

Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations
Membership Meeting of February 21, 2008
MINUTES

The meeting of FCFCA was held at the Packard Center at 7:30 p.m. (Attendance list is attached to file copy.) The preceding month's planned meeting on January 17 was canceled due to inclement weather.

President Jeff Parnes introduced the evening's program, which included two topics. The first was a presentation by Dominion Virginia Power regarding the proposed new power transmission line, as a counterpoint to the presentation in opposition to the line from Virginia's Commitment at the November membership meeting. The second was the originally scheduled topic of the meeting, presentations on several transportation subjects.

Program —

The Dominion Virginia Power presentation was introduced by Phil Sparks, the local senior manager for state and local affairs. He apologized for being unable to attend the November meeting due to a schedule conflict with a meeting at the Council of Governments (COG). He introduced Kevin Curtis, director of transmission planning and marketing for Dominion Virginia Power.

Mr. Curtis provided a color printout of a slide presentation, which he then reviewed. Among other points, the presentation noted that the population of northern Virginia has grown by about 43 percent since 1990, but the energy demand has increased by about 73 percent. He said that at present Dominion Virginia Power imports about 10 percent of its energy needs; it has a conservation program; and it encourages renewable energy sources. However, he said there is still a significant long-term challenge in meeting the projected demand for energy in the region, which has been named one of the nation's two "critical congestion areas" by the Department of Energy. In the short term, he said, the transmission line is needed in service by 2011 to avoid rolling blackouts in northern Virginia at times of peak demand. The line would be located within or adjacent to the right of way for the existing line. According to a study by the consulting firm KEMA, it represents the least intrusive, least adverse impact solution, he said. He noted that the next step will be an evidentiary hearing on February 25. In response to a question, he said construction needs to begin in April 2009 for the line to be ready for the summer of 2011. In response to another question he said that the additional nuclear plant for which Dominion Power has applied would be available no sooner than 2014.

President Jeff Parnes then introduced the speakers on transportation. Roger Boothe from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) spoke on the Beltway HOT (high-occupancy/toll) lanes project, with additional comments from Nick Nicholson, also of VDOT. The HOT lanes are a private-public partnership with Fluor and TransUrban. The project involves widening the Beltway by two lanes over the section of the Beltway from Springfield to just north of the Dulles Toll Road (but ending before Old Georgetown Pike), then allocating two inside lanes to high-occupancy vehicles, vehicles choosing to pay a toll, and rapid transit buses. As with HOV lanes, motorcycles will not pay a toll. The Beltway HOT lanes are due to come online in December 2012.

Tolls will vary according to traffic in the HOT lanes, with the goal of managing traffic volume to ensure a predictable travel time. They will be collected electronically by use of transponders in the vehicles, similar to SmartTag transponders, and will go to the concessionaire. The tolling will be "at speed," meaning that vehicles will need to slow down somewhat on entry, but not much. Virginia state police will enforce the HOV restriction for those not paying a toll and not qualifying as high-occupancy vehicles.

The project is a capacity improvement for the Beltway that will also provide connectivity for transit (via the bus rapid transit) and for existing HOV lanes. Planning has included environmental aspects. Major interchanges will be rebuilt so that the new bridges or overpasses are wide enough to allow the full number of lanes underneath. Almost every overpass will include bicycle and pedestrian treatment.

Many questions involved the likely toll rates, which will be high, and concerns about possible congestion chokepoints prior to getting to the HOT lanes or after exiting from them. In response to other questions, Nick Nicholson stated that a study of rail on the Beltway had found that approach was not feasible. He also made the point that he considers road capacity for major routes to be a safety issue; without enough capacity, congestion spills over into neighborhood streets that were not designed for commuter traffic.

The next speaker, Mark Canale of the Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT), is the Fairfax County coordinator in addressing the major relocation of personnel to Fort Belvoir under BRAC (the federal Base Realignment and Closing Commission). The county's BRAC staff includes six positions: himself, two transportation planners, and three land use planners. Issues include transportation, impact on local schools, and county services. He began by noting that BRAC mandated that an additional 19,300 positions will move to Fort Belvoir and associated areas by September 2011. In practice, the military, civilian, and contract workforce associated with Fort Belvoir will increase from 21,500 to 47,500. This increase includes discretionary moves by the Army above and beyond the BRAC requirements.

The major agencies involved are the National Geospatial Agency (NGA), the US Medical Command (part of the former Walter Reed), the Washington headquarters service or WHS, and various Army units now in leased space, usually referred to as Army Lease. The current plan is for the NGA to go to the former Engineering Proving Grounds (EPG) property south of Springfield, the hospital and the Army Lease group to the South Post on Fort Belvoir, and the WHS to one of several possible destinations. At one point, it was planned for the WHS to go to the old GSA warehouses in Springfield, but there are now two other possibilities, the Mark Center in Alexandria and the Victory Center in Alexandria.

The changes resulting from BRAC will include a projected 6.5 million additional square feet in building construction and another 7 million square feet in parking. The transition also emphasizes a shift from transit use by employees to vehicle use. He also noted that the impact of the BRAC project and other large projects has been treated in a piecemeal fashion. Planning for the Army Museum and its impact has been handled separately, for example. The Army has estimated that the needed road improvements to accommodate the BRAC workforce changes will cost \$626 million. Fairfax County and VDOT have estimated the cost at \$1.6 billion. Very limited road improvements (some ramps and the like) have been DAR-certified by the Army, meaning they would be paid for as part of this transition. Fort Belvoir has also committed to hiring a traffic demand management (TDM) staff person in 2009. The missing segment of the Fairfax County Parkway, from Rolling Road to Fullerton Road, will be completed. Funding of \$114 million had been set aside to build it, but it will cost \$174 million, so not all aspects of that project will be built. Federal assistance in paying for the many improvements required to accommodate the BRAC impact is critical, but has been hard to obtain. The area is competing for resources with many other localities affected by BRAC. Growth installations also attract less sympathy than areas with base closures.

The third and final speaker was Nick Nicholson, who described the transportation management planning (TMP) for major planned projects, including the Beltway HOT lanes and rail to Dulles. TMP aims at maintaining traffic mobility during the construction period and was used recently for the Wilson Bridge project and the Springfield Mixing Bowl project. Challenges include loss of road shoulders and off-hours lane closures. The plan for the upcoming projects includes obtaining and sharing real-time information on congestion on the Beltway (including via websites); placing a high priority on clearing incidents rapidly, with increased safety service patrols and more state police; and the acquisition of live traffic information from sensors and detectors in scheduling contractor closure requests. Other efforts will include subsidizing use of transit, encouraging flexible work hours, adding park and ride lots and a bus circulator service, and coordinated efforts to get information out ahead of time about major closures.

Business Meeting —

a. The minutes for the December 13 membership meeting, as published in the January newsletter, were unanimously approved.

b. The Treasurer's Report was reviewed and received.

c. A proposed fax to Mary Peters, the US Secretary of Transportation, reiterating the Federation's support for rail to Dulles, was approved unanimously.

d. Jeff Parnes suggested the possibility of a joint board meeting with the Montgomery County Federation at some time. He also noted the upcoming COG community leadership institute and need for a citizen representative to the COG Transportation Planning Board. There was also a discussion of the request for art judges for community art work (art in public places) at a particular site.

e. Carol Hawn stated that the newsletter deadline was March 9.

f. Charles Dane noted that he had circulated a memorandum on the status of the FCPS budget and the views of the Education Committee.

g. Flint Webb stated that the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) had approved and suggested for adoption the PM 2.5 particle state implementation plan (SIP). He had hoped to prepare testimony for the membership meeting's review on the upcoming policy plan amendment regarding upstream protection, but had not been able to do so in time. Instead, he would testify as an individual (not on behalf of the Federation) at the hearing, the following Monday.

h. Sally Ormsby reviewed some key pieces of state legislation on issues that the Federation has included in its legislative package, including the cash proffers/impact fees bill, redistricting reform (defeated in subcommittee), tree conservation, and payday lending.

i. Charles Dane reported that he is returning to a focus on Federation membership after dealing with the pressing Education issues related to the FCPS budget. We have another eight or nine member associations more than the same time last year.

j. Esther Ferington reported on behalf of Art Wells for the Braddock District Council that the Braddock workshops on putting the green in Braddock (beautification) and helping seniors to stay in place were reasonably well-attended and successful. Roger Hoskin reported that the Mason District Council will be seeking greater visibility. Jim Davis reported on the Mount Vernon Council's last meeting, which included a discussion of the problem of systematic delivery of unwanted newspapers. Sally Ormsby reported that the next Providence District Council meeting would be on the school and county budgets. Jeff Parnes reported on a recent meeting of the Sully Council on the Route 50 corridor, with Loudon board members.

k. Jeff Parnes reminded those present that the next Federation Board meeting is March 6, due to the county budget timing. Also, the next membership meeting is March 27, which is the fourth rather than the third Thursday, for the same reason.

Next Membership Meeting: March 27 – County's Proposed FY09 Budget Presentation by the County Executive (4th Thursday)

Next Board Meeting: March 6, review of proposed position on county budget.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.