



## **Dulles Direct Newsletter**

**December 2013**

Welcome to the December edition of the Dulles Direct Newsletter. I hope you are having a wonderful holiday season, enjoying friends and family. I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous 2014!

Thank you to those of you who joined me for my quarterly Dulles Direct Town Hall meeting at Freedom High School earlier this month. As always, we had a good discussion. After giving you a lot of information in last month's newsletter, I've tried to keep things a bit shorter this month. If you didn't see it, last month's newsletter is still available on my website ([www.loudoun.gov/dulles](http://www.loudoun.gov/dulles)) and has a lot of updates on various projects.

### **LEGISLATIVE UPDATES**

#### **Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG)**

First, on a personal note, I am pleased to report earlier this month I was elected President of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) for 2014. COG is a regional organization representing the 22 local jurisdictions of the Washington area. I will continue to serve as a member of the COG Board of Directors as well. While we certainly have our share of challenges in Loudoun, many of our issues are regional in nature. COG has an important role to play in fostering cooperation and better regional planning. With Loudoun becoming more connected to the Washington region (through Metro—literally), it is important we have a seat at the regional table. I appreciate the opportunity to serve and look forward to a productive year.

## **Good Financial News**

After sharing some tough news last month regarding the County's difficult replacement of our core financial systems, I'm pleased to give you two pieces of good news this month. The first is we are in the process of closing the books on the previous fiscal year and it appears the County ended with a \$41 million surplus. As a member of the Finance Committee, I voted to apply some of the surplus to offset next year's tax rate, pay down debt on existing projects and fund several one-time expenses. We have reserved about half for future needs or issues which may arise during the coming fiscal year. It is important to mention, simply applying these funds to the FY15 operational/school budget would be a poor financial practice that could risk our credit rating, which is why we on the Finance Committee have not made that recommendation to the full Board. Overall, this is a strong fiscal performance, highlighted by significant cost savings in almost every area. I appreciate the hard work of our County employees to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars.

The other piece of good news relates to the County's OPEB—Other Post-Employment Benefits—reform. This is probably one of the most important things our Board has accomplished in our first two years—yet it is difficult to understand and won't receive much attention. Almost every jurisdiction has been facing massive unfunded liabilities in benefits due to retirees. Our Board decided to tackle this head on last year and institute major reforms to the OPEB system. The reforms still provide a safety net for County employees who retire, but do so in a much more fiscally responsible way. We just received the result from our first full year of reform and even our consultant, who has worked on this issue in dozens of jurisdictions, was blown away. In just one year, we reduced the County's OPEB liability by \$60 million. Our system is now not only paying for itself, but we are putting in more than we are taking out which is allowing us to get "caught up" on our commitments. We were told almost no other government in the nation has been as successful in getting ahead of this issue. It will still take several years for this program to be solvent, but I'm proud of the progress we've made and hopeful our leaders in Washington can take notice—it is possible to reform entitlement programs while maintaining benefits.

## **Gum Spring Road/Evergreen Mills Road**

Gum Spring and Evergreen Mills is a frustrating intersection with several geographic challenges. Right of way is quite limited which will make improvements difficult. These challenges cause severe delays on Gum Spring Road. At the December 4 Board meeting, the Board approved and initiative I brought forward with Blue Ridge Supervisor Janet Clarke to conduct a feasibility analysis on potential improvements at the intersection of Gum Spring Road and Evergreen Mills Road.

The first step will be to identify the scope of the work and funds needed. Once approved, my hope is the study will provide us with options for making various levels of improvements that would help traffic flow better through the intersection.

Besides improving the intersection itself, the Board of Supervisors is working on road connections that would provide alternatives to this intersection. The Countywide Transportation Plan calls for future north/south connections via Loudoun County Parkway, Northstar Boulevard and Arcola Boulevard in place of existing Gum Spring Road. Many of these roads are presently not funded or are tied to developer proffers, but are not yet triggered. The Board has asked for options on how the County could move forward with construction and be reimbursed as the proffers are triggered. We expect to evaluate these during the FY2015 budget process. I will be sure to provide updates on our efforts.

## **Local Fixed Route Transit**

In October, the County assumed responsibility for funding local fixed route transit service. Up until this point it was run and maintained by Virginia Regional Transit (VRT) and paid for largely through grants. However, the federal government recently determined Loudoun no longer qualified for these transit grants given its more urban status. So, the County had to step in and begin funding the transit routes that serve the Town of Leesburg and areas of northern Ashburn and Sterling.

Following a discussion on transit at the Board's Transportation Summit this past summer, a study was conducted which evaluated existing routes and—at least the Board thought—opportunities for new service. However, when the study was presented at the Transportation and Land Use Committee in November, it only suggested an on demand service for heavily populated areas south of the Greenway and did not seem to take into consideration the development of new retail areas and StoneSprings Hospital Center in the Route 50 corridor. Left unaddressed, this gap would remain until a full revision of the Transit Development Plan (TDP) is completed in 2016. This full revision is the time the Board would incorporate plans for local fixed route service that connects to Phase II of the Silver Line opening in late 2018 or early 2019.

I was quite disappointed with the analysis they brought forward and made my feelings known to staff and my colleagues. In order to try and achieve a more productive outcome, I offered an amendment to add funding for a survey of all residents south of the Greenway and east of the Northstar Boulevard alignment to determine the level of demand for a route and which stops will serve the greatest number of people. My amendment also provided a placeholder in the TDP for a future route to serve the area to be surveyed once it has been determined and funded by the Board. In the end, the Board unanimously approved my amendment.

I do want to note that local bus service to Metro was not included in this discussion because it is already proceeding on a different track. While the service itself will be using "transit" buses, for now at least, it will be operated under the LC Transit banner. The County is still proceeding with development of the East Gate Park and Ride Lot, which will feature local bus service to the

Wiehle Avenue Metro station in 2015. Also, we are working on several possible solutions to provide more parking at the Dulles South commuter bus lot in Stone Ridge.

## **DULLES DISTRICT UPDATES**

### **Tall Cedars Parkway Update**

As you may recall from last month's newsletter, the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) amendment for the final two lane section of Tall Cedars Parkway between Riding Center Drive and Pinebrook Road was set to go before the Board earlier this month. I am pleased to report the Board did approve the CIP amendment and fund the construction of this project.

This will allow the County to use proffer funds to expedite the construction of an additional two lanes of road between Riding Center Drive and Pinebrook Road. The County will be eligible for a cash payment to cover the construction when the commercial properties are developed and the proffer is triggered. As a result, we will have a four lane Tall Cedars from Stone Ridge to East Gate when the project is completed in 2015.

### **Route 50 Potholes and Markings**

Recently, several of you brought to my attention the potholes and faint pavement markings throughout the Route 50 construction area. I have been working with VDOT and their contractor to resolve these issues. Crews spent much of last week repairing potholes and re-striping portions of the road throughout the project area. The re-striping should make for better visibility at night and in poor weather. If your vehicle was impacted by a pothole, contact my office at [matt.letourneau@loudoun.gov](mailto:matt.letourneau@loudoun.gov).

### **Traffic Sign Removed on Riding Center Drive**

Various residents contacted me regarding the Right Turn Only sign/lane on Riding Center Drive at the intersection with Tall Cedars Parkway (heading toward Freedom HS). To be honest, this sign has bothered me for years because it didn't seem to make a lot of sense. We worked with VDOT to take another look at it and they ultimately agreed to remove the sign. It has been removed. Now when you approach the intersection there are two legal through-lanes, which merge into one lane once you are through the intersection.

### **Senior Center Design Update**

The design process for our new Dulles South Senior Center is now well underway. This is a much needed facility for our growing senior population. Other senior centers in Loudoun are not easily accessible to those in Dulles South. Earlier in December, we had a large turnout for two design input sessions on the Senior Center expansion at the Dulles South Multipurpose Center. At a December 18 follow-up meeting, four different concepts were presented and additional input was received. This phase of the DSMC is slated to begin in 2015, and will likely take about a year to complete. For additional information on the design concepts click [here](#). To provide feedback or request more information about the design status email: [prcs@loudoun.gov](mailto:prcs@loudoun.gov)

As a reminder, while the voters have approved a bond for the senior center, the Board of Supervisors will still need to fund construction of the project in FY2015. Going into the budget season, ensuring construction is funded will be one of my top priorities.

## **Elementary School Attendance Zone Boundaries Set**

In order to ease overcrowding at numerous Dulles South elementary schools and account for the opening of Cardinal Ridge Elementary School in the fall of 2014, the Loudoun County School Board recently approved a new attendance boundary plan. The new boundaries will be put into effect next school year. To view the new attendance zone boundaries [click here](#).

Questions about the new boundaries should be addressed to the Loudoun County School Board. Our representative is Jeff Morse, and his email address is: [Jeff.Morse@lcps.org](mailto:Jeff.Morse@lcps.org)

## **Potential Catholic High School Relocating to South Riding**

The Catholic Diocese of Arlington is assessing the feasibility of moving Paul VI High School from Fairfax to South Riding by the year 2020. There is an appropriately sized parcel at the intersection of Riding Center Drive and Braddock Road in South Riding, which the Catholic Diocese already owns.

As a product of a Catholic high school myself, I am a strong believer in Catholic education and welcome this announcement. Paul VI would provide Loudoun residents with a high quality educational opportunity and would be a valuable addition to our community. The construction of Paul VI could also bring some relief to Loudoun's high schools, which face continued strains due to a growing student population. I look forward to working with the Catholic Diocese of Arlington as they begin this process.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Retirement of Congressman Frank Wolf**

As I am sure many of you are aware, last week Congressman Frank Wolf announced he will not be seeking reelection to the U.S. House of Representatives. He has served in the House since 1981. Wolf cited his desire to continue his work on human rights and religious freedom – issues for which he has become a globally recognized leader. Congressman Wolf has been a tireless advocate for Northern Virginia and Loudoun County. His legacy includes the expansion of Metro to Loudoun and numerous other projects which have benefited our citizens. I have always appreciated Congressman Wolf's passion, his bluntness and his willingness to take on issues which were not politically advantageous to him, yet truly impactful for humanity.

I was proud to have Congressman Wolf's support and look forward to working with him during his final year in the House.

### **Possible Reduction in Property Insurance Rates**

Did you know the price we pay for property insurance is influenced by variables such as the local fire departments equipment and staff training? Recently, Insurance Services Office, Inc. (ISO) reviewed the County and determined new, up to date Public Protection Classifications (PPC) based off the 10 point scale, 1 being the best and 10 being the worst. Loudoun County's PPC is 3/10 for suburban properties and 5/10 for rural properties. However, any property situated five miles or more from a fire station receives a 10/10 PPC rating.

The Board has implemented new investments concerning staffing, training, and rural water operations into our local fire departments. These changes have improved the County's ability to address structural fires. I would encourage you to contact your property insurance company to see if these new PPC ratings will impact your rates.

### **Snow Removal Information**

December's early snowfall in the Dulles District reminds us of the necessity of snow removal. VDOT's policies bring the most focus on major roads first (like Route 50), then major local roads and finally neighborhood streets. During a snow event of more than two inches, you can view the status of plowing at [www.VDOTplows.org](http://www.VDOTplows.org). If you feel your street may have been missed you can call 1-800-FOR-ROAD to report an unplowed road. As always, residents can reach out to my office during winter events if they feel there is a situation which warrants extra attention. I will also use my [Facebook](#) page to provide updates as needed.

Among the tips from VDOT are:

- When shoveling driveways, leave the last 5 feet of snow at the curb until after the plow

- Shovel to the right facing the road
- Park on the odd numbered side of the street or in driveways
- Allow room for the plow to come through
- Call 511 for road conditions, or visit [www.511virginia.org](http://www.511virginia.org) for traffic cameras

More information is available at [www.virginiaDOT.org](http://www.virginiaDOT.org), [www.YouTube.com/VDOTweb](http://www.YouTube.com/VDOTweb) , @511northernva on Twitter.

We have been working on some localized snow removal issues in Loudoun Valley Estates and in the Poland Road/Herndon Avenue area. Agreements have been worked out to ensure that all roads will receive plowing. Previously, VDOT contractors stopped at the Loudoun County border and did not plow any of Herndon Avenue, which had the effect of trapping Loudoun residents from getting out in that direction. If issues arise during future storms, feel free to contact me and I'll try to get them fixed.

## **County Facility Holiday Closures**

The County government will be closed December 23-25 and January 1, 2014.

The Dulles South Multipurpose Center and Senior Center will be closed December 24-25 and January 1, 2014.

Gum Spring Library will be closed December 24-25. The library will close early at 5pm on December 31 and remain closed January 1, 2014.

## **Christmas Tree Removal**

After enjoying your Christmas tree, be sure to have it disposed of properly. Many local HOAs have curbside pick-up for recycling your trees. Click on the corresponding links below for more information:

South Riding: <http://southriding.net/for-residents/trash-removal/>

Loudoun Valley Estates: <http://lvehoa.com/HOA-Information/community-trash-guidelines-no-paint.html>

For a list of Loudoun County Christmas Tree disposal sites click here: <http://www.loudoun.gov/index.aspx?NID=401>

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