

Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations
Membership Meeting of December 14, 2006
MINUTES

The meeting of FCFCA was held at the Packard Center at 7:30 p.m. (Attendance list is attached to file copy.) President John Jennison reviewed the calendar for the year. The minutes for the November 16 membership meeting were unanimously approved. President Jennison introduced Supervisor Dana Kauffman, who is also a member of the Metro Board and who spoke on issues related to Metro.

Program —

Supervisor Kauffman noted the recent tragedy involving the deaths of two Metro track walkers. Track walkers inspect the tracks for cracking and other dangers and are an essential part of rail maintenance.

Metro was established in 1967 by an interstate compact among Maryland, Virginia, and the District. It is a unique multijurisdictional body in which each of the three partners has a veto and is one of the few areas in which regionalism has really worked. The Metro Board consists of twelve members; there are four from each of the three member jurisdictions, of whom two are voting and two nonvoting. The Virginia members are Fairfax County Supervisors Kauffmann and Cathy Hudgins, Bill Euille of Alexandria, and Chris Zimmerman of Arlington.

Metro has about 10,000 employees and a billion dollar budget. Metro riders (on both buses and rail) account for 1.1 million daily trips on a typical week day, of which about 700,000 are by rail. Metro is the second largest rail transit in the country by ridership, larger than other systems like Chicago; New York is the first. It is the sixth largest bus transit system in the country. Unlike other transit systems, it has seen steady growth in ridership until this year, when the growth rate flattened to about 2 percent. Metro is one of the largest parking operators in the country (following Disney World) with 60,000 parking spots; there has been some discussion of contracting out the parking service. The system faces a severe limit because it is a two-track system. Other transit systems with more tracks can operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, because they can close tracks for maintenance and still operate trains normally on the other tracks.

Metro saves the region 10 million tons of air pollutants a year and 80 million gallons of gas; the estimated reduction in car ridership on area roads is the equivalent of 1400 lane miles or 11.5 percent of current lane miles. Its operation cuts commuting time for all commuters in the area significantly by keeping cars off the road. Federal employees make up about 47 percent of the peak ridership; in Fairfax County, federal employee passengers are especially concentrated toward the southeast part of the county.

No US transit system can support itself from fares alone. Metro relies on contributions from local governments and the federal government. It has also pursued advertising revenues and there may be some more opportunity there. Metro is the only major US transit system for which there is no dedicated source of revenue. Most of the budget goes toward operating expenses. In Virginia, contributions come from the localities, not the state; in Maryland, contributions are from the state, so the Maryland Board members are gubernatorial appointees. Fairfax County contributes about \$60 million annually for operating and capital costs. Federal support is received only for capital expenses; there is no federal subsidy for operating costs. There was an attempt by Congressman Davis in the last Congress to secure substantial federal funds provided the localities committed other funds first and certain other conditions were met; this did not pass the US Senate and the bill is now dead. It could be submitted again in the next Congress.

The original plan for the rail system has been completed, although rail to Dulles will be next and other expansions are possible; Supervisor Kauffman strongly supports the tunnel option for Dulles rail. For Metro, this is a fundamental change from the three decades during which new station construction was a constant. Maintenance issues have become a concern due to aging equipment and deferred maintenance. The mean time between failures has been going down for both bus and rail, which means increased service issues. In addition, about a third of Metro's mechanics will be eligible to retire in the next few

years. Metro's land use policies have varied widely, but currently the system relies on local governments to set the bar, and generally follows their preferences. The Metro Board is currently in the process of adding an Inspector General.

The recently reported fare increases and other changes were staff proposals at the time they were reported. The Metro Board has just met on the proposals and there is some time before final decisions will be made. One idea is to encourage off-peak ridership with fare differentials; the main unused capacity of the system is, of course, in the off-peak hours.

Supervisor Kauffman answered questions on best practices, bathrooms in stations, musical performers in stations, paratransit (transit for the disabled), Smartrip cards, parking, adding more standing room or longer cars, Metro's emergency preparedness, signage, and the transit impact of the BRAC changes to staffing at Fort Belvoir, and the Tysons rail tunnel. He advocated use of the GSA warehouses near the Franconia-Springfield station for possible use for the base staff expansion, since they are so close to the Metro; the issue has been that these are on GSA rather than DoD land.

In responding to the question on emergency preparedness, Supervisor Kauffman made a special point of his pride in Metro's performance on September 11, 2001, which he described as one of the bright, shining moments in its history. He noted that the system continued to operate despite a request from DC police that it close down, and that Metro rail and bus operators returned to the city over and over without consideration of personal danger, providing a crucial means of evacuation for workers in the city.

Business Meeting —

- a. Scott Schlegel, the new Treasurer, presented the Treasurer's Report, which was approved unanimously. The previous Treasurer, Jeff Parnes, presented the proposed budget for the year, which included actual figures for the months to date. It was approved unanimously.
- b. Bill Hanks presented the CO2 resolution on behalf of the Resolution Committee, which was unanimously recommended to the membership by the Federation Board. Flint Webb as Environmental Chair thanked Sally Ormsby for carrying the resolution forward at the previous Board meeting in his absence and accepted a friendly amendment to add language asking the county to set an emissions reduction goal. The resolution, as amended, was adopted unanimously. Flint and Sally will draft language for a transmittal letter and forward that to President John Jennison.
- c. Carol Hawn noted the next newsletter deadline is December 29.
- d. Sally Ormsby presented a resolution to add a position on traffic red-light cameras to the current Federation legislative package. Localities had previously been permitted to use these cameras to detect cars that ran red lights, but the provision was allowed to lapse by the 2005 General Assembly. The resolution was defeated with 5 in favor and 14 against.
- e. President John Jennison noted that Transportation Committee co-chair Earl Flanagan has resigned from that position effective December 31 because of his new appointment as a Planning Commissioner for the Mount Vernon District. He thanked him for his service to the Federation and presented him with a Federation mug.
- f. Steve DelBianco reported that, at President John Jennison's request, he had brought with him the McLean Civic Association's recently passed resolution in support of the Tysons tunnel. With the permission of Transportation Committee co-chairs Earl Flanagan and Roger Hoskins, he read the resolution, with the idea of adopting a similar Federation resolution. After questions arose about some details, the resolution was sent to the Transportation Committee for immediate consideration.

g. Charles Dane, chairman of the Education Committee, noted that the next Federation membership meeting will be on education. The Education Committee will review the superintendent's budget once it is available.

h. Jeff Parnes reported that he has made some enhancements to the membership database. He will work with John, Carol, and Scott to gather all new data that comes in, to keep the database current.

i. Environmental Committee co-chair Flint Webb thanked the membership again for passing the CO2 resolution and noted some air quality issues. A recent Department of Energy analysis of the Mirant coal plant predicts that the excess deaths caused by the operation of the plant is estimated to be 3.8 per year.

j. Jeff Parnes noted that he is making changes to the website to reduce or eliminate spam e-mails, a process which has been time-consuming because of the number of web pages involved. He also noted that only he, as the webmaster, can send e-mails to the protected list of all Federation members.

k. Steve DelBianco, chair of the Land Use Committee, presented a resolution on minimum lot widths, the fifth in a series of resolutions on zoning changes. It was unanimously approved as amended.

l. Jeff Parnes reported the next Sully District Council meeting will be a report by legislators on transportation funding. Roger Hoskins reported the Mason council has changed to quarterly meetings.

m. Sally Ormsby reported that the Citizen of the Year banquet will be March 11 at the Fairview Marriott.

Next Membership Meeting: January 18, "Education in Fairfax County" with Fairfax County Public Schools deputy superintendent Dr. Richard Moniuszko and CFO Diedra McLaughlin

Next Board Meeting: December 21, 2006.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.