



## **Dulles Direct Newsletter**

**May 2013**

Welcome to the May 2013 Dulles Direct Newsletter. In this newsletter, I'll provide a synopsis of the Town Hall meeting I held with VDOT and Shirley Construction on Route 50 as well as review some other major items we've been working on.

### **DULLES DISTRICT UPDATES**

#### **Route 50 Town Hall Meeting Summary**

Thank you to the residents who attended my quarterly Dulles Direct Town Hall Meeting on May 22. Staff members from VDOT, Shirley Construction, and Dewberry (engineering) provided an update and overview on construction along Route 50. The bottom line is that the project is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2014, and is currently on budget. To view the full VDOT/Shirley presentation, which includes planned traffic shifts, click [here](#).

As I think most of you realize, this project is entirely managed by VDOT. It is not a County project and thus it is not under our control. That said, VDOT and Shirley have expressed a desire to work with us when there are particular issues that arise. I personally know how frustrating traveling Route 50 is because I do it myself. I view my role essentially as a liaison between those of us who travel on the road regularly and the VDOT and Shirley team working on construction.

With that in mind, there were a couple of takeaways that came up during the discussion we had at the Town Hall meeting that I want to highlight specifically. I'll phrase them in the form of a question, and provide the answers. Keep in mind—the substance of the answers came from VDOT, Shirley or Dewberry, though I am paraphrasing and in some cases breaking their technical-speak down a little bit:

**Question:** Why is this project taking so long? Why, when I travel on 50, don't I see many workers or much activity? Can't this be done faster, or at night?

**Answer:** The 50 project is a design/build project, which is different than many of the projects that we're used to seeing around here. What that means is that the design, right of way acquisition, and construction are all occurring at the same time. Normally, these occur as separate steps. So, the engineer would design the road, VDOT would go out and acquire the property needed for it, and then construction would start. On a normal project that is not design-build, at this point you would not yet see any work occurring on the road. That's because while the design of 50 is complete, the right of way acquisition and utility line relocation parts are not. For that reason, you aren't seeing more actual construction activity going on. At this point, VDOT is down to the last remaining parcels that they need to acquire. Over 70 individual parcels need to be acquired for this project. Those of you who have bought a house know what it is like to acquire just one parcel—now imagine doing that seventy times over, sometimes with property owners that don't want to sell them! It is a time consuming process.

Shirley can't start working on parcels until VDOT owns them, and they are spread out throughout the project in such a way that it is difficult to actually go full speed ahead on construction. In addition, Shirley has encountered some significant delays in getting various utilities relocated, which needs to be done by multiple utilities.

In just a few more months, the right of way acquisition process should be completed, and you should see work rapidly accelerate as crews will have the freedom to move on all parcels. That said, because they are keeping the road open during the project, they are still restricted, and the plan is to basically switch back and forth between sides, while diverting traffic.

As far as night work, this has come up before, and we have been told that it is too dangerous because of buried utilities and terrain, and that the budget of the project could not accommodate night work, which is more expensive. Some work, such as signal work, is being done at night.

**Question:** Can any of the signal timing or triggers be adjusted to allow for better traffic flow?

**Answer:** Maybe. As you know, there were issues with traffic signal timing related to the installation of temporary signals. Those issues have been addressed. However, VDOT is unable to monitor signals through their normal means and thus is reliant on reports from drivers about unusual signal timing. VDOT has certain parameters for signal timing involving different types of roads. On Route 50, obviously traffic must favor 50 at a certain ratio, depending on the level of volume at the intersecting road. At the meeting, Delegate Ramadan and I asked VDOT and Shirley to look closely at several intersections, including Stonecroft Boulevard, to ensure that the timing and triggers are correct and to see if any further adjustments are possible. Most of the temporary signals are not using the same loop technology embedded in the pavement that permanent signals use because lanes will shift, leaving the trigger mechanisms more vulnerable to malfunctions.

**Question:** Why can't I turn right from the center lane of Pleasant Valley (Loudoun)?

**Answer:** Loudoun's Pleasant Valley has become the stickiest intersection of them all, due in part to traffic on Eastgate View Drive turning onto Pleasant Valley but then really having nowhere to go. I have been in constant contact with the Sheriff's Office about this intersection.

First, regarding the no right turn from center lane—although numerous vehicles make this turn every day, it does not meet VDOT standards. For instance, VDOT requires that all vehicles must be able to transverse the turn, and most trucks would not be able to do it. In addition, Captain Eric Prugh, station commander of the Dulles South Sheriff Station, reported that there have been an excessive (over 40) number of accidents at this intersection, almost all of which were due to vehicles making a right turn from the center lane, which he considers to be an unsafe practice.

Finally, Shirley and VDOT informed us that the configuration at the intersection will be changing shortly and the median barriers will shift closer to Pleasant Valley, reducing the width even further and making the turn from the center lane even more difficult. Therefore, it may become almost impossible to make the right turn from the center lane during construction anyway.

Captain Prugh reiterated at the meeting that this intersection will continue to be a target for marked and unmarked deputies. He said that he does not believe that writing tickets will solve the congestion problem, but that drivers should be on notice that if they are observed taking a right from the center lane here, they will receive a ticket. In addition, he noted several road rage-type incidents here which also are of concern to the Sheriff's Office.

Regarding Eastgate View Drive, the challenge is that the road itself is not under VDOT (or County) control—it is a private road owned by the developer. One outcome of the meeting is that County Administrative staff and I will review the plans here and see if anything can be done, although at first glance it does not appear that there is a viable legal solution. I would certainly agree that more thought should have been given to this design and timing in light of 50 construction, but unfortunately all of those agreements occurred before I took office.

Finally, VDOT has committed to me to evaluate the Pleasant Valley intersection at the conclusion of the Route 50 project. If conditions warrant, we could potentially move forward with a separate project to install a second turn lane, provided funding is available.

**Question:** Can any of the westbound lanes be used for eastbound traffic during the AM rush?

**Answer:** According to Dewberry, the engineering firm, no. First, there is a significant elevation difference between lanes that would make it difficult to maneuver between them (not to mention the median). Second, all of the intersections make it very difficult to engineer around. Third, that type of conversion would end up costing a lot more money and time that would otherwise be going toward actually completing the project. Although some residents did express that they would be willing to see the overall project delayed if

it meant receiving some short term relief, my personal view is that there probably isn't anything viable out there that will significantly improve things enough to be worth delays on the overall project. That said, Delegate Ramadan and I will be meeting with the project team and the newly installed Northern Virginia VDOT leadership to go over this project from top to bottom to see if anyone can up with short term relief.

Ultimately, this project will have six lanes all the way through to Route 28, bridges over the Cub Run, synchronized signals, and ten feet wide shared use paths on both sides. Capacity will be increased by fifty percent and the road is being designed to accommodate future population growth using 2020 and 2030 projections.

If you notice that something is “off” on your daily commute—worse than normal, etc—please continue to let me know. I'll communicate that to VDOT and they will respond and investigate. Also, this summer there will be major shifts in the road which will have an impact on traffic. I will communicate those as soon as we get the information by email and [Facebook](#).

## **LEGISLATIVE/COUNTY UPDATES**

### **Dog Parks**

The County's Zoning Ordinance currently does not allow for dog parks in housing districts. In fact, dog parks are only allowed in the Planned Development—Transit Related Center (PD-TRC) zoning district. Only Loudoun Station and Moorefield Station are properties zoned PD-TRC. Communities such as South Riding and Lansdowne have desired to offer dog parks to their residents, but have been unable to do so.

At the request of South Riding, Supervisor Stevens Miller attempted to fix this quirk during the last Board's term. The item was carried over into our Board's term, but the Board voted to remove it from our work plan because it was not considered a high priority. I voted against this decision, but was in the minority.

However, at the last Board business meeting, I successfully teamed up with Supervisor Ralph Buona (Ashburn) to reinstate the Zoning Ordinance Amendment (ZOAM) allowing dog parks in the Planned Development—Housing (PD-H) zoning district. This time, the Board voted unanimously to put it back into our work plan. County staff will now work on the ZOAM and bring the item back for final approval. While it might take a while for staff to complete, at least the ZOAM is now moving forward and eventually dog parks will be allowed in places like South Riding. Certain issues like performance standards (ensuring that the dog parks go only in appropriate areas) will be part of the ZOAM process.

### **Loudoun County Retains AAA Bond Rating**

I am pleased to share with you that the nation's top bond rating agencies have again affirmed Loudoun County's AAA rating on our general obligation bonds. This is great news for the county and is no small feat, considering the financial turmoil many localities continue to face as the economy recovers. In fact, Loudoun is one of an extremely small number of communities in

the entire nation to achieve this feat. Retaining our AAA bond ratings allows the county to obtain the best possible interest rates to finance capital projects such as schools, sheriff's stations, and fire/rescue apparatus, among other things.

The agencies noted Loudoun's strong financial management practices and policies, as well as long-term economic growth potential and consistently solid fiscal performance. Of note, Moody's said that our rating reflects the County's "strong financial management," and Fitch stated their belief that the Phase II expansion of Dulles Rail into Loudoun "will positively impact the county's dynamic underlying economy." As a member of the Board's Finance Committee, I can personally attest to how hard we work with our Management and Financial Services and Capital Budgeting staff to carefully plan and manage our debt while meeting the needs of our citizens.

### **Raytheon Selects Loudoun for Consolidated IIS Business Headquarters**

In a major economic development "win" for the County, defense contractor Raytheon announced earlier this month that it selected Loudoun County as the location for the consolidated headquarters of the Raytheon Intelligence, Information, and Services (IIS) business. At this time of federal contracting uncertainty, I cannot overstate the significance of Raytheon relocating their IIS business from Texas to Loudoun. The IIS business is one of Raytheon's four business units, which in total employs over 68,000 people worldwide. The IIS relocation will bring executive level jobs to the County, in areas such as reconnaissance, missile defense, cybersecurity, among others. Economic development research shows that companies are more likely to invest and grow in communities where they have strong executive presence. Raytheon is continuing to develop its Loudoun campus on Waxpool Road. Their expansion to Loudoun bodes very well for existing jobs, as well as future expansion opportunities.

As chairman of the Economic Development Committee, I am excited to see our new business development strategies pay off. In this case, Texas did compete for Raytheon IIS as well. Last year, the Board of Supervisors approved a major overhaul of the County's Economic Development department, adding positions ("boots on the ground") dedicated to selling Loudoun to the global business community. Attracting businesses like Raytheon expands the commercial tax base, providing relief to residents, while also adding local jobs, cutting down on commute times and congested roads.

### **Business Incentives**

Many county and state governments offer financial incentives to businesses looking to relocate major operations to a certain area. Historically, Loudoun has also engaged in this practice in an ad hoc manner. In some cases, we provide infrastructure upgrades like road improvements, but in other cases cash incentives are on the table. In my role as Chairman of the Economic Development Committee, I have been studying various practices and options and have determined that Loudoun would be well served to have a consistent policy in this area.

At the May Economic Development Committee meeting, the committee voted 5-0 to approve a set of guidelines for awarding financial incentives. The key factor in determining eligibility for

incentives is ROI—return on investment. In many cases, a relatively modest cash incentive will provide a property tax return in a matter of months. If some cash is needed to help attract a business that will generate millions for the County in the short, medium and long term, than it is a good investment. As part of the package approved by the County, specific guidelines regarding ROI, amount generated, jobs generated and other criteria were included. Incentives will remain at the discretion of the Board of Supervisors even with this policy in place, but will help guide staff as they have early-stage negotiations with companies we are recruiting. The full Board will consider this item in early June.

### **SourceLink**

Another economic development tool we have been working on is Loudoun SourceLink. Loudoun SourceLink is an online tool that links business owners to the nonprofit and government resources they may need to help them grow and prosper. It allows the entrepreneur to indicate to a high level of specification what assistance they need, and then lists the resource providers who can best provide that assistance. In addition, Loudoun SourceLink has a calendar of events and trainings, a step-by-step guide to registering your business, and online tools and articles for the small business community. This can all be done 24/7 at the user's convenience of time and place. Loudoun SourceLink can be found at [www.loudounsourcelink.com](http://www.loudounsourcelink.com).

### **Small Business Week Recognized in Loudoun June 3-7**

At the May 15 Board meeting, I presented a resolution recognizing Small Business Week in Loudoun from June 3-7, 2013. This is the second year I have offered this resolution, as I think it is important to recognize the many benefits small businesses bring to Loudoun. Small businesses make up 85% of county businesses and more than 7,000 Loudoun County businesses have less than 20 employees.



*L to R: Board Chairman Scott York, myself, Susan Henson, Regional Manager with the Mason Enterprise Center, and Debi Roder, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Manager with Loudoun County Dept. of Economic Development*

Loudoun Small Business Week is June 3<sup>rd</sup> through June 7th. With ten events in five days, there are multiple opportunities to network and learn from successful business owners and experts. For more information, click [here](#).

### **North-South Corridor Meetings in June**

In June, VDOT will be holding two meetings related to the North-South Corridor. A public information meeting will be held on **Monday, June 3, 2013 from 6-9pm at Hylton Performing Arts Center located at 10906 George Mason Circle, Manassas, VA**. The presentation will start promptly at 7pm, followed by a question and answer period. Citizens wishing to speak may sign up at the door and will be limited to two minutes. This meeting will address the larger picture of the North-South Corridor, including the [North-South Corridor Master Plan Study](#), the proposed [Bi-County Parkway](#), improving access to the [western side of Dulles Airport](#), and the proposed [Manassas National Battlefield Park Bypass](#). Comments may also be submitted via email at [meeting\\_comments@vdot.virginia.gov](mailto:meeting_comments@vdot.virginia.gov) with “North-South Corridor Information Meeting” in the subject line.

A second meeting, more specific to improving access to Dulles Airport north of Route 50, will be held on **Thursday, June 13, 2012 from 6:30pm-8:30pm at Creighton’s Corner Elementary School located at 23171 Minerva Drive, Ashburn**. VDOT will be conducting both meetings and provide presentations and answer questions.



There is a lot of information—and misinformation—out there regarding the North-South corridor. My position has been consistent—I have concerns about some of the possible routes for the actual road. However, I think the overall concept is good for a wide variety of reasons, not the least of which is the ability for citizens in our area to access points south without having to travel east to 28 or 267/495. The discussion so far is entirely conceptual—nothing is set in stone, no funding has been identified, etc. Northern Virginia has historically been lagging in infrastructure because officials often waited too long to make improvements. I view the North-South corridor discussion as an attempt to get ahead of what will be a growing problem—how to move people between Loudoun's keynote employment centers at our Metro stations, Dulles Airport, the 50 corridor, Prince William County and points south via the 234 bypass and I-95. At the least, this is a conversation worth having and the studies being conducted are worthwhile. I would note that the concept has support from both the Loudoun and Prince William County Chambers of Commerce, the Dulles South Alliance, and other business groups that are interested in continuing to develop our area as an employment destination.

### **CORRECTION: Claiborne Parkway Completion Date**

In a previous newsletter, the completion dates listed for Claiborne Parkway were incorrect. Claiborne Parkway is over 60% designed, with construction planned to begin in 2014 and completion scheduled for 2015. Neighboring communities continue to be part of the process and everything is on track for completion in 2015. I did communicate the correct timeline to the HOAs involved and the correct timeline was discussed at the County public information meeting on Claiborne. I always strive to give accurate information, but in this case we confused "construction date" with "completion date" in some internal communications and I apologize for the mistake. I know that this topic came up in the context of the school boundary process, so I'll also note that LCPS and the School Board did have the correct timeline for this project at the time of their deliberations.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **LCPS Survey**

Loudoun County Public Schools is conducting a community survey this month (closing on May 31) to gather feedback from all residents on the school district's priorities. The results of the survey will help inform leadership at LCPS on these various topics. Whether you have kids in the school system, I encourage you to take the survey, which can be found at [www.lcps.org](http://www.lcps.org). Hurry, the survey closes on May 31.

### **Dulles Greenway Toll Rates Public Hearing**

If you are frustrated with the high tolls on the Dulles Greenway and routinely avoid it, the State Corporation Commission (SCC) wants to hear from you! The SCC will hold its Eastern Loudoun public hearings on the Greenway on **Thursday, June 6 at 4pm and 7pm at Park View High School in Sterling**. A hearing will also be held in Richmond on July 18 at 10 am at the commission's courtroom located in the Tyler Building at 1300 E. Main Street.



Delegate David Ramadan initiated the request for the SCC to look into the rates. The SCC states that the rates must “be reasonable to the user in relation to the benefit obtained; not materially discourage use of the roadway by the public; and provide the operator no more than a reasonable return as determined by the Commission.” While it is unclear what action the SCC might take, the first step is to prove to the Commission that there is in fact a problem in Loudoun with the Greenway.

If you can't attend the hearing, please consider submitting written comments by July 9 by going to [www.scc.virginia.gov/case](http://www.scc.virginia.gov/case) or by mailing comments to Joel H. Peck, Clerk, State Corporation Commission, c/o Document Control Center, P.O. Box 2118, Richmond, VA, 23218-2118. The case number is PUE-2013-00011.

### **Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event at Freedom High School**

Loudoun County conducts several Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) collection events throughout the year to collect used and unwanted household hazardous materials such as gasoline and household chemicals. A resident contacted me letting me know that all HHW events were in the northern part of the county, making it difficult to attend. Upon my request for an event in the southern part of the County, the Waste Management Division will hold a HHW collection event on Saturday, June 15 from 8:30am to 2:30pm at Freedom High School. Details on what items are accepted and other HHW events in the County can be found at [www.loudoun.gov/hhw](http://www.loudoun.gov/hhw).

### **Dulles South Station Open House**

Loudoun County Sheriff's office invites all Dulles South residents to attend the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Dulles South Station Open House on Saturday, June 15, 2013 from 10:00am to 2:00pm at the Dulles South Station located at 25216 Loudoun County Parkway. Stop by and learn more about public safety in your community.

### **Celebrate South Riding**

It's nearly summertime and that means time for Celebrate South Riding! Join in the fun with rides, live entertainment, fabulous food, fireworks and more. The 18<sup>th</sup> annual event takes place Friday, May 31 from 5-11pm and Saturday, June 1 from 12pm to 10pm. For more details click [here](#).

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