal funding.

The federal surface transportation program is up for re-authorization this year and future allocation levels are very much in doubt. The Commonwealth lacks funds for transportation infrastructure to attract new business and supplement public-private partnership transportation investments. The Northern Virginia Transportation Coalition has previously affirmed support for a minimum of $400 million per year in new, dedicated, sustainable transportation funds for Northern Virginia and for the position that such funds must not be viewed or used as a replacement for new or existing state transportation revenues.

NEXT ACTION STEPS

The Committee supports the efforts of the Northern Virginia Transportation Coalition as the Coalition intends to strive for:

1. The inclusion of bonds, public-private partnerships, General Funds, allocation formula changes, tolls and other currently used mechanisms remain part of the solution.

2. Recognition that bonds, public-private partnerships, General Funds, allocation formula changes, tolls and other currently used mechanisms are inadequate individually or collectively to address well-documented needs.

3. Fiscal and political realities dictate that the Commonwealth's transportation needs cannot be met without new and reliable revenues in the form of dedicated taxes and/or fees.

4. No-tax pledges on transportation funding by candidates for public office are contrary to the best interests of the citizens of the Commonwealth and future economic prosperity.

5. Monitoring the progress of the Commonwealth of Virginia working together and doing whatever is necessary to secure significant, new, dedicated, reliable transportation revenues to erase Virginia's crippling transportation deficit, which threatens Virginia's long-term prosperity.

6. Sustaining a series of periodic Public Information meetings to keep residents of Northern Virginia informed on the progress of road and highway maintenance activities in Northern Virginia.

7. Monitoring VDOT's reporting to the Governor, General Assembly, Commonwealth Transportation Board, and Fairfax County Board of Directors.

8. Including two representatives from the Mount Vernon District on the Northern Virginia Transportation Coalition to keep our supervisor apprised of funding issues and discussions that could affect the Mount Vernon District, and to assure that the Mount Vernon District receives its appropriate share of the available maintenance funding.

ISSUE #6

Technology Utilization for Traffic Flow Monitoring

COMMITTEE POSITION

Intelligent Traffic Management including Smart signal light/timing technology will improve traffic flow of primary and secondary roads.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

While road infrastructure improvements and the widening of U.S. 1 (Richmond Highway) and key intersections have not yet been completed, so that there are 6 travel lanes and dedicated left turn lanes and deceleration lanes, currently Richmond Highway is congested with the volume of commuter vehicles, as well as local trips for residents and to the Fort Belvoir post hospital. Given the continuing importance of U.S. 1 in future growth and economic redevelopment to the Mount Vernon magisterial district, it is especially critical that the capacity of the Richmond Highway corridor be improved in order to attract quality development. Much of the new growth along the corridor in the past two or three decades has been stretched along a suburban strip pattern that is unconnected and generally low density rather than concentrated in nodes. The multiple, individual and separate entrances of the strip developments bog down traffic resulting in increasing congestion. Pedestrian safety is also compromised.

Intelligent Traffic Management systems exist that can monitor vehicle speed and volume by using anonymous signals from cell phones in cars along heavily traveled routes. Fish eye cameras can be installed at key intersections so that traffic can be controlled based on actual information on the road and at key intersections. Advances in vehicular electronics have provided new vehicles with access to real-time operating systems (either through GPS navigational units or sending signals to satellites collecting data as to where traffic is congested). Currently, drivers can view real-time traffic volumes on their GPS units if their vehicles are so equipped. In 20-25 years, the technology should surpass where it is today and our roads should be equipped with real-time traffic light synchronization so that cars do not have to stop at every or every other traffic signal. Plus, traffic management off-peak should look to see the actual traffic volume at an intersection before stopping cars on the main road to let one car out of a development.

NEXT ACTION STEPS

- The Virginia Department of Transportation should analyze the new technology and make it available as an approved VDOT traffic signal management system. Currently, VDOT has both fixed-timed and traffic responsive signals that adjust the timing of the light based on the number of vehicles detected on the intersection approach.
- In the next 20-25 years, VDOT should have all of our traffic signals in the Mount Vernon magisterial district using the currently approved traffic responsive signals.
- In order to keep traffic moving on U.S. 1, both smart traffic signal technology and smart growth needs to be implemented. U.S. 1 needs to have nodal developments with high density as traffic congestion is lessened with fewer entrances onto the highway.
- Jurisdictions should be encouraged to use Intelligent Traffic System that use real-time light synchronization based on actual traffic monitoring.

ISSUE #7

Adopting High Technology for Rider Convenience

COMMITTEE POSITION

GPS Technology opens for us a myriad of possibilities for making driving a novel and easier experience; concomitantly it will make driving safer.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

It was amazing to view a recent German invention, which permitted the steering of a driverless vehicle navigating on a regular highway. This navigation was achieved with an interplay of radar, GPS technology, cameras and computers, which enabled the vehicle to "see" and make decisions as to direction, speed, destination, lane usage, and circumventing obstacles.

While it may be a long way off, to make this sort of convenience available at a manageable price for everyday usage, parts of this technology could be adopted in the foreseeable future to provide assistance to drivers through centralized control and direct communication between a Traffic Control Center and an individual vehicle. The GPS technology can pinpoint the exact location of a vehicle on the road. The Traffic Control Center can oversee the traffic volume and advise individual drivers to take specified lanes to enable smooth progress. Specific speed can be prescribed, or it can be understood that the maximum legal speed is applied unless otherwise directed. As technology progresses, vehicles can be equipped with remote control capability, so that they are placed into specified existing lanes where control is shifted to the respective Traffic Control Center. The Center will then control all vehicles in these specified lanes, it will impose a designated speed, prescribe the interval between cars; and if road or weather conditions impact adversely, the speed will be lowered. When mishaps occur, all vehicles may have to stop until the scene is cleared. When exiting the highway, the vehicle driver reaffirms personal control over the vehicle. The technology towards centralized control of vehicle operations opens up a new page in vehicle safety. The ability to set speed and the interval between vehicles will eliminate reckless driving and force safer driving during inclement weather conditions. The accident rate can be predicted to plummet significantly. Ultimately, in the distant future, the German invention could dominate the traffic scene.

NEXT ACTION STEPS

1. The new technology must be analyzed and plans should be drafted for a communication connection between personal vehicles and a dedicated highway Traffic Control Center which, with GPS, can monitor each vehicle on a specific highway.
2. As a first operational step, vehicles monitored by the respective Traffic Control Center need to be identified and tracked, similar to aviation operations.
3. The next step is to establish communication with tracked vehicles. Installation of inter-connecting equipment should be at the option of POV operators.
4. Once tracking and communication is perfected, speed and lane designation can be directed to drivers connected with the Center.
5. Further intervention for total centralized control of vehicles in designated lanes must await progress in technology and associated cost reduction of needed equipment.

ISSUE #8

Eastern Bypass

COMMITTEE POSITION

Construct limited access parkway between I-95 and an upgraded Maryland Route 301 or alternative parallel corridor.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

As development continues south of Lorton and more cars crowd I-95 in both directions, it is clear that new solutions or the re-energizing of past initiatives must be studied and explored in order to reduce congestion in northern Virginia and Fairfax County. Residential development and growth continues unabated in Prince William, Stafford and Spotsylvania counties as well as in Fredericksburg with more cars headed into the Northern Virginia and District of Columbia. Truck traffic continues to increase as more supplies are required for operation of the communities and their populations in the National Capitol region. Rush hour continues to expand and absorb more hours of the day. Flex- and telecommute work schedules have not helped to reduce traffic.

This issue focuses on construction of an Interstate 95 Eastern Bypass to and around the National Capitol area – referred to as "I-95E". Background for this issue has been obtained from the Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance (NVTA) website from its list of regional priorities (www.nvta.org).

"The Eastern Bypass is part of what regional planners in the 1960s proposed as a third or outer Beltway. The Eastern Bypass' primary function is to divert north-south interstate traffic, heavy trucks in particular, moving up and down the East Coast off the Capital Beltway and Woodrow Wilson Bridge and away from and around the metropolitan core. Potential corridors, benefits and feasibility were last examined in the late 1980s in a joint Maryland-Virginia (Bellomo-McGee) Study. This Study examined six possible corridors ranging from 57 to 91 miles in length. It estimated travel demand of 60,000 vehicles per day by 2010 and costs between $1.5 billion and $1.8 billion (in 1988 dollars) depending upon the corridor." (NVTA)

"The Northern Virginia 2030 Transportation Plan includes the Eastern Bypass and estimates its cost at $1.215 billion." (NVTA)

The construction of an Eastern Bypass would significantly contribute to increase the quality of life in the Mount Vernon District. Removing cars and trucks that are traveling north and south with no business in the Northern Virginia, District of Columbia and Maryland counties of Montgomery and Prince George will decrease the total traffic on I-95 north/south through the National Capitol region and lower the commute times for the area as well as reduce the number of cars transiting our District.

NEXT ACTION STEPS

- Fairfax County should endorse the concept of an Eastern Bypass and should recommend to the Governors of Maryland and Virginia to direct their Departments of Transportation to conduct a joint study and recommend the best corridor for this highway.

- Fairfax County should recommend to the Maryland-Virginia-District of Columbia Joint Legislative Commission on Interstate Transportation to place this issue on its agenda.

ISSUE # 9

Vehicle Capacity in Neighborhoods

COMMITTEE POSITION

Support the economic re-vitalization of the Mount Vernon District through traffic reduction measures and alternate accessibility means to parks, schools, shopping centers, and malls.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

In many counties and cities, street design is regaining its status as a vital element of neighborhood and city planning. The reasons for this status are self-evident: people want to live on streets where there are low traffic volumes, slow speeds and minimal noise. Residents also seek proximity to parks, schools, shopping centers, and other facilities for their children. Many residents today have a newfound desire for sidewalks, bike paths, walking paths, trails, greenways and open space. However, the streets and neighborhoods built in the 80's and 90's have often created the opposite conditions: wide streets full of fast, noisy traffic, and subdivisions that encourage automobile dependence. The walk to the corner store has, for many, been replaced with a drive to the Safeway or Giant in a 2-ton vehicle. Even when stores lie close to homes, land uses are separated to such an extent that it's often impossible to reach them without a motor vehicle. This separation of uses is common in modern zoning codes. The typical layout of a conventional community locates residential, commercial and civic buildings in distinct enclaves that are often connected only through larger arterial roadways. As a result, the child living in the residential subdivision cannot visit the local park unless he or she is driven there. A child in Fairfax County cannot comfortably walk or ride a bike to the park without confronting 4- or 6-lane arterial roadways. The same is true of most other trips an individual or family wants to make. Therefore, most trips require use of a car, thereby exacerbating already congested arterial roadways.

Another problem is teenage drivers who forget that they were small children and drive recklessly through communities just to get that video or pizza they desperately need. The emphasis on motor vehicle capacity has encouraged traffic engineers to design streets with minimal obstacles for errant drivers, so trees are often set at a distance from the roadway and on-street parking is discouraged. The resulting wide streets and long blocks, then, literally encourage speeding and discourage walking and biking. The traditional neighborhood street is narrow and lined with trees that not only help calm traffic but also increase comfort for walkers and cyclists. Many residents and local officials are recognizing that these traditional streets help form more livable neighborhoods. As a result, efforts are underway to design or retrofit more streets to mirror these characteristics, including such measures as 'traffic calming.' Traffic-calming denotes a set of mostly physical treatments to roadways that help manage traffic flow and encourage safer, more civil driver behavior within districts and neighborhoods.

Studies have shown that reducing traffic noise, traffic speeds, and vehicle-generated air pollution can increase property values. One study found that a 5 to 10 mph reduction in traffic speeds increased adjacent residential property values by roughly 20%. Another study

found that traffic restraints that reduced volumes on residential streets by several hundred cars per day increased home values by an average of 18%. Another study revealed that real estate values over the next 25 years will rise fastest in "smart communities" that incorporate traditional characteristics of successful cities including a mix of residential and commercial districts and a "pedestrian-friendly configuration." Contemporary neighborhoods with its smaller, decentralized businesses, thrive on land use patterns that regress back to the towns of early industrial years, with city centers, corner stores and streetcar suburbs. Pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods with accessible downtowns, shopping centers, and malls with a mix of restaurants, offices, parks, and housing promote interaction. Interaction is key since the new economy for Fairfax County will thrive on accessibility, networking, and creativity. That accessibility must be safe and hazard-free in order for our resident to network and be creative.

NEXT ACTION STEPS

1. Install crosswalks, possibly with pedestrian-safe islands, in areas with predictable pedestrian traffic (e.g., Post Office, Shopping Center, Parks, etc…) where the absence of the crosswalk is a safety hazard.

2. Consider widening sidewalks in communities, bulb the curbing at intersections, and placing colorful pavement stones in new sidewalks and streets.

3. Upgrade, as appropriate, pedestrian walkway lighting, especially for access to public transportation.

4. Maintain bicycle trails to limit hazards to the cyclists. Additionally, do not permit the use of pedestrian walkways as bike trails. For the safety of both pedestrians and cyclists two separate pathways are always required.

5. Investigate other communities to see how they implemented traffic-calming techniques and projects revitalized economic growth in blighted areas.

6. Promote incentives that support low-tech transportation and convenient access to shopping centers, malls, schools, and parks. A number of specific steps should be considered; however, priority should be to always include bicycle and separate pedestrian routes on all new, reconstructed, or expanded roadways, along with bicycle facilities in new subdivisions.

7. Investigate all measures to reduce the amount of traffic flow in our communities. Provide incentives to use alternate means of accessibility than the automobile.

8. Consider the use of gateways, street trees, lighting, benches and other streetscape amenities in areas around exiting malls and shopping centers.

9. Improve and complete Historic Potomac path.

10. Install sidewalks/trails in areas that currently have none, with priority on providing safe pedestrian access to public transportation.

11. Complete/connect the gaps in the current trail systems and bicycle lanes on the streets.

12. Encourage the installation of benches along walkways, especially in areas near senior residential communities and locations providing services and resources to seniors.

ISSUE # 10

Teleworking/Telecommuting

COMMITTEE POSITION

Promote telecommuting as a traffic congestion mitigation tool.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

According to the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments, telework is defined as "wage and salary employees who at least occasionally work at home or at a telework or satellite center during an entire workday, instead of traveling to their regular workplace."

Telework offers great promise to ease traffic congestion and clean the air in the Mount Vernon District. Residents have access to technology and many have jobs that are telework appropriate. More and more government agencies and private companies in the commonwealth and region are embracing teleworking as a practical alternative for their employees. However, getting management buy in, developing trust with their workers and making the shift to results-based management and institutionalizing opportunities through outreach to Human Resources departments continue to be challenges for governments and private industry alike.

Fairfax County defines telework as allowing employees to work from a home-based office or local work center during normal work hours, instead of commuting. Fairfax County government began their teleworking program with 50 employees in 1995. During that first year, those teleworkers saved a total of 180,000 commuting miles and 6,000 commuting hours.

NEXT ACTION STEPS

1. Encourage all private and public employers to establish and promote specific goals for telecommuting by its own employees.
2. Support a telework audit to identify which county employee positions (at every level) are or are not applicable for telework.
3. Promote the development of clear telework policies, educational tools and sample HR manuals that can be customized and disseminated to employers of Mount Vernon residents. Use the federal www.Telework.gov as a model.
4. Encourage the branding of telework as another piece of the multimodal "pie"—offering yet another choice for commuters. This means marketing telework as a viable sustainable solution that necessarily doesn't have to be a full-time commitment.
5. Support legislation that provides tax incentives for companies to implement telework programs.
6. Support the dissemination of information about specific examples in the community and region of successful use of telecommuting in business/industry. This could be led by the Mount Vernon/Lee Chamber of Commerce.

ISSUE # 11

Potomac River Commuter Ferry Service

COMMITTEE POSITION

Fairfax County should monitor, collaborate and coordinate with Prince William County concerning the feasibility of a Potomac River commuter ferry service between Occoquan and Washington, D.C.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

It has long been recognized that the Potomac River holds potential as a commuter route from the suburbs of Virginia and Maryland to Washington D.C. Studies from as early as 1965 have been conducted in an effort to gauge the feasibility of providing commuter ferry service on the river. Some of these studies have included the area of Virginia along the Interstate 95/U.S. Route 1 corridor.

A recent route proving study (May, 2009) sponsored by Prince William County resulted in the following finding: "… .. a public commuter ferry operation has the potential to offer a commuting option to the public that in terms of travel time and service between the area of Occoquan, VA and SE Washington D.C. would be competitive with those commuter services offered by Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC) and Virginia Railway Express (VRE).

The concept of a ferry service as yet another mode of mass transportation offers the potential of reducing traffic congestion in the Mount Vernon District and Fairfax County by diverting car, bus, and rail commuters from southern counties in the corridor (Prince William, Stafford, and Spotsylvania) to an alternate form of mass transportation.

Detailed discussion and analysis of this concept is contained in the Prince William County Department of Transportation Potomac River Commuter Ferry Service Study and Route Proving Exercise Final Report of September 15, 2009.

NEXT ACTION STEPS

The Committee concurs with recommendations contained in the Ferry Service Study and recommends that Fairfax County endorse the following actions:

- "Coordination with local governments and military installations that front the Potomac River should be pursued. While commuter ferry service from Prince William County to Washington D.C. appears viable, there is great potential for a ferry operation to serve cross-river commuters between Southern MD and VA."
- "Initial investigations into an authority to oversee ferry operations should also be discussed with those counties and cities that might have an interest in commuter ferry service."

ISSUE #12

Gas Tax

COMMITTEE POSITION

Consider a more sustainable, fair and realistic way to tax gas and/or raise necessary revenues to invest in transportation, anticipating greater decline in gasoline usage/tax revenue. In other words, find a funding mechanism that gets the incentives right.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

The gas tax is at 17.5 cents a gallon (the national average is 28.5) and is one of three sources of state funding to the VDOT (Gas tax, sales tax of vehicles and licensing fees). The gas tax has been 17.5 cents a gallon since 1986 and remains the same no matter what the price per gallon may be which makes it a somewhat predictable but declining source of revenue especially as road maintenance and construction costs increase due to inflation. Essentially, the gas tax nets 50 million dollars per penny levied or $875 million a year, about the same cost to widen Richmond Highway to 8 lanes. The average driver (at 15,000 miles a year) pays about $90 – 100 a year in gas taxes. A nickel increase would add $30 a year to average driver's tax payments.

The challenge is as follows:

1. Gas tax revenues are going down due to more fuel efficient cars and increased usage of alternative modes of transportation. Automobiles have run on gasoline for 100 years. The era of the gasoline-combustion engine may be coming to a close. The decline in gasoline consumption -- and the taxes generated by it -- will be slow at first, and then precipitous. The decline is entirely foreseeable; and

2. Gas tax revenues can't keep pace with the increase in population and vehicle miles driven. According to VTrans2035 Report VDOT needs $7 – 10 billion dollars a year over next 20 to 30 years to maintain and upgrade existing road infrastructure and metro (e.g.: new metro rail cost is estimated at around one billion dollars a mile; and, the Northern Virginia 2030 Transportation Plan estimates the cost of an Eastern Bypass at $1.215 billion.)

The worsening situation is exacerbated by the run-up in gasoline prices in the past few years and the economic recession has dampened gasoline sales and tax revenues even more.

NEXT ACTION STEPS

- Urge adequate funding of new road construction and maintenance by re-aligning incentives for road use as the linkage of the fuel tax to users of roadways is becoming less reliable and is inadequate in revenues raised to meet funding needs.

- Encourage the General Assembly to consider creative ways in which to raise necessary revenue by levy of increased gas taxes, sales taxes and/or replace with alternative tax such as per vehicle miles traveled, or similar system that means taxing road use instead of solely basing upon fuel consumption.

- Moreover, the new tax system must be designed to incentivize travel at different times of day so as to lessen congestion or to differentiate among types of vehicles based on wear they impose on the roads and/or their emissions performance.

ISSUE # 13

HOV Operations

COMMITTEE POSITION

Provide HOV lanes on major North-South highways, as well as major East-West connector roads to accommodate busses, multiple travelers in privately owned vehicles and high energy efficient vehicles to reduce highway congestion, enhance group travel and promote energy savings.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

In order to overcome cost shortfalls for transportation initiatives, the State government, overall responsible for the construction and upkeep of inter-state highways and primary roads, has contracted-out the widening of Inter-State 95 and the Washington Beltway to private developers. To compensate for the cost of construction, the widened roads will be designated HOV lanes, allowing the private company to charge tolls for single-occupant vehicles opting to use these lanes. Busses and multi-passenger vehicles will still be authorized toll-free usage. Profits will be shared with the State. The chargeable mileage rates will be determined and constantly varied in response to changing usage and congestion on the highway.

Although no current financial operational data is available, it appears that only wealthy motorists will be able to afford sustained single vehicle usage of these lanes. With busses and multiple passenger vehicles excused from paying, it is not confirmed that this arrangement will prove profitable to the private contractors over the long term. Tightened budgets, due to marginal profits, can result in poor maintenance, customer complaints and decreased payable usage. In turn, this arrangement may threaten to fall short of diverting sufficient traffic from general travel lanes to reduce congestion and keeping traffic off local roads. If the current arrangement is not significantly profitable, there will be resistance to expand this construction method to other roads such as Highway #1 and the Fairfax County Parkway.

Added to this problem, and perhaps aggravating the problem, is the philosophical concept for many, that HOV road usage must not favor the wealthy over all other taxpayers who had originally funded the construction of these roads. Additionally, it is dubious that high energy efficient vehicles can be included in the exemption of toll payments for HOV usage. Private ownership of HOV lanes my also have unintended side effects. For example, VDOT felt compelled to contractually require the contractor to desist from interfering with maintenance, scheduled for adjacent State roads, assuming that desired poor maintenance on side roads would attract more travelers to use HOV lanes. Other unforeseen consequences may materialize.

NEXT ACTION STEPS

1. The operation of paid HOV usage requires immediate and close monitoring by VDOT to assure required maintenance is performed and to evaluate the validity of the financial arrangement.
2. If the paid HOV operation is profitable, steps should be taken to designate additional North-South highways and State roads for HOV expansion. Ultimately HOV lanes on East-West highways can re-enforce existing bus routes.

3. Should paid HOV operations fail to divert sufficient traffic from general highway usage and be deemed unsatisfactory in terms of maintenance and operations, the State should be prepared to buy-out the private contracts and take over the administration of HOV operations. Funding sources need to be identified to compensate the private contractors. A toll charge for general highway usage may have to be imposed which will impact equally on all travelers.
4. With State operations implemented, payment for HOV usage should be terminated. Preferred treatment for HOV usage must be bestowed only on the basis of multiple vehicular occupancy and designated green energy vehicle usage.
5. The expansion of HOV operations, as indicated in Paragraph 2 above, will be considerably slower, without private developer money, but needs to be programmed and executed on the basis of future alternate funding arrangements, to be determined by the Governor and approved by the Legislature.

ISSUE #14

Illegal Roadway Signs

COMMITTEE POSITION

Fairfax County should resolve to aggressively pursue solutions to remove the blight of illegal roadway signs.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

From a report on Illegal Signs in the Right-Of-Way by David Conway in September 2001: "Illegal signs in the public right-of-way probably have been around for as long as there have been public rights-of-way, but the number of signs has spiraled out of control in recent years. Between fields of popsicle stick signs for homebuilders and politicians, and signs for weight loss, work at home businesses, hauling, and other signs plastered on every available traffic sign and utility pole, everyone in Fairfax County has something to hate about illegal signs."

At the conclusion of this report of 2001, numerous recommendations were made to assist in eradicating illegal roadway signs in Fairfax County. As we approach 2011, no progress has been made in Fairfax County despite similar repeated citizen requests and requests forwarded by various civic organizations. In the meantime, Prince William County continues its program of removing roadway signs per an agreement with VDOT, a program that has been in place since 2000.

As recent as June 9, 2010, the Environmental Quality Advisory Council (EQAC) submitted recommendations regarding illegal signs in highway rights-of-way to the Board of Supervisors for review.

This issue, which does not necessarily meet the criteria for what Mount Vernon District should look like in the next 25 years, is considered appropriate for Task Force submission based on:

1. The lack of progress during the last 10 years to implement a program.
2. The potential for significant improvement in the quality of life for Fairfax County citizens at very low cost to the taxpayer to implement.

NEXT ACTION STEPS

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors should:

1. Resolve to make the illegal roadway sign issue a high priority.
2. Exploit the capabilities and endorsements of State legislators in a teaming arrangement to find a solution to roadway blight.
3. Resolve to implement an effective program within two years with a view to long term sustainment for the future.

ISSUE #15

County Transportation Plan

COMMITTEE POSITION

Enhance the effectiveness and value of the Fairfax County Transportation Plan.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

The Fairfax County Transportation Plan is an excellent document that reflects great attention to detail regarding countywide objectives and policies. There are 13 objectives with numerous policy points contained within each objective. The plan also contains detailed descriptions of transportation terminology and provides complete listings of existing roadway system functional classifications.

The introduction outlines realistic challenges that must be addressed in the future regarding demographics and funding, and points to the need for reducing reliance on automobile travel.

While the Plan is sound, the purpose of this issue is to recommend two strategies that may help to increase its value as a planning document for the future. First, the plan states that "… ..many forces outside the County, which generate increasing levels of traffic demand, are out of the County's direct control. Thus, it becomes imperative to explore possible options for reducing current and future demands on the transportation system." While it is indeed important to explore options for reducing demand, it is also important for the County to look beyond its boundaries even though it does not have direct control in these areas. In order to accomplish Fairfax County goals and objectives for the future, adjacent jurisdictions should be engaged in order to establish a common vision for the entire Northern Virginia environs. Prince William County and Alexandria each have their own transportation plans. There may be efficiencies gained if local jurisdictions reach out to one another to discover potential common goals and objectives for a consistent and unified vision for transportation for Northern Virginia. Policy c of Objective 13 is: "Promote regional and subregional transportation planning by cooperating with neighboring jurisdictions to coordinate a planned network of transit routes." This policy should be exploited to the maximum extent and should be aggressively pursued.

Second, as stated, the plan contains numerous policy points and objectives for improving transportation in the future. However, the plan might be of greater value if substantive and specific projects for improvement are attached to each objective. For example, Policy h of Objective 2 is to "Improve the speed, quality, reliability, convenience, and productivity of transit service." Of course this is a sound policy, but it would have more value if there were stated metrics and methods that could be tied to the policy to explain how the policy is or is going to be implemented. Achieving a vision for improved transportation requires not only a goal but substantive measures of effectiveness as well.

NEXT ACTION STEPS

To enhance the effectiveness and value of the Fairfax County Transportation Plan in achieving its stated goals and policies:

- County transportation planners should place greater emphasis on collaboration and

teaming with adjacent jurisdictions on issues that are not in direct control of Fairfax County. Planners should exploit opportunities to influence adjacent jurisdictions concerning transportation issues that impact Fairfax County.

- Policies and objectives contained in the Transportation Plan should also have metrics, measures of effectiveness and a desired end state and timeline associated listed with the respective policy.
- Continue to emphasize, as stated in the Preface of the Comprehensive Plan, that "Fairfax County's elected officials and staff should continue to participate in leadership roles in cooperative regional activities, recognizing that the physical, economic, and social well-being of the people of Northern Virginia and the Washington Metropolitan Area is dependent upon regional cooperation."

ISSUE #16

Transportation Impact Fee

COMMITTEE POSITION

The Board of Supervisors should adopt a zoning ordinance to assess and impose impact fees on new development to pay all or part of the cost of reasonable road improvements that benefit the new development as authorized by Va. Code Section 15.2-2319. And Fairfax County should assess and impose transportation fees on all new development ("a specific development or subdivision" that requires a building permit – Va. Code Section 15.2-2323).

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

Desired residential and commercial development has been stymied in view of the lack of progress to expand the existing transportation infrastructure and the public's outcry due to the worsening gridlock in the Mt. Vernon Magisterial District. While road infrastructure improvements and widening on U.S. 1 (Richmond Highway) and key intersections have been completed so that there are 6 travel lanes and dedicated left turn lanes and deceleration lanes, Richmond Highway is congested with the volume of commuter vehicles, as well as local trips for residents and visitors to the Fort Belvoir post hospital. That is, those improvements to the transportation infrastructure were not sufficient to accommodate the tens of thousands of vehicles that travel the Richmond Highway corridor daily. Fort Hunt Road, the George Washington Parkway, Buckman Road, as well as Telegraph Road, Old Colchester Road, Lorton Road, Armistead Road, Pohick Road, Silverbrook Road, Rolling Road, and Ox Road are all overloaded with vehicles and their road surface is crumbling. Money is needed for these transportation infrastructure projects and the citizens of Fairfax County have been paying more than their share for decades.

In 2000, the Virginia General Assembly granted localities (the County) the authority to impose transportation impact fees for new development in order to generate revenue for the coast of reasonable road improvements that benefit the new development. By 2010, only one locality (Stafford County) had created and imposed transportation impact fees. Stafford County created and established transportation impact fee districts in 2003 and 2005, and identified specific road improvements as necessary to the new growth. U.S. Route 1 in Stafford County was widened to 6 lanes and development has not abandoned Stafford County.

NEXT ACTION STEPS

1. The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors should adopt a zoning ordinance to assess and impose impact fees on new development to pay all or part of the cost of reasonable road improvements.
2. After adoption of the transportation impact fee zoning ordinance, Fairfax County should enforce it and collect fees from new development.
3. In the next 20-25 years, Fairfax County should be able to fund transportation infrastructure projects through impact fees and draw new development to its main economic centers.