



## Dulles Direct Newsletter May 2016

Welcome to the May edition of the Dulles Direct newsletter. In between all of the rain this month, I had a chance to visit with several different groups and share some updates that I'll also cover here.

I started off the month at the South Riding Spring Festival. Our booth was busy the entire afternoon- thanks to those who stopped by. School Board Representative Jeff Morse and I held a joint Town Hall Meeting hosted by the Dulles South Alliance, which was well attended. I was also very impressed by the huge turnout at Avonlea for a Town Hall meeting hosted by the Avonlea HOA. We had a great discussion.

In the Board Room, I took time to recognize Loudoun Small Business Week. This annual event was held May 16-22 with networking events held around the County and visits to businesses by members of the Board of Supervisors.

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In this day and age, I feel like we hear constantly about negative things, especially when it comes to young people. I thought it was important to recognize some of the extraordinary young people we have in the Dulles District that were involved in Freedom High School's Hats Off for Charity Prom event. The Senior and Junior classes chose not to spend money on a traditional off-site prom and instead dedicate this year's prom to raise funds for pediatric cancer research. They raised over \$60,000 for this worthy cause. One of the students also took what I think was the Board's first "selfie!"



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## LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

### Credit Ratings Received

As I shared last month, I traveled to New York in my role as the Board's Finance Committee Chairman to meet with credit ratings agencies on Wall Street in advance of the County's bond sale. I am pleased to report that, earlier this month, the County received the results of that trip and that we were once again rated AAA --the highest possible rating--by all three agencies.

The credit rating reports are essentially a report card for the County's financial management, and once again we did very well. The reports specifically mentioned the County's sound financial management and positive economic outlook.

A statement from Fitch said that the AAA rating reflects Loudoun's "exceptionally strong operating performance, supported by solid revenue growth and expenditure flexibility". Moody's cited Loudoun's "consistently solid financial performance" and a "manageable debt burden". Standard & Poor's highlighted Loudoun's "very strong economy with access to a broad and diverse metropolitan statistical area," and the County's "very strong management, with strong financial policies and practices".

A triple-A rating is important to the County government and taxpayers because it helps the County

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continue to get the best possible interest rates to finance capital projects, saving millions of dollars. More information on Loudoun County finances and the Road to Triple-A status is online at [www.loudoun.gov/triple-a](http://www.loudoun.gov/triple-a).

[Loudoun County  
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As part of our Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) loan from the federal government for Metro Silver Line construction, we are also required to receive a rating on our Metrorail service district from one agency. Of particular note this year is that Fitch upgraded our Metrorail service district rating from AA to AA+, which reflects a positive outlook on development around our Metro stations.

#### **Bond Sale Results (AKA, "Why You Should Care!")**

The credit ratings that I mentioned above came before the County sold more than \$180 million in bonds in two separate sales this month. The County also achieved a net present value savings of more than \$12 million as a result of refunding debt.

Loudoun sold \$147.9 million in general obligation bonds an interest rate of 1.86 percent. This interest rate was nearly a percentage point lower than the last bond sale in spring 2015 and the lowest interest rate the County has achieved for a general obligation bond sale in the past eight years. The lower interest rate means the County pays less interest for borrowing money for capital projects. The interest rate is driven by our strong bond ratings.

Proceeds from the sale will be used for schools and general government projects, including the design, construction and equipping of nine schools: Moorefield Station Elementary School (ES-16); Cardinal Ridge Elementary School (ES-21); Madison's Trust Elementary School (ES-27); Dulles North Elementary School (ES-31); Trailside Middle School (MS-6); Brambleton Middle School (MS-9); Dulles North Area High School (HS-11); Riverside High School (HS-8); and the Academies of Loudoun.

Proceeds are also used to pay for the renovations of Loudoun Valley High School, stadium upgrades at Loudoun County High School, and Freedom High School additions.

General government projects funded with the bond proceeds include Belmont Ridge Road improvements; Sterling Community Center renovations; Lucketts Fire Station replacement; Dulles South Multipurpose Center Phase 2; and the acquisition of fire/rescue apparatus.

Also, through the Economic Development Authority, the county sold \$35.795 million of lease revenue and refunding bonds with an interest rate of 1.88 percent.

The proceeds of the sale will be used for the acquisition, design, construction, and equipping of general government office space at Blue Seal Drive in Leesburg, the Courts Complex Phase 3, renovation of the Youth Shelter, the Round Hill Group Residence, and the Ashburn Metro Station stormwater management facility.

## **Metro System Concerns**

### **SafeTrack**

Some of you already rely on Metro for your daily commute. Even if you don't, you may well be impacted by an intense Metrorail rehabilitation program called SafeTrack which starts this week. SafeTrack will accelerate three years' worth of maintenance work into approximately one year. Extensive maintenance activities will impact the entire system, including Orange and Silver lines. Single tracking on the Orange and Silver lines from East Falls Church to Ballston will begin on June 4 for thirteen days. A second phase of maintenance is planned for these lines in July as well. Overall, commutes will be impacted all the way until Christmas. As a result of delays, I expect to see more vehicles on the road, which may make traffic worse than usual this summer. For information on

those impacts, be sure to visit the SafeTrack plan site at <https://wmata.com/rail/safetrack.cfm?>.

### **Ongoing Concerns about Metro's Operations and Financial Condition**

As Vice Chairman of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments representing Virginia and as a Commissioner of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission representing Loudoun, I have been engaged in the regional discussion about Metro's issues. Some of you may have seen some recent stories where I stirred up a bit of a hornet's nest over suggestions that the WMATA Board consider contracting out to private companies certain aspects of their operation. I also asked about who assumes ownership of WMATA assets should they cease operations over several funding shortfalls.

Why am I asking these questions? The WMATA Board Chair is making the rounds to sound off the alarm over funding shortfalls in unfunded pension liabilities and operation costs, as well as billions in unfunded capital needs.

These issues aren't new. We've known that WMATA would need a major infusion in capital for years because it has been obvious that not enough attention was paid to maintaining the system. That happened as a result of poor leadership by regional leaders, the WMATA Board and others over the course of decades.

Metro's other problem, however, is entirely of its own making. Labor costs at WMATA are extremely high, and there have been legitimate questions about the work actually being performed (or not performed) by employees.

My position is that before WMATA can credibly ask the public or any other governing body for more money, it must demonstrate that it can solve its own problems, starting with employee costs and benefits. Every jurisdiction struggles to make difficult choices, and all of us would like to pay our employees more. According to some reports, Metro has operators



making more than some school principals do in Loudoun. Metro is currently in collective bargaining with mandatory arbitration, and I believe a tough, public stance must be taken.

In the meantime, I'm going to keep asking questions that apparently make people uncomfortable.

### **Where Does This Leave Loudoun?**

Loudoun's piece of Metro's finances is small. We expect to pay about 4.1% of the total operational budget. The Capital Funding Agreement that we will be a part of hasn't been negotiated yet, and our ongoing operating costs will be determined by a formula that is based largely on our ridership.

Meanwhile, development is booming around our Metro stations, and property values are significantly higher. In fact, it's fair to say that every single resident of the County is currently being subsidized by Metro, because the County's tax base and revenue has increased. Over time, that will continue.

In other Loudoun Metro news the Board of Supervisors terminated negotiations with one of our two vendors that bid to construct our parking garages this month. One garage at the Ashburn station will be constructed by Comstock Corporation, while the other two (one at Ashburn, the other at Loudoun Gateway) will be built by the County. The County will be issuing an RFP to operate those garages.

## **DULLES DISTRICT UPDATES**

### **Power Line Update**

Work continues in our fight against Dominion's proposed powerline route along Route 50. The State Corporation Commission (SCC) comment period closed earlier this month. Thank you to all of you that took the time to submit comments, in person or online.

Preparation for the evidentiary hearing continues by the coalition of property owners in the area, led by County

Attorney Leo Rogers. I have submitted testimony and received a list of interrogatories back from Dominion's attorneys (questions about my testimony).

The County has submitted several alternative routes during the course of the discussion over where the lines may go. Currently, our focus has been on consideration of Alternatives 4 and 5

(<https://www.loudoun.gov/index.aspx?nid=3600>). Just last week, a new Alternative 6 was proposed with the only change being the northern most alignment to reduce conflicts with a planned interchange at the Loudoun County Parkway, Route 606, and Arcola Boulevard intersection.



The SCC Hearing is scheduled to begin June 29 in Richmond and as of now, I expect to be testifying later that week.

### **Center Street and Loudoun County Parkway**

Many of you may remember that a restriction in turns was put in place on Center Street at Loudoun County Parkway in 2014. At the time, we had seen a series of serious accidents at the intersection and completed a study to determine the impacts of certain changes to traffic patterns. Following the study and consultation with the South Riding HOA, it was determined that the current flex post configuration would be installed until



a more permanently constructed solution could be funded. Last year, I secured \$650,000 to fund the design and construction of the final project.

Design has been completed and approved by VDOT. The project will be out for construction bids this summer. County staff expects to award the contract in September and completion is expected next spring. We will provide updates about construction impacts when they are available.

### **Edgewater and Poland**

Work continues on moving towards a permanent roundabout at the intersection of Edgewater and Poland. Last year, I secured \$950,000 to match \$600,000 from VDOT to fund the design and construction of the final project.

Since that time, VDOT began the survey and design process and are nearing completion on a final design. Last week, I met with the Ridings at Blue Springs HOA Board to discuss the project and potential needs from VDOT, as well as pedestrian access at the roundabout and on Edgewater Street, which I am working on. After the design is finalized, we will have a better idea of final cost and be able to work with VDOT to get the project out for construction bids.

VDOT and I are both committed to moving this project as quickly as possible to get rid of the current temporary situation and alleviate the maintenance issues that exist. Information is available on VDOT's [project page](#).

### **Tall Cedars Parkway Update**

We received some not so good news when the bids were opened on Tall Cedars construction. All bids came in significantly higher than the County anticipated. As a result, the County now faces a \$1.5 million shortfall on this project. I am working closely with Transportation and Finance staff to address this shortfall and keep the project from seeing any more delays.

### **East Gate Transit Service**

Those of you that use the 88X (East Gate - Wiehle Reston - East) know that the buses currently used on the route are leased and do not permit SmartTrip usage. I am pleased to inform you that the permanent, SmartTrip outfitted buses will be in service on July 5.

Several of you have asked when long haul service may be expanded in Stone Ridge and added to East Gate. The County is scheduled to receive four new transit buses in December 2016. Those buses are slated to replace coach buses currently providing service in other areas of the County. Two of those coach buses will be repurposed to provide long haul service from the Stone Ridge and East Gate lots.

When we have the specific dates on those new long haul buses in Dulles South, I will share that information with you.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **DMV2GO**

The DMV 2 Go mobile customer service center will be at the Dulles South Public Safety Center on Wednesday, June 8 from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. The Dulles South Public Safety Center is located at 25216 Loudoun County Parkway in Chantilly, VA.

The mobile customer service center allows residents to apply for or renew your ID card (available for adults and children), apply for or renew your driver's license, update your DMV information, obtain vehicle titles, license plates, decals, and transcripts, order disabled parking placards or plates and other services.

DMV 2 Go is a fleet of five mobile customer service centers ready to bring DMV services to Virginians at convenient locations. For more information on this program and the services provided, please visit [www.dmvNOW.com](http://www.dmvNOW.com).

### **Commuter Services Facebook Page Launched**

Loudoun County Commuter Services has launched a Facebook page to provide information to the public on

all the commuting and travel options available to the residents, employees and visitors to Loudoun County. The page will also broadcast known transit service disruptions along with public meetings that relate to transportation and transit. There will also be fun facts, photos and events to engage the public to consider choosing an alternative to the drive alone mode.

The Facebook page can be found by either searching Loudoun County Commuter Services in the search box on Facebook or by clicking on this link: <https://www.facebook.com/Loudoun-County-Commuter-Services-1486379418268204/>.

### **Household Hazardous Waste Events**

Loudoun County has announced the Spring 2016 schedule for the County Household Hazardous Waste Collection Program.

The purpose of this program is to provide a safe, no cost method for residents to dispose of the unused, old or unwanted hazardous materials stored in their homes. Household hazardous waste is any waste produced in the home that is dangerous or potentially harmful to our health or the environment.

Events operate from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and are free to the public (Loudoun County residents only). More information on the types of items that are accepted is available at [www.loudoun.gov/hhw](http://www.loudoun.gov/hhw) or by calling 703-771-5500.

The event date and location is as follows:

- June 25 - Freedom High School, 25450 Riding Center Drive, South Riding

### **Dulles South Food Pantry**

Effective June 1, the Dulles South Food Pantry is expanding its geographic boundaries to serve families in the Brambleton community who are in need of food assistance. Since its inception two years ago, the food

pantry has served any person who resides in the school attendance zones for the Freedom High School and John Champe High School clusters in Dulles South. Thanks to the generous support the pantry has received from the community, the food pantry is pleased to begin serving the areas that have been assigned to attend the new Brambleton Middle School opening in 2017.

The food pantry is now open every Wednesday in the historic white chapel at Arcola United Methodist Church, 24757 Evergreen Mills Road, Dulles, VA 20166. On the first and third Wednesdays of the month, the pantry is open to walk-ins from 5-7pm. Other Wednesdays the pantry is open by appointment. Call 703-507-2795 or email [info@dsfp.org](mailto:info@dsfp.org) to schedule a private appointment.

Since opening two years ago, the food pantry has distributed more than 150,000 lbs. of food and currently averages nearly 140 visits a month from local families. Additionally, the pantry provides weekend food to over 100 students in 10 different Dulles District schools. See the Dulles South Food Pantry's website at <http://www.dsfp.org/> for information on how you can help the food pantry fight hunger locally. The Dulles South Food Pantry Inc. is a multi-faith emergency food pantry providing nutritious food, personal supplies and other services to those in need in the Dulles South area regardless of income, faith or other criteria. It is an all-volunteer organization focused both on feeding the hungry and promoting the self-sufficiency of those it serves. Donations to the Dulles South Food Pantry, Inc. are tax deductible.

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