



January 2020

Welcome to the January edition of the Dulles Direct newsletter. Work at the Board of Supervisors is busy with four new members, a robust legislative agenda, and budget season looming in the near future.

I have a lot to report in this month's newsletter, from significant road updates to land use and commercial projects. All of that is below. First, I want to tell you a little more about the upcoming County budget discussion. This year's budget presents more challenges than those in recent years. As I've been reporting, the County is implementing a new classification and compensation system for employees. We have phased in changes over the last two years, but the rest of the bill is now due and it's a large one - about \$24 million all told. That number is eating up much of the new revenue the County is collecting from economic growth, leaving little for other items. If we don't add employees or increase budgets in many service areas, we will create a service delivery reduction because demand is always increasing.

Due to this quandary, the Board had a robust conversation about where to start budget discussions. The County Administrator always presents the Board with a budget that fits the parameters of the Board's

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fiscal guidance. The guidance from the outgoing Board headed into this cycle was to prepare the budget at an equalized tax rate of \$1.02/\$100, or 2.5 cents below the existing rate. The new Board decided to change that guidance and start at the current tax rate instead, with options to go up or down 1 cent.

I did not support this motion, even though I do think it would be hard to get to the equalized tax rate. The motion passed anyway on a party line vote (myself, Supervisor Buffington and Supervisor Kershner opposed). For me, it really comes down to process and philosophy. I would rather have the County Administrator give us the budget at a lower rate, and then have the Board vote to add the things we need one by one. I have found over my eight years on the Board that approaching it this way leads to greater scrutiny of needs and efficiencies. Generally, as the revenue estimates become more clear, the situation improves. I probably would have voted to add many of the things that the County Administrator will now include in his base budget, but the existing tax rate will result in a modest tax increase for most homeowners because of rising assessments. I think the Board should be deliberate and thorough if that is to be the case.

Perhaps even more unsettling, at the current tax rate, there is still a large gap with the Superintendent's proposed budget request (which he recently presented to the School Board). He is asking for an 8.9% budget increase, which far exceeds the 1.9% projected student enrollment increase. Obviously, Loudoun is a community that cares deeply about education and we have proven that we are willing to invest in it - but I have never viewed that as being unlimited. We have to work within the boundaries of available funding for all requests, including those by LCPS. Despite this reality, we have funded 98% of all school budget requests during my tenure on the Board.

The School Board is now working to prepare its request to the Board of Supervisors, so we'll see where it ends up. However, the current numbers would push the tax rate to at least \$1.07, which would raise taxes

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by hundreds of dollars per homeowner. That decision would certainly need scrutiny. The Board of Supervisors has scheduled a joint meeting with the School Board in late February to start the conversation. I'll let you know how that discussion goes.

Speaking of LCPS, we have had several snow days since the holidays ended. Although we haven't seen much accumulation, conditions have been slick and icing has been a concern. As always, I provide information from VDOT later in the newsletter concerning snow removal and safety precautions. As we continue to experience winter weather, I urge you all to stay safe and stay off the roads should it snow or ice. If LC Transit happens to go on early dismissal due to weather, you can read more about their procedures [here](#).

As a new term on the Board begins, the Board votes on leadership positions and committee assignments. The Board's new vice chairman is Sterling District Supervisor Koran Saines. I will remain Chairman of the Board's Finance, Government Operations, and Economic Development Committee, and I appreciate my colleagues' support to remain in that position despite the change in the Board's political majority. With that change however, I will no longer be a representative on the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Board of Directors. I appreciate the eight years I was able to serve on the COG Board, including my year as Chairman in 2018, which was a great honor. The Board instead appointed me to the National Capitol Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB), which is an offshoot of COG that deals with regional transportation issues.

I will remain a member of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission where I just completed a year as Chairman. Like the Board of Supervisors, NVTC has committees, one of which deals exclusively with Metro. I will chair that committee and also be a member of the Executive Committee. Finally, I was reappointed Alternate Director for Virginia on the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

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Board of Directors. I was called into service already this month, as I filled in at a WMATA Safety and Operations Committee meeting, Finance Committee budget worksession, and Board meeting. WMATA has recently ratified a labor contract with its main employee union, and is now dealing with competing needs between jurisdictions while operating under a 3% cost increase mandated by Virginia and Maryland. I will give a more detailed update on Silver Line construction below, as that has been a major topic of conversation for Metro.



Supervisor Katie Cristol of Arlington County presents me with a resolution for serving as Chairman of NVTC in 2019.

[Loudoun County Traffic Incident Map](#)

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I'll also continue to serve on the Route 28 Improvement District Commission, which I have done since joining the Board of Supervisors in 2012. I'll also remain on the Dulles Area Transportation Association (DATA), which develops commuter programs and looks for solutions to congestion and traffic safety issues in the area. Finally, I have two new responsibilities - serving on the County's Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Investment Committee and the Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP) Committee.

DULLES UPDATES

New Configuration Coming for Route 50 / Stone Springs Boulevard

Many of you have given me feedback on the intersection of Route 50 and Stone Springs Boulevard - in particular, the frequent delays that occur to travel north across the intersection or west onto Route 50. I know sometimes it may seem like nothing happens when you give that kind of feedback, but my staff and I are often working internally with various agencies to examine the issues and see if there are ways to improve them.

This intersection is one of those examples, and I'm ready to share our action plan going forward. The County's transportation staff and VDOT Traffic Engineering analyzed the intersection configuration and signal timings. As expected, three areas were identified - the two movements I mentioned plus the southbound straight across movement. You may not have noticed, but over the last year signal timings themselves were adjusted in an effort to alleviate delays. Sadly, they did not have much impact.

Since that didn't work, we needed a new approach. Subject to Board of Supervisors approval on February 18, the County and VDOT have agreed to the following changes:

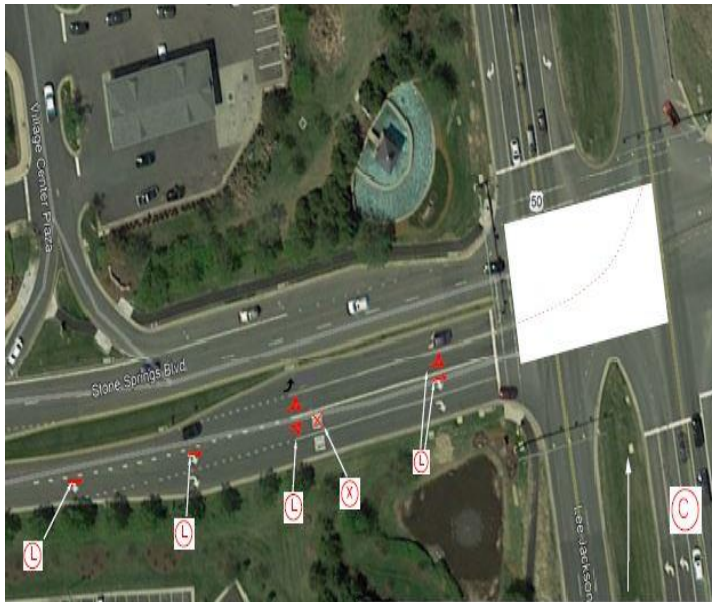
-The signal will become a split phase for northbound and southbound movements. Adding a phase does result in an increase in wait time for the other movements, but the engineers believe the impact won't be substantial in concert with the changes below.

- The northbound lanes will be reconfigured. Currently there are 1 left turn lane, 1 through lane, and 2 right turn lanes. It will be changed to 1 dedicated left turn lane, 1 shared straight / left turn lane, 1 shared straight / right turn lane, and 1 dedicated right turn lane.

- The southbound lanes will also be reconfigured. Currently there are 2 left turn lanes, 1 straight lane, and 1 right turn lane. It will be changed to 1 dedicated left turn lane, 1 shared left turn / straight lane, 1 straight lane, and 1 dedicated right turn lane.

Based on analysis done by VDOT, these changes should reduce delays for northbound left turns during the morning commute and, even more significantly, for southbound through traffic during the evening commute. The model predicted some trade-offs in the off-peak direction of travel, but nothing significant.

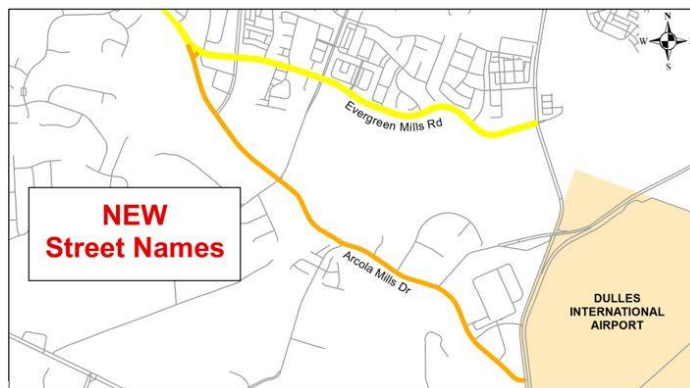
To make these changes, VDOT will have to conduct signal modifications. They can do this themselves, and the cost will fall between \$15,000 and \$23,000, which the Board will be asked to allocate next month. I'll update you in the February newsletter if we hear new timeline information or any other details about the project.



New Names for Southern Section of Evergreen Mills Road and Shreveport Drive

Effective February 27, two road segments in the Arcola area are being renamed. The southern section of Evergreen Mills Road, from the intersection near Strickland Drive south to Loudoun County Parkway,

will be known as Arcola Mills Drive. Shreveport Drive is being renamed Evergreen Mills Road. New road signs will be installed on the effective date, unless weather pushes their installation into early March. Letters will be mailed to affected homeowners. Questions about the changes should be directed to mapping@loudoun.gov.



Greenway Update

It's been a while since I discussed the Greenway. This is more of an interim update given that we're in the middle of some different processes. First, the Greenway has applied for another toll rate increase - this time for five years, at a rate of more than 6% per year. As you'll recall, this is the first year in a decade that the State Corporation Commission can actually consider the increase on its merits rather than having to follow General Assembly direction. Formal action has

not yet been taken, but I will lead an effort on the Board to oppose the increase. We will be prepared to undertake a significant legal challenge should it come to that. Frankly, we've been waiting for this moment and the County Attorney will be prepared.

Beyond that, there is the possibility for action by the General Assembly. We've been trying for years to get a bill passed which would even the playing field, but politics always seems to get in the way of our efforts. Last year, it was mostly Republicans that supported a bill from Senator Stanley and Delegate LaRock to exclude consideration of prior debt, limit the items that the Greenway can be compensated for (no more claiming lobbyists and Redskins tickets) and define some of the terms in the statute. That bill failed after an extensive effort by the Greenway's lobbyist, which happens to be one of the most powerful firms in Richmond.

Most of that same bill has been reintroduced, this time by our newly elected Delegate Suhas Subramanyam. Delegate Subramanyam has worked very closely with the County and with me personally to craft the language included in the bill. At our January 7 Business Meeting, I made the motion to the full Board of Supervisors to support the Delegate's Greenway legislation, which passed unanimously. Delegate Subramanyam has been trying to get support from his colleagues for this bill, starting with the rest of the Loudoun delegation, but that support has not been forthcoming.

Arguments are being made that the bill represents some kind of breach of contract because previous debt can't be included in rate calculations. This is the debt that keeps getting spun off by the Greenway, which resulted in a road that cost \$300 million to construct carrying over \$1 billion in debt. The County Attorney provided a legal opinion that exclusion of that debt for rate calculations is neither a violation of any contract or a "taking," and that opinion was affirmed by the Office of the Attorney General. Nevertheless, the

Greenway's lobbyist appears to have convinced some of our delegation that the opposite is true.

Delegate Subramanyam continues to work with the County and his colleagues to find areas of compromise on these issues, and I think he's making progress.

Route 50 Study

Delegate Subramanyam has also introduced HJ 57, which directs VDOT to conduct analysis and propose solutions for congestion on the Route 50 corridor between Interstate 66 in Fairfax County and Route 15 in Loudoun. At our January 21 Business Meeting, the Board recommended support of the bill. I believe it will help Loudoun's ongoing effort to improve Route 50. The County conducted a comprehensive analysis in 2017 between Route 28 and Northstar Boulevard, which has resulted in five separate improvement projects that I have been able to add to the six-year Capital Improvement Plan.

As part of our ongoing efforts on several of the proposed interchanges and on the Route 50 northern collector road, a VDOT-required update to that analysis is now underway. This new study will add to that work with the additional piece to the east. Of course, studies alone don't solve things, but they are required in order to pursue solutions down the road. Personally, I'll take all the help we can get on Route 50.

In addition, we are moving forward with the Intelligent Transportation System installation on 50 this year, which will give us better data and more active traffic management from VDOT in the corridor. All these efforts are part of my strategy to get attention and eventually funding for the improvements we need. There are a lot of competing issues, corridors, and areas of congestion in Northern Virginia. I believe Route 50 is one of the worst anywhere in the area, but the more data we have that proves it, the better chance we get the help needed. Once again, Delegate

Subramanyam made a point to work with me and our transportation staff to craft a helpful request; I really appreciate his cooperation.

Tall Cedars Parkway / Nations Street Intersection

As you'll recall from previous updates, the intersection of Tall Cedars Parkway and Nations Street has become increasingly problematic. At my December Town Hall meeting, I discussed plans to move forward with configuration changes. Updated crash data indicates that the frequency of accidents is getting worse. Between January 2016 and May 2018, only 12 crashes occurred. However, 18 crashes occurred between May 2018 and November 2019 (a smaller window of time), and I'm aware of another accident that occurred just this week on January 28. The bottom line is that movements need to be restricted in certain directions, similar to what has been implemented at Center Street and at Elk Lick Road. These changes will result in some loss of convenience. Some of the feedback I've received is that "bad drivers" shouldn't be dictating these kinds of changes. I think that's true to a point. We do a lot of analysis of these intersections precisely to figure out which ones are inherently problematic versus those where it is clear that bad drivers are the main problem. Over the years I have received a lot of requests for changes to intersections that we study but don't implement because there is no supportive data and they don't meet VDOT's criteria.

In the case of Tall Cedars and Nations however, it has gotten to a point where there are too many accidents, and they are typically angle crashes with lots of damage and sometimes injuries. It is true that there may be factors such as distracted driving that lead to those accidents, but many have simply been errors in judgement. All of us drivers have made an error of judgement before - whether we didn't see something, misjudged speed, etc. We are humans and accidents happen. If they keep happening in the same place, it's time for local government to make changes that reduce the chances of accidents occurring. That's what we are

trying to do now, as irritating as it may be to lose the ability to make certain movements through the intersection. I'm happy to trade minor inconveniences for increased driver safety.

The good news is that VDOT will be repaving on Tall Cedars Parkway this summer, and they are willing to take on this intersection project with some funding from the County. It requires very fast work (especially by government standards) to get these plans designed and approved, but on January 7 the Board voted 9-0 to direct staff to return with a funding plan to sync with VDOT's existing project. That staff report is expected at our February 4 Business Meeting, and I am hopeful to receive the support of my colleagues in expediting the project. Flex posts will be installed initially. About 18-24 months later we will go to permanent and more attractive curbing.

You can see the whole discussion from my December Town Hall meeting on this topic [here](#).

Tall Cedars Parkway / Stone Springs Boulevard Intersection

Work continues to progress at the intersection. The County was required to change the design of one of the signal poles, and that work has been submitted to VDOT. Staff is currently evaluating four bids received on January 16. We anticipate construction to begin in early spring, but we will have more details on a timeline once a contractor is on board.

Mooreview Parkway / Croson Lane Intersection

Those of you in the northern portion of the district likely noticed that a new sidewalk and shared use path were recently completed along Croson Lane from the Quails Pond neighborhood to Mooreview Parkway and along Mooreview Parkway from Croson Lane to Wynridge Drive. These were constructed as a County

project to ensure safe pedestrian and bike access in the area.

I recently received news that the Croson Lane and Mooreview Parkway intersection has met warrants for a traffic signal. The signal itself will be constructed under a developer proffer by Moorefield Station. The Zoning Department is transmitting the official request to the developer to get them started on design and construction. Look for a completion timeline once that process gets underway. This area will be changing significantly when Metro service starts (more on that below) and the County has paid a lot of attention to the road network here to make sure we are ready.

Upcoming Land Use Item

SPEX-2019-0020, WAWA CHANTILLY

On February 12 at our Public Hearing, the Board will be hearing a special exception to permit an automobile service station with gas pumps for a Wawa at the Meadows Farms Nursery in South Riding. Meadows Farms has decided to sell the western part of their parcel for the purpose of developing it. The Planning Commission heard the case in December and voted to recommend approval. Wawa would replace the yard between the storage facility and the Meadows Farms building. The application includes a modification to reduce the required parking lot periphery landscaping strip from 10 feet to 8 feet along the rear boundary. As I mentioned in last month's newsletter, we have been discussing Route 50 access to the site with VDOT, Commissioner Salmon, and the County transportation staff. The recommended configuration is for left turn access to be restricted exiting Meadows Farms to 50 eastbound, and for all other access to remain. I will update you on our discussion at the Public Hearing.

If you wish to speak at the Public Hearing on this or another topic, you can sign up in advance by noon on February 12 or at the dais at the hearing. Please call

703-777-0200 to do so. Comments are limited to items on the agenda.

COMMERCIAL UPDATES

Whitman South

I have been given permission to confirm that Lidl is the anchor tenant at Whitman South. Other tenants are a well known auto service provider, a veterinarian and a childcare. There are still some pad sites without tenants. Van Metre has been looking for food providers given the proximity to Paul VI High School. Meanwhile, work continues on the widening of Braddock Road and reconfiguration of the Gum Spring intersection.

Avonlea

I had discussions with Peterson this month following the third submittal of their revised application for a town center project occupying land from 50 / Loudoun County Parkway to Pinebrook Road. Based on staff feedback, Peterson has decided to pursue a different zoning category on this parcel under the revised definitions of a town center in the 2019 Comprehensive Plan. This direction will give them more flexibility on the mix of permitted uses and specific things like floor area ratio. As mentioned, there are up to 450 housing units proposed as part of this project, the specific mix of which is still to be determined but will likely include a lot of condo / apartment units with ground floor retail. The consensus of staff, the Department of Economic Development, and the development community is that this type of layout is the only way to get entertainment / dining / retail options into the space, because it provides more revenue security for a bank that needs to finance the project. The project will head to the Planning Commission once Avonlea resubmits under the new designation.

LOUDOUN UPDATES

When Will the Silver Line be Boarding?

The media has breathlessly reported every twist and turn and projected opening on the Silver Line. For quite some time I've told you in this space to expect the first quarter 2021 for a target date. Nothing has happened that would warrant a change in my prediction. As a member of the Metro Board, I recently received a detailed update on the status of the construction project. As a reminder, the project itself sits with the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority but will then be turned over to Metro. This does not tend to be the most efficient way to build something, despite good communication between MWAA and Metro.

MWAA's substantial completion date is April 2020. With an expected six months of Metro testing, that would result in revenue service by October of this year. I think there are too many outstanding issues for that to be realistic. There are a few in particular that require close tracking; many of the others have either been resolved or are in the process of being resolved. The two that I'm concerned with relate to concrete panels and signal software certification. Metro has brought in the Office of the Inspector General to make a determination on the concrete panels. Their current stance is that the panels should be inspected every three months for cracks. There are 1700 panels - that's not a small amount of work, and Metro has serious concerns about it. However, there are indications that this stance may not be warranted based on testing and the opinion of competing analysis. The software issue is more about the process that was used to program the software, which has not yet been certified. I'm not sure when that will ultimately be resolved.

In the meantime, Loudoun County will be ready when the trains start running.

Thomas Jefferson High School

Loudoun's participation in Thomas Jefferson High School, including bus service for students, was a topic of considerable interest in the fall. I reported at the time that our School Board Representative Jeff Morse, who was on the losing end of votes to restrict the number of seats and cut bus service, vowed to bring the item back to the new School Board at their first meeting of this term, and he did. As expected, the new School Board voted (unanimously with one abstention) in favor of Jeff's motion to reverse the previous Board's decision. I'm pleased to see this action to provide Loudoun students with additional educational opportunities.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

United States Census

Every ten years, everyone in our nation is counted. The 2020 census begins in March. For every person not counted in the census, Loudoun will lose \$2,000 a year for the next ten years for schools, healthcare, and more. It is vitally important that you participate. Please be on the lookout in early March for a mail invitation detailing how to participate. You can respond online, by phone, or by mail. For more information, visit www.loudoun.gov/2020census. Our part of Loudoun has a lot of homes with multiple generations living together, and we need everyone to be counted in order to ensure that we receive everything from appropriate federal funding to the right sized electoral districts.

Small Business / Entrepreneurship Opportunity

Mason Enterprise Center is a small business incubator that helps grow existing companies. The center provides shared office space in an entrepreneurial environment in historic downtown Leesburg. Companies are connected to resources and business coaching from the Small Business Development

Center. For more information, please call 703-466-0466 or visit the Mason [website](#).

Give Feedback on Fairfax Route 50 Study

VDOT will hold a public information meeting on Thursday, January 30 (makeup date for weather-related cancellation is March 12) on a study they are conducting on Route 50. VDOT is looking into safety and operational improvements for two miles between Route 28 (Sully Road) and Stringefellow Road (Route 645). The meeting will take place from 6:30 - 8:30 PM on January 30 at Brookfield Elementary School, located at 4200 Lees Corner Road in Chantilly. The public will also be able to provide input through an online survey, which can be accessed [here](#), or by mailing questions to Mr. Andrew Beacher with VDOT at 4975 Alliance Drive in Fairfax.

LC Transit Study

Members of the public have the opportunity to shape future routes and schedules for Loudoun County Transit's Premium Commuter Bus service. The County is seeking feedback on proposed route and schedule changes for the bus service through an online survey. All responses to the survey will be taken into consideration before a final decision is made on the routes and schedules. The changes are focused on improving the on-time performance of the various routes that travel through Washington DC. For more information, please click [here](#).

Reversing Opioid Overdoses Training Session

Revive! is a session-based program of Loudoun County's Department of Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and Developmental Services Department. The next Revive! session is scheduled for Thursday, February 27 from 5:30 - 7:30 PM at the MHSADS office building, located at 906 Trailview Boulevard in

Leesburg. Training will focus on signs of an opioid overdose and how to respond to an overdose emergency with the administration of naloxone. Any registered participant completing the training will be eligible to receive free naloxone nasal spray from the Loudoun County Health Department. The training is open to the public, but registration is required [here](#).

VDOT Snow Update

VDOT's fleet of snow removal equipment clocks in at 3,500 pieces this year. They are responsible for clearing 14,000 miles of road, and have a \$53.4 million budget to do so. VDOT is encouraging folks not to drive if it is snowing, and to be safe in the case of a winter weather event. If we do get snow, VDOT's goal is to have one passable lane on every road within 24 hours when snowfall is 2-4" and within 48 hours for 4-6". Over 6" is expected to take at least 72 hours. If you feel that your street is missed after these time frames have passed, you can use the resources below to get more information on plowing status and/or report your issue directly to VDOT:

- http://www.virginiadot.org/about/emergency_response.asp

for news releases, important messages, frequently asked questions and links to many other resources, including:

- [@VaDOTNOVA](#) on Twitter -

www.511virginia.org for road conditions and traffic

cameras - www.vdotplows.org for neighborhood status

and locations of plows - <http://www.virginiadot.org>

or 800-FOR-ROAD (367-7623) to report issues

Dulles South Food Pantry

The Dulles South Food Pantry provides food assistance up to twice a month to any person who resides in the school attendance zones for Freedom High School, John Champe High School, Independence High School, Rock Ridge High School and Briar Woods High School. The Pantry also provides one-time emergency food assistance to

anyone in need. The food pantry is open Wednesdays in the historic white chapel at Arcola United Methodist Church, 24757 Evergreen Mills Road, Dulles, VA 20166. Call 703-507-2795 or email info@dsfp.org to schedule an appointment. See the Dulles South Food Pantry's website at <http://www.dsfp.org/> for information on how you can help the food pantry fight local hunger. Donations to the Dulles South Food Pantry, Inc. are tax deductible.

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