

Residents Plan for 2030  
Ideas, public input, sought in interactive forum.  
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Photos by Mirza Kurspahic/The Connection  
Steve Cerny, left, recommends that metro be extended to serve the new population expected to move close to Fort Belvoir in the southern part of Fairfax County. Tim Donohue and Roger Diedrich discuss other ideas. Reston residents and other members of the community had a chance to help transportation planners plan where to add future residential and commercial development in the metropolitan region, and what supporting infrastructure needed to be provided for that development.



Mike Corrigan, left, and Mike Catalano discuss ways to bring more commercial development to the eastern part of the metropolitan region.



Population and job growth in the metropolitan Washington, D.C., region is expected to continue over the next two decades. The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) is projecting an increase of 1.9 million residents, and 1.3 million jobs, by the year 2030. Even without the projected growth, the region needs transportation improvements. "People are spending more time in their cars," said Sarah Crawford, a transportation planner with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC). Crawford said financial constraints are impacting the region's ability to deal with transportation issues. Also, she said, land use decisions are made at the local level of government while transportation decisions are made at the state level, creating a disconnect between two areas that should be connected. To hear ideas on solutions to growth-related issues, TPB and the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations held an interactive forum at Sunrise Valley Elementary School in Reston last week on Thursday night. Crawford said the forum's intent is to encourage people to think outside the box, providing planners with fresh ideas. "How do we stretch the dollar," she asked a room of about 40 participants. The participants were split up into groups, each of which was given a map of the metropolitan region with yellow and green dots, labeling the projected housing and job growth in the area. Without financial constraints, they were asked to rearrange the dots into areas they felt were most appropriate and to draw new transportation infrastructure that could support the future residential and employment centers. Another MWCOC transportation planner, Darren Smith, familiarized the participants with four major issues affecting the region's planning:

- \* Job growth is outpacing household growth.
  - \* Workers are living farther away from their jobs.
  - \* There are major disparities in terms of residential and job growth between the eastern and western parts of the region.
  - \* And he projected growth would be located outside of the area supported by mass transit.
- “Job growth is outpacing household growth, and we are forced to import workers from West Virginia and Southern Pennsylvania,” said Smith.

PARTICIPANTS’ DISCUSSIONS within the groups included what types of jobs the region would attract in the coming decades, how far to extend metro lines and concerns over the projected salaries for the new jobs. Bill Lecos, president of the Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce, said if he could do anything to change how the region developed he would travel back in time 40 years to fund public education in Prince George’s County, Md., and Washington, D.C. “That is what forced people and jobs [to the western part of the region],” said Lecos. □A member of Lecos’s group, Flint Webb, said he thought the area around the Pentagon would no longer be a job magnet it once was. Lecos disagreed, saying the existing office space in the area would attract companies from Washington who could still be close to the nation’s capital, but would not pay the top dollar for the land in the city. The group agreed that a metrorail bridge should be built across Potomac River, connecting Rockville to Tysons Corner.

Reston resident Steve Cerny, a member of another group, said his group showed no enthusiasm for widening of roads to accommodate the new people and jobs. “Our solution for transportation is rail,” said Cerny. His group also brought up the concern that there is a lot of poverty in Prince George’s County. “They need the jobs there and they want the jobs,” said Cerny. Jody Bennett’s group wanted to know what the expected level of income would be for the new jobs.

“There was a lot of housing in Loudoun County, so we added some jobs there,” said John Jennison, president of the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations, of his group’s findings. “One person just refused to put more jobs. They just weren’t going to fit here,” said Jennison.

JOHN SWANSON, a transportation planner with MWCOG, said the planners would take these ideas and test them in different scenarios to find out which of them had highest payoffs, were most realistic and most desirable. He encouraged further public input and feedback from the participants. “Are we looking at the right things? Should we be looking at other things,” asked Swanson.

Webb said the workshop did not take into consideration non-motorized transit — bike lanes and walking lanes. Kevin Deasy, a resident in the area for the past 30 years, said technology was left out of the discussion. “There’s been no mention of what technology might be able to do for us. It could allow us to do a lot more with our existing roads,” he said.

Fran Kieffer said she thought a lot seemed to depend on mass transit. “We need to make it easier to get people around, because we’re really choking right now,” said Kieffer. Fairfax County Supervisor Catherine Hudgins (D-Hunter Mill) said ideas such as the ones shared with the planners on Thursday night were needed to tackle the issues concerning the region’s growth.