



Residents Seek Answers at Traffic Meeting

By [Bonnie Hobbs](#)
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Last week at the Fairfax County Government Center, officials and politicians promoted a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system to better move traffic on I-66 and pave the way for future metroraill here. Afterward, local residents got to ask questions.

Lillian Vogel said a deterrent to people using the Fairfax Connector bus now is "worrying when or if the bus will show up. Will we get technology anytime soon, telling us when the next bus is coming?"

"I'm a proponent of it," said Supervisor Pat Herry (R-Springfield). "I want to know if I have time to drink my coffee and read the paper, or if I have to stand outside and wait for 15 minutes."

Unfortunately, said Kathy Ichter, director of the county's Department of Transportation (FCDOT), "We want to do it, but can't, yet, because of the budget crunch."

Little Rocky Run's Al Francese, a 30-year carpooler, noted that traffic at I-66 and Stringfellow Road is "already backed up from people coming in from the west. Will one of the future BRT lots be located west of Stringfellow?"

"Yes," replied Ichter. "We have land at the Government Center and Fair Oaks and have designated additional stations in Centreville."

Stuart Schwartz, executive director of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, said, "It's important to make the land uses work with this. You need the right mix of uses, and concentration of jobs and housing, to make this successful."

Jeff Parnes, Sully District's representative on the county's Transportation Advisory Committee, said that, under the currently proposed budget, Fairfax Connector service would be reduced in western Fairfax County. "It only runs every half hour, so more people will be driving cars," he said.

Furthermore, he said, "The only parking lot accessible from I-66 is Vienna. So [if electronic messages directed drivers to other stations with vacant parking spaces, when Vienna is full], how would you get to another station easily?"

Supervisor Michael R. Frey (R-Sully) told Parnes that the Board of Supervisors planned to reinstate the Dulles Corridor bus routes designated for elimination. Explained Frey: "They're critical to building the ridership for future rail, and we're happy we were able to find a way to do that."

REGARDING PARKING, Ichter suggested commuters park at the lot on Stringfellow Road and take a bus to the Vienna Metro. But Parnes told her that not everyone drives to Washington, D.C., to work. "People also come here," he said. "And right now, people coming to the west to work in [a large company in] Fair Lakes, for example, don't have a place to get off. They can't get off I-66 at Stringfellow."

Sully District resident Finnuola Quinn wondered about possible pavement-widening. "What about the cost estimate of the construction [of dedicated BRT lanes], relative to the impact on the communities during construction?" she asked.

"We're concerned about the impact to parks, homes and land, too, so we're looking at what's feasible within the existing roadway, rather than expanding it," answered Steven Shapiro, of Dewberry & Davis, deputy project manager of a study examining all the major roads in Northern Virginia. "It's probably the most sensitive issue we'll have to deal with, other than money."

Pleased with the BRT idea, Stephen Vandivere of Cabell's Mill said, "Driving is time wasted; riding is time that can be put to use. I think that would be a powerful marketing tool."

State Sen. Dave Marsden (D-37th) said he's hopeful that something like BRT can be done "without additional public expenditure. Right now, we can make it so — if we drive on a road without a shoulder and have a fender-bender — we can drive to the next shoulder or safe area to exchange information [with the other driver]. All these ideas [espoused during the April 19 meeting] are fabulous. I'm a big fan of BRT, but we're going to have to solve some of our funding problems in Northern Virginia before it can move forward."

MEANWHILE, Gregory Goodwin of the Pender community had a complaint about Routes 50 and 29. "The timing of the traffic lights is very poor," he said. "If you could ease congestion there, it would help."

VDOT regional traffic engineer Hari Sripathi told him, "We have a signal-timing team to deal with that. But on [Routes] 50 and 29, those signals are operating above their capacity and we can't tweak them any more than we've done."

The bottom line, said Herry, is that "if we can improve traffic on I-66, it'll improve traffic on the other roads because people won't use them as much as alternates."



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