



Dulles Direct Newsletter February 2016

Welcome to the February edition of the Dulles Direct newsletter. We are now hard at work on our FY2017 budget, which I will discuss below. The Board of Supervisors will adopt a budget in the first week of April.

Thank you to everyone that attended my first Dulles Direct Town Hall meeting of the new term earlier this month. We had a great discussion at the meeting. I promised a recap of the major items, so here it is.

Power Lines

Loudoun County Attorney Leo Rogers has been hard at work on the legal fight against proposed power lines on Route 50. The County has developed two more alternatives which are currently under consideration. Both are deviations of the 606 route (Alternative 1b), which would run from the Yardley Ridge site at Evergreen Mills Road along 606 down to Route 50. Click [here](#) to see the new alternative routes.

These results were developed in response to comments from the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority and input from landowners. While they both have their own set of challenges, they are compatible with the Airport's future plans and work from an electricity generation standpoint.

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We have also been able to successfully delay consideration of the power lines. The State Corporation Commission has ordered a new hearing on these alternative routes to be held at Freedom High School on March 29 at 6:00pm. This hearing will run very similar to the prior hearing that was held to take input on Dominion's proposed route using Route 50. As that date comes closer, I will be sharing information on what to expect. The discussion this time is going to be more technical, about the specific impacts of the new routes. The overall testimony and sentiment expressed at the last public hearing is still valid and will be considered by the SCC.

The evidentiary hearing is now set for June 7 at 10:00am in Richmond. After that time, we will have a final decision on this case.

Traffic Signals

VDOT's Signal Operations Manager was on hand to discuss the signal timing process. He actually logged into the system and demonstrated on his laptop how VDOT monitors and adjusts signals. We were even able to watch intersections in real time, which was interesting. VDOT does not synchronize signals except in urban, street-grid situations, but they do evaluate signals every few years and adjust as needed. They do "optimize" signals for traffic.

At the meeting, VDOT announced that in March, they will begin a full-scale optimization process in the 50 corridor between Poland Road and Route 28. The signals that will be involved are not just directly on 50, but also those that feed that corridor. They expect the project to take about 3 months and it is the final component in the widening project.

VDOT explained that currently, there are 8 separate signal timing sequences programmed on 50, depending on the time of day. West of Loudoun County Parkway, several intersections, including Pinebrook and Hutchison Farm, are not under VDOT's control, but are

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Quick Links

still controlled by developers (who cannot receive their bonds back until the signals are accepted by VDOT).

While optimization should help, it certainly won't solve all of our problems. Ultimately, there is a lot of traffic volume on 50 and several signals are already being timed to the maximum allowable amount by the Federal Highway Administration in order to move traffic.

Avonlea Town Center/Retail Development

I'm frequently asked about the status of the Avonlea Town Center development. The good news is that this development is still moving forward, albeit at a slow pace. Peterson Companies has chosen to be very selective in their tenant mix. They're trying to make Avonlea a very different type of environment with a different mix of retail than what we already have. However, as a sign of their commitment, they are just about to begin work on their section of the Tall Cedars Parkway expansion. I feel confident they would not be expending millions of dollars in infrastructure improvements if they were not completely committed to this project. Cineopolis remains committed as the anchor movie theater tenant as well, and based on my discussions, it sounds like they are close to several more announcements, including one on the grocery store tenant.

I also want to mention that we have been worked with Arcola Center, which is the big project next to Dulles Landing. They have undertaken some changes in management, and there is new partner in the project that is now studying options and working with potential tenants. This is good news and the first activity on the retail side we have seen in several years. I am continuing to work with both of these projects to make them successful.

On a different topic, this month we welcomed the History Club and staff from Lunsford Middle School as well as members of the Conklin community to the Board Room. They were presented with a Resolution

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of Commendation for their work on a history project and mural commemorating the Village of Conklin that existed near the site of the school before the development of South Riding. I appreciate all the work that went into the project and the student's interest in learning about the history of our area. Lunsford does a great job with creative ways to learn.



I enjoyed the opportunity to join several of my colleagues at Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce's Policy Maker Breakfast Series. The Supervisors that attended were given some time to talk about what we have been focused on and what may be coming in the future. I thanked the Chamber for their advocacy on several legislative items in the General Assembly and updated them on our progress in the area of economic development.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

FY2017 Budget Update

Work is well underway on the FY2017 budget. County Administrator Tim Hemstreet presented his proposed budget to the Board on February 10. That budget was broken down into multiple scenarios. The proposed budget is based on the countywide overall (residential and commercial property) equalized tax rate of \$1.135. At this rate, the budget would continue to fund current

operations on the County side, allow for pay increases for staff, and provide a \$26.9 million increase to Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS).

The second scenario was the Administrator's recommended budget. This budget is based on a tax rate of \$1.14 (the homeowner's equalized rate) and would provide for the staffing of new County facilities, pay for the review of the Comprehensive Plan, and provide for other needs as identified by the Administrator. There was an option as part of the recommended budget to set the tax rate at \$1.15 and provide a total increase of \$37.6 million to LCPS. Even at this level of increase, we would be about \$20.7 million short of their requested increase. The decisions about exactly which programs would be funded at that level is up to the School Board, but it would be possible to fund many of their top priorities.

On the capital side, the Finance Committee reviewed the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) at our meeting last week. Many of us on the Board remain frustrated with the constant need for schools to be accelerated, which is difficult to do given the cost and the long term planning needed for these types of expenditures. When the Board of Supervisors met with the School Board, I pressed Dr. Williams and the School Board one exactly what steps were being taken to improve the enrollment projection process in high-growth areas. The growth that is occurring here is not a surprise-it can and should be predicted so that the two Boards can plan for it. In the current system LCPS uses, by-right growth is not accounted for until projects actually start developing, which doesn't give us enough time to react. This has forced us to be behind the curve and see annual requests to move up schools.

We are facing a seat deficit at all levels in Dulles South. My top priority, as I mentioned, is accelerating a new Middle School. (More on that below). Beyond that, we will have major overcrowding at the high school level in about 2-3 years, and the School Board has yet to identify a site for a new high school. School Board Representative Jeff Morse and I will be working

on that problem together. We also have a need for a new elementary school, which is being accelerated in the proposed budget.

We continue to make progress on funding for transportation projects. I had success in scheduling a number of large projects in the CIP over the last few years like Arcola Boulevard and Northstar Boulevard. I will be fighting to keep those projects in line for funding. I am looking for ways to fund our needed improvements to the intersections of Belmont Ridge and Stone Spring Boulevard on Evergreen Mills Road (\$12 million) as well as the widening and signal installation at the Braddock and Supreme/Summerall intersection (\$2 million).

Turf Fields

One item that has come up during our public hearings so far is the desire to see turf fields at the four high schools in Loudoun that do not currently have them, including Freedom. I understand that desire, and also frustration that the School Board has not planned to upgrade these fields until after 2020. However, this is an issue of debt capacity -- not the tax rate, and not the operational budget. The County only has a certain amount of debt we can issue every year, and we have to fit all of the items that need to be funded into that debt limit. On the school side, my highest priority is seats for students. As I just discussed, we are facing easily the most challenging situation on that front in my five budgets. We have a need for a new high school, middle school and elementary school in Dulles South alone, plus several schools in Dulles North. It is physically impossible for us to fund all of those when they're really needed, so we have to stage them, and look at other options such as classroom additions and modulars. The turf issue is being framed as an issue of equality, but I need to point out that classroom space and size is an equality issue as well -- having class sizes approaching 30 kids per class is not the norm for LCPS, but it will be in Dulles South schools if we don't take action, and that has to be my first priority.

Beyond that, the County is engaged in the discussion about rubber crumb turf and there have been concerns expressed in the community. The Joint Committee of my Board and the School Board will be receiving a report from the County's Health Department Director, Dr. Goodfriend, in the near future. The EPA Administrator has said that she believes there has been inadequate research on this subject, and that EPA is now conducting a new investigation. That does give me pause, because I don't want to invest further in something if it turns out it is not healthy for our kids.

For the record, I voted against putting turf fields into Potomac Falls High School in December because our fund balance was very low and I knew we would have a difficult time during the FY17 budget. I was outvoted 5-4 and PFHS got the money. The circumstances were a little different, as they were having structural issues with their fields and they needed a significant amount of work done anyway. But, at least I'm being consistent. On the other schools that went "early", in the case of Stone Bridge, the boosters raised \$250,000 toward the cost of the field a few years ago, and in the case of Park View, the Washington Redskins provided roughly that amount to help defray costs. LCPS had not indicated there was going to be this level of an overcrowding problem and we had funds available at the time (unlike now). Broad Run was one of the oldest schools in the County, and the entire sports complex (as well as the school itself) needed a major renovation, so while that was being done turf was installed.

The new schools in the County are built with turf -- its a cheaper built in cost up front. So, that's how we got here. I'm certainly going to keep working on this, and I think there is a good chance that we can move forward prior to the current schedule.

Shoppes at East Gate/Hotel on 50

At the Board's Public Hearing this month we approved an application for Shoppes at East Gate. This application is for property located in East Gate between the hotel site and Tall Cedars Parkway. The proposal

includes a commercial center with professional office uses, an automobile service station, and structured parking that is adjacent to the hotel site.

The developer of the property has told me that they anticipate the automobile service station being operated by Royal Farms -- their first location in this area -- and that the structured parking would help make the hotel site more attractive for completion.

I have been working to get the hotel project moving for several years now, and this is a step in the right direction. I'm pleased to see strong cooperation between Atapko, the company that owns the shopping center, and the owner of the hotel site. I know that the hotel owners have been working hard to get their project financed, and have been in discussions with hotel brands about a flag for the hotel. I will continue to do what I can to push this along.

Route 606 at Loudoun County Parkway Interchange

As we all know, the Route 606 widening project is underway. Part of that project deals with the intersection of Route 606, Loudoun County Parkway, and Arcola Boulevard. The plans currently call for a signaled intersection -- 2 left turn lanes from 606 to southbound Loudoun County Parkway -- and I felt was insufficient for the level of traffic. VDOT completed a study and found that while it was acceptable at completion of the project, it would be failing after five years. With that information, VDOT decided to add a third turn lane which would keep the intersection operating within acceptable levels for 18 years. (I think that might be optimistic, but keep reading).

While the plans move forward with the enlarged intersection, we are also looking at a future flyover interchange at that intersection. This month we approved moving forward with a study of the proposed flyover and ensuring that it doesn't conflict with Dulles Airport's future western access point.

While it is still unclear exactly whether that access would be open to the public or just be for serving the future uses on the western side of the airport, we want to be sure that the access can be accommodated within whatever is constructed at this intersection. We know the interchange will be needed in the future and I am happy that we are working in advance to have plans in place now.

Bat Problem Could Mean Delays on New Middle School

As I've stated, I have been working to accelerate what we call MS-7 -- the next Dulles South Middle School into this year's budget (FY17). I believe there is a very good chance we will be successful in that effort. The next question is whether the school can be opened on time for the 2018-19 school year. A complicating factor is the recently recognized endangered species designation for the Northern Long Eared Bat (you can't make this stuff up). Part of the natural habitat for the Northern Long Eared Bat is in northern Virginia, and so unless a specific survey is done, potential habitats for the bat cannot be disturbed during certain times in the year. Outside of these timeframes, the bat is assumed not present, and so the habitat can be disturbed without the special survey-which has to be done before the budget is complete.

So as a result, the School Board is requesting an advance \$3 million payment to allow LCPS to begin clearing and site work on the site. I've been working with staff on this request and I'm going to be supporting it tomorrow when the Board of Supervisors meets. The County has sufficient funds to advance the money, which will ultimately be recouped when the project is debt financed in the fall. By taking action now, we can ensure that the school will open in 2018 and alleviate the huge middle school space crunch. Hopefully, the full Board will agree.

DULLES DISTRICT UPDATES

Braddock Road and Northstar Boulevard Intersection

I have heard from many of you with concerns over safety at the intersection of Braddock Road and Northstar Boulevard. Every time there has been an accident, I've sent it to VDOT, who had done a warrant study for a stop sign or traffic signal which found that neither would be allowed.

After months of putting pressure on VDOT for action, they notified me earlier this month that they have agreed to a safety exception for an all way stop at the intersection. The all way stop should be in place this summer and I expect it will stay until the intersection meets warrants for a future signal. I realize this will not solve all the problems, but at least it is a start and will help with drivers who are unfamiliar with the intersection.

Tall Cedars Parkway

I have been disappointed with the delays that we have seen in completing the missing segment of Tall Cedars Parkway between Gum Spring Road and Pinebrook Road. The right of way acquisition has been painfully slow and we are finally completing acquisition from the final property owner. This project was one of the first started when the Board started accelerating road construction several years ago, and I think since then we've learned some lessons about how to approach these kinds of projects. We've also since added staff, additional lawyers and outside consultants to help better deal with the issues that arise during road construction.

The delays and additional costs have required the Board to approve the use of additional developer proffers in the amount of \$915,000 to fund the full project. With this additional funding, I expect that the project will be out to bid by this summer and a contract awarded in the fall. Construction is anticipated to take up to two years.

Commission and Board Openings

I am still accepting applications for the following boards:

- Commission on Aging
- Communications Commission
- Transit Advisory Board
- Library Board of Trustees
- Lyme Disease Commission

You must be a Dulles District Resident to serve. There are also at large openings that are not district specific. For more information on all Boards and Commissions and to download a copy of the required application form, visit

<https://www.loudoun.gov/index.aspx?nid=87>.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Text to 911

Loudoun County's new Emergency Communications Center will have the capability to receive text to 911 messages beginning March 1, 2016. Please note, however, that wireless carriers have up to 180 days to activate the service. Individuals with questions regarding their carrier's text to 911 capabilities should contact their service providers directly for information.

Contact 911 only when you have a fire, medical or police emergency. In an emergency, a voice call to 911 is always preferred because important information can be relayed to the dispatcher more quickly. In some cases, however, sending a text to 911 is good alternative. For more information, click [here](#).

LC Transit Request for Route Suggestions

Loudoun County is accepting suggestions from the public for new and improved bus routes that would go into effect in 2017. Suggestions can include modifications to existing routes or brand new service in places where there is no service.

There are limited resources, so not all suggested routes will be developed and the changes won't happen immediately. The Board of Supervisors must endorse and approve the funding for the recommended routes. If the Board approves the suggested routes, they will be included in the Fiscal Year 2018 budget with service scheduled to begin in July of 2017. In our area, I am already working to bring at least one long haul bus route to the East Gate park and ride lot. When the County takes delivery of new transit buses this year, we can reallocate a few long haul buses to other routes.

Suggestions may be sent by email to transitcomments@loudoun.gov or mailed to:

Paul Mounier
Transit and Commuter Services Manager
Department of Transportation and Capital
Infrastructure
P.O. Box 7000, Leesburg VA 20177

In order for staff to have time to evaluate the proposals and develop cost and operational impacts for the Board of Supervisors to consider, comments must be received by March 1, 2016.

More information is available online at www.loudoun.gov/transit.

Dulles South Food Pantry

The Dulles South Food Pantry is in need now more than ever. They are now serving an average of 70 families at every distribution (over 300 people). Additionally, the Pantry provides almost 100 Friday Food Packs (weekend food for kids) to the schools in the Champe and Freedom HS clusters every week. The Dulles South Food Pantry is open to distribute food the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month from 5 pm to 7 pm located at 24757 Evergreen Mill Road, Dulles, VA, 20166.

The Dulles South Food Pantry is a multi-faith emergency food pantry. They provide nutritious food, personal supplies and other services to those in need in Dulles South area that come to them regardless of income, faith or other criteria. They are an all-volunteer organization focused both on feeding the hungry and promoting the self-sufficiency of those they serve. Donations to the Dulles South Food Pantry are tax deductible. The Dulles South Food Pantry needs the following unexpired food: canned chicken & tuna, soups and stews with protein, 1 or 2 lb. bags of rice or rice mixes, pasta and pasta sauce (no glass please), breakfast cereal and pancake mix, granola bars, fruit (in cans, plastic or dried), canned or dried beans of all types, toothpaste, shampoo and grocery store gift cards in any amount. They welcome monetary contributions and volunteers as well. They are able to accept food donations at the Pantry 10-11:30 am Mondays and Wednesdays and 7-8:00 pm Monday nights or at the Dulles South Multipurpose Center located at 24950 Riding Center Drive in South Riding during business hours. For additional information please visit their website at www.dsfp.org.

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