



District of Columbia  
Bowie  
College Park  
Frederick County  
Gaithersburg  
Greenbelt  
Montgomery County  
Prince George's County  
Rockville  
Takoma Park  
Alexandria  
Arlington County  
Fairfax  
Fairfax County  
Falls Church  
Loudoun County  
Manassas  
Manassas Park  
Prince William County

**MEMORANDUM****March 11, 2004**

**TO:** Transportation Planning Board

**FROM:** Ronald F. Kirby *RFK*  
Director, Department of  
Transportation Planning

**RE:** Letters Sent/Received Since the February 18 TPB Meeting

The attached letters were sent/received since the February 18 TPB meeting. The letters will be reviewed under Agenda #5 of the March 17 TPB agenda.

In addition to these letters, a large number of letters, faxes and e-mails has been received concerning the Inter-County Connector project. While these latter communications are too numerous for inclusion in the TPB mailout packet, copies will be available for TPB members and other interested parties at the TPB meeting on March 17.

Attachments





U.S. Department  
of Transportation

Federal Transit Administration  
Region III  
1760 Market Street, Suite 500  
Philadelphia, PA 19103  
215-656-7100  
215-656-7260 (fax)

Federal Highway Administration  
DC Division  
1990 K Street, N.W.  
Suite 510  
Washington, DC 20006  
202-219-3536  
202-219-3545 (fax)

FEB 23 2004

Mr. Chris Zimmerman, Chairman  
National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board  
c/o Mr. Ronald Kirby, Director of Transportation Planning  
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments  
777 North Capital Street, NW, Suite 300  
Washington, D.C. 20002-4201

Re: Conformity Determination for the 2003 Constrained Long Range Transportation Plan and the  
FY 2004-2009 Transportation Improvement Program for the Washington Metropolitan Area

Dear Chairman Zimmerman:

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) have completed our review of the Air Quality Conformity Analysis for the 2003 Constrained Long Range Plan (CLRP) and the FY 2004-2009 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the Washington Metropolitan Area, adopted by the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) on December 17, 2003. Our review has been coordinated with the FHWA Maryland and Virginia Division offices and the Region III office of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

FHWA and FTA find that the 2003 CLRP and the FY 2004-2009 TIP submitted by the TPB on January 7, 2003 conform to the region's State Implementation Plans, and that the conformity determination has been performed in accordance with the Transportation Conformity Rule (40 CFR Part 93), as amended. In accordance with the provision of Section 134, Title 23 USC, we find the urban planning process for the National Capital Region is a coordinated, comprehensive, and continuing process.

EPA, in a letter to FHWA's District of Columbia Division dated February 19, 2004, (attached), acknowledges its review and includes technical documentation that supports the conformity finding of the region's 2003 CLRP and FY 2004-2009 TIP.

Any questions concerning this approval action should be directed to Sandra Jackson, FHWA District of Columbia Division, 202-219-3521, or Anthony Tarone, FTA Region III, 215-656-7061.

Sincerely,

Herman C. Shipman  
Acting Regional Administrator  
Federal Transit Administration

Gary L. Henderson  
Division Administrator  
Federal Highway Administration

Enclosure



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION III  
1650 Arch Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103-2029

Mr. Gary L. Henderson  
Divisional Administrator  
Federal Highway Administration,  
District of Columbia Division  
1900 K Street, NW  
Suite 510  
Washington, D.C. 20002

February 19, 2004

Dear Mr. Henderson:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region III has reviewed the Conformity Determination for the 2003 Constrained Long-Range Plan and the FY 2004-2009 Metropolitan Washington Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) as adopted by the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) and submitted to us by the Federal Highway Administration on January 22, 2004. EPA has reviewed the Conformity Determination in accordance with the procedures and criteria of the Transportation Conformity Rule contained in 40 CFR part 93, sections 93.106, 93.108, 93.110, 93.111, 93.112, 93.113(b), 93.113(c) and 93.118.

Based upon our review, we concur with the Conformity Determination for the 2003 Constrained Long-Range Plan and the FY 2004-2009 Metropolitan Washington Transportation Improvement Program as adopted by the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board. Enclosed please find a copy of our detailed evaluation entitled, "Technical Support Document for Review of the Conformity Determination of the 2003 Constrained Long-Range Plan and the FY 2004-2009 Metropolitan Washington Transportation Improvement Program".

Please feel free to call Marcia Spink Associate Director, Air Division at (215)-814-2104 or Martin T. Kotsch, at (215)-814-3335 to discuss this review.

Sincerely,

Judith M. Katz, Director  
Air Protection Division

Enclosure

cc: Valencia Thomson (FHWA, MD)  
Sandra Jackson (FHWA, DC)  
Ed Sundra (FHWA, VA)  
Sam Curling (VDOT)  
Howard Simons (MDOT)



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

Federal Transit Administration  
Region III  
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215-656-7100  
215-656-7260 (fax)

Federal Highway Administration  
DC Division  
1990 K Street, N.W.  
Suite 510  
Washington, DC 20006  
202-219-3536  
202-219-3545 (fax)

MAR 4 2004

Mr. Dan Tangherlini  
Director  
District of Columbia Department of Transportation  
2000 14<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20009

Re: District of Columbia's FY 2004 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program

Dear Mr. Tangherlini:

We are pleased to inform you that the joint Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) review of the District of Columbia's FY 2004 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) has been completed. Based on this review FHWA and FTA have determined that the STIP is consistent with the Statewide Planning and Metropolitan Planning Final Rules of October 28, 1993. As a result, we approve the FY 2004 STIP.

This STIP approval does not constitute a final commitment of Federal funds. Federal funding for projects included in the STIP is available when FHWA approves a request for project authorization or when FTA approves a grant application. FHWA will review any highway project amendments and FTA will review any transit project amendments to the STIP, as needed.

In addition, FHWA and FTA, in a joint letter to the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments dated February 23, 2004, approved the conformity determination for the 2003 Constrained Long Range Plan and the FY 2004-2009 Transportation Improvement Program for the Washington Metropolitan Area.

Please direct any questions concerning this approval action to Sandra Jackson, FHWA District of Columbia Division, 202-219-3521, or Anthony Tarone, FTA Region III, 215-656-7061.

Sincerely,

Herman C. Shipman  
Acting Regional Administrator  
Federal Transit Administration

Gary L. Henderson  
Division Administrator  
Federal Highway Administration

cc: Maurice Keys, D.C. DOT  
Ronald Kirby, MWCOG



# FREDERICKSBURG AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Fredericksburg City  
Spotsylvania County  
Stafford County

Robert C. Gibbons  
Chairman

Stephen Manster  
FAMPO  
Administrator

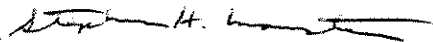
February 17, 2004

Mr. Ronald Kirby  
Director of Transportation  
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments  
777 North Capitol Street, NE, Suite 300  
Washington, D.C. 20002-4239

Dear Mr. Kirby,

As per our previous conversations, I am hereby transmitting Resolution FAMPO 04-13, adopted unanimously by the Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization at its February 4<sup>th</sup> meeting. The resolution concerns the boundary between our Metropolitan Planning Organization and Transportation Management Area regions and our commitment to providing required services to our urbanized areas. We ask that this matter be placed on the agenda of the next meeting of the Transportation Planning Board for its concurrence. Please notify me of the action taken by the TPB, so I may forward the actions of our two MPOs to the Governor. Thank you very much for your consideration and assistance.

Sincerely,



Stephen H. Manster  
Administrator





# FREDERICKSBURG AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Fredericksburg City  
Spotsylvania County  
Stafford County

Robert C. Gibbons  
Chairman

Stephen Manster  
FAMPO  
Administrator

## FAMPO RESOLUTION FY 04-13

### A RESOLUTION TO CONCUR IN THE BOUNDARY FOR TRANSPORTATION PLANNING FOR THE FAMPO REGION

**WHEREAS**, the Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (FAMPO) region is the most rapidly growing metropolitan area of the Commonwealth; and

**WHEREAS**, the FAMPO region contains some of the most heavily congested areas due to the rapid growth and the increasing amounts of traffic traveling through the region; and

**WHEREAS**, the U.S. Census Bureau's designation of the urbanized boundary for the Washington, DC-Maryland-Virginia urbanized area, based on the 2000 Census, places a portion of Stafford County in the Washington, DC-Maryland-Virginia urbanized area; and

**WHEREAS**, federal law and regulation require that an urbanized area be entirely within the same Metropolitan Planning Organization's boundary unless the governor designates to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) otherwise; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Supervisors of Stafford County has expressed their preference that all of Stafford County remain within the FAMPO planning boundary;

**WHEREAS**, the portion of Stafford County placed in the Washington, DC-Maryland-Virginia urbanized area has been designated as part of an urbanized area having a population greater than 200,000; and

**WHEREAS**, an urbanized area having a population greater than 200,000 is designated by law as a Transportation Management Area (TMA) and is thereby responsible for meeting additional transportation planning and environment requirements beyond those of an urbanized area under 200,000 in population; and

**WHEREAS**, FAMPO has committed to meeting the TMA responsibilities for transportation planning and environment requirements, including providing an organization structure which grants voting membership on the MPO policy board to include representation of local elected officials, officials of agencies that administer or operate major modes or systems of transportation (transit operators, sponsors of major local airports, maritime ports, rail operators, including all transportation agencies that were included in the MPO on June 1, 1991), and appropriate State officials;

**WHEREAS**, FAMPO has developed and will maintain a continuing and comprehensive transportation planning process, carried out by FAMPO in cooperation with the State and transit operators, which includes the development of a long-range transportation plan and a transportation improvement plan and provides compliance with the public participation components of federal transportation planning law and regulation, and meets the requirements of the American with Disabilities Act, the Civil Rights Act, and provides an opportunity for at least one formal public meeting annually to review planning assumptions and the plan development process and an opportunity for at least one formal public meeting during the TIP development process; and

**WHEREAS**, FAMPO will develop a Congestion Management System (CMS) which will provide information on transportation system performance, usage, and efficiency, and proposed strategies to alleviate congestion, and for effective management of new and existing transportation facilities through the use of travel demand reduction and operational management strategies; and

**WHEREAS**, FAMPO has developed and will maintain a Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) developed in cooperation with the State and operators of publicly owned transit that meets the requirements of 23 CFR part 420, subpart A in sufficient detail to include who will perform the work, the schedule for completing it and the products that will be produced, and document planning activities to be performed with funds provided under title 23, U.S.C., and the Federal Transit Act;

**WHEREAS**, a formal certification of the FAMPO's transportation planning process by FHWA and FTA is required at least every three years for a TMA that is a nonattainment or maintenance area for transportation related pollutants to assure that the MPO's transportation planning process is adequate to ensure conformity of plans and programs in accordance with procedures contained in 40 CFR part 51; and

**WHEREAS**, FAMPO must show that its transportation planning process includes air quality planning and is in conformance with the State Implementation Plan; and

**WHEREAS**, FAMPO has coordinated with and entered into agreements with the Washington Council of Government's (WashCOG) Transportation Planning Board to ensure that portion of Stafford County included in the Washington, DC-Maryland-Virginia urbanized area is provided the transportation planning process prescribed by law and regulations; and

**WHEREAS**, it is the desire of FAMPO to establish a single regional transportation planning process supported by the member jurisdictions.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE FREDERICKSBURG AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION REQUESTS THAT THE GOVERNOR DESIGNATE THE FAMPO REGION TO INCLUDE ALL OF STAFFORD COUNTY AND SO NOTIFY THE FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION AND THE FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION THAT THE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS FOR THE FAMPO REGION WILL CONFORM TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF FEDERAL LAW AND REGULATION; AND**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT THE FREDERICKSBURG AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION REQUESTS THAT THE WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENT'S TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD CONCUR IN THIS REQUEST TO THE GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA.**

**Adopted by the FAMPO Policy Committee at its meeting on February 4, 2004.**

Signature Block – FAMPO Resolution 04-13

  
Chairman, Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning  
Organization/Date



**METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD  
777 North Capitol Street, N.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20002**

**RESOLUTION ON AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE  
NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD  
AND THE FREDERICKSBURG AREA METROPOLITAN  
PLANNING ORGANIZATION ON CONSISTENCY AND  
CONFORMITY OF PLANS, PROGRAMS, AND PROJECTS**

**WHEREAS**, the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) is the officially designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Metropolitan Washington area; and

**WHEREAS**, the Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (FAMPO) is the officially designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Fredericksburg area; and

**WHEREAS**, Stafford County, Virginia is a member of the FAMPO, and is included in the Washington DC-MD-VA non-attainment area; and

**WHEREAS**, under the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, plans, programs, and projects for Stafford County are required to be included in the TPB's air quality conformity analysis and determination for the Washington non-attainment area; and

**WHEREAS**, under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), "if more than one metropolitan planning organization has authority within a metropolitan area or an area which is designated as a non-attainment area for ozone or carbon monoxide under the Clean Air Act, each metropolitan planning organization shall consult with the other metropolitan planning organizations designated for such area and the State in the coordination of plans and programs;" and

**WHEREAS**, on June 16, 1993 the TPB executed an agreement with the Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization to ensure consistency and conformity of the plans, programs, and projects of the TPB and FAMPO; and

**WHEREAS**, in a letter of October 4, 1994 the Federal Highway Administration advised the Virginia Department of Transportation that "Either all of Stafford County has to be in one or the other metropolitan planning area, or part of Stafford County can be in FAMPO's metropolitan planning area and the other part in TPB's metropolitan planning area. None of

the area of Stafford County can be in both metropolitan planning areas."; and

**WHEREAS**, Stafford County has requested that the County be designated as completely within the FAMPO's planning area;

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:** the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) hereby executes amendments to its June 16, 1993 agreement, as defined in Attachment A, with the Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (FAMPO), to reflect Stafford County's request, and ensure continued consistency and conformity of plans, programs, and projects of the TPB and FAMPO.

Adopted by the Transportation Planning Board at its regular meeting on December 21, 1994.

## ATTACHMENT A

### Agreement between the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) and the Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (FAMPO) on Consistency and Conformity of Plans, Programs, and Projects

Recognizing that Stafford County, Virginia, is a member of the FAMPO and is included in the Washington DC-MD-VA non-attainment area for ozone, and has requested that it be designated as completely within the FAMPO's planning area, TPB and FAMPO have agreed upon the following procedures for ensuring consistency and conformity of their plans, programs, and projects:

1. The TPB agrees that Stafford County be designated as completely within the FAMPO's planning area and that Stafford County not be a part of the planning area covered by the TPB, and not be a member of the TPB. Transportation plans, programs and projects in Stafford County will be included in the Long-Range Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) developed by the Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (FAMPO), and will not be included in the TPB's Long-Range Transportation Plan and six-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).
2. While TPB and FAMPO will develop their plans, programs, and projects separately, TPB and FAMPO will coordinate their data collection and analysis activities, and will consult with each other to ensure that their plans, programs, and projects are integrated and consistent.
3. In accordance with a mutually acceptable schedule, FAMPO will submit its plans, programs and projects for Stafford County to the TPB for inclusion in the TPB's air quality conformity analysis and determination for the Washington non-attainment area. In the event that the TPB is unable to make a conformity determination due to an issue relating to the plans, programs, or projects submitted by FAMPO for Stafford County, the TPB will return such plans, programs, or projects with a detailed explanation of the conformity issue for reconsideration by FAMPO.
4. Stafford County will be involved in all aspects of the TPB's air quality conformity analysis and determination.
  - Formal involvement for Stafford County will be provided through the Virginia Department of Transportation on the TPB, and through Stafford County's membership on MWAQC and its Technical Staff Coordination Committee (TSCC).

- Informal involvement by Stafford County will be provided through participation by representatives of Stafford County and FAMPO in COG and TPB committees and processes concerned with conformity, including receipt of all materials and participation in all meetings, discussions, and reviews.





## Government of the District of Columbia

Office of the Deputy Mayor  
for Planning and Economic Development

March 4, 2004

Mr. Christopher Zimmerman  
Chair  
National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board  
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments  
777 North Capital Street, N.E., Suite 300  
Washington, D.C. 20002-4239

**SUBJECT: Incentive Programs for DC Businesses**

Dear Mr. Zimmerman:

The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development, in partnership with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and the District of Columbia Public Library (DCPL), inaugurated the Enhanced Business Information Center, or e-BIC, on September 24, 2003. Since that date, the e-BIC has been helping to give existing small businesses as well as prospective business owners access to comprehensive, cutting-edge services that have never before been available in a single facility.

Among the benefits that the e-BIC brings to DC Government agencies is the opportunity to reach out to their constituents and provide information at a very central and accessible location. So far, four district offices (Office of Tax and Revenue, Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Contracting and Procurement and Office of Local Business Development) use the e-BIC's space to present or provide office hours to start-ups and small businesses.

A next stage in this process is to introduce the many incentive programs that the DC Government offers. We invite you to participate in a series of 1.5 hour afternoon classes on DC's important incentive programs. We plan to include the following agencies:

- Department of Employment Services (DOES): Opportunities for Employers
  - Customized Training Program
  - Welfare-to-Work Credit
  - Work Opportunity Credit
- US SBA: Hub Zone Program
- National Capital Revitalization Corporation: Economic Development Finance Corporation (Small Business Loans)

Christopher Zimmerman

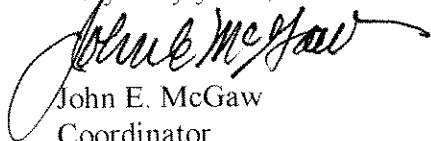
Page two

March 4, 2004

- Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED):  
Neighborhood Revitalization
  - Commercial Property Acquisition and Development
  - Commercial District Technical Assistance Program
- Department of Housing and Community Development: Community Development Block Grants
- DC Department of Health: DC Brownfields Program
- DMPED: DC Revenue Bond Program, Tax Increment Financing, and Enterprise Zone Incentives
- DMPED / Office of Tax and Revenue: Net 2000
- DC Fiscal Policy Institute: DC Earned Income Tax Credit
- Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments: Guaranteed Ride Home
- WMATA: Metrochek / SmartBenefits

Barry Margeson, DMPED's representative at the e-BIC, will contact you for an appointment to discuss the involvement of your office in this important initiative. Thank you very much for your assistance.

Very truly yours,



John E. McGaw  
Coordinator

Commercial Revitalization and Small Business Development



February 20, 2004

Mr. Ronald Kirby  
Director of Transportation Planning  
WMCOG/TPB  
777 North Capital Street, NE, Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Kirby: *Ron*

I want to personally update you on activities associated with the Regional Mobility Planning Session on January 9, 2004. Feedback from the session attendees indicates that there are opportunities for us to work cooperatively to implement more immediate, lower-cost management and operational solutions to our regional mobility challenges. Individual efforts are clearly underway to respond to these challenges.

All of us recognized that travelers in the region have challenged us to provide immediate mobility relief. As noted by the Washington Post; travelers want "Solutions Now." While travelers in the region are aware of our various planning efforts to expand transportation system capacity, they are unwilling to wait 10 years for some relief. Several of us have recently initiated efforts to provide relief, but more is needed.

Panelists at the January 9<sup>th</sup> session identified a number of other promising opportunities: examples included regional interoperability of technology, more broadly adopted transit benefits, incident management at choke points, bus priority treatments, a standard bus stop maintenance program, multimodal traveler information, multipurpose smart cards, parking management, enhanced access to Metrorail stations, and rationalization of bus service. We will shortly distribute these ideas in a Proceedings of the Session.

As a proposal, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Chief Executive Officer, Richard White offered to combine two WMATA Board-approved programs, the Regional Activity Center Demonstration and Bus Enhancement Programs, with local transportation management strategies into a multimodal Regional Mobility Initiative. In a letter dated January 23, Mr. White asked members of Panels 1 and 2 to serve on a Senior Policy Steering Committee to oversee development and implementation of regional action. He also asked for creation of a staff Technical Advisory Committee to support the Steering Committee's efforts.

**Washington  
Metropolitan Area  
Transit Authority**

600 Fifth Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001  
202/962-1234

By Metrorail:  
Judiciary Square—Red Line  
Gallery Place-Chinatown—  
Red, Green and  
Yellow Lines  
By Metrobus:  
Routes D1, D3, D6, P6,  
70, 71, 80, X2

A District of Columbia,  
Maryland and Virginia  
Transit Partnership

Mr. Ronald Kirby

Page 2


All indications are that a consensus exists for moving forward with the Regional Mobility Initiative. To maintain the momentum begun on January 9<sup>th</sup> and channel it constructively, we have identified a set of 60-90, and 150-day actions:

- In 60 days we will have produced the Proceedings of the Session and a proposed WMATA management plan for the initiative.
- In 90 days we will have established the Senior Policy Steering Committee and supporting Technical Advisory Committee to produce a three-year Action Plan to continuously implement management strategies.
- In 150 days we will have the Action Plan complete and ready to be implemented. This plan will identify high priority corridors and centers in the region for deployment of more tailored management strategies and as well a small set of region-wide strategies.

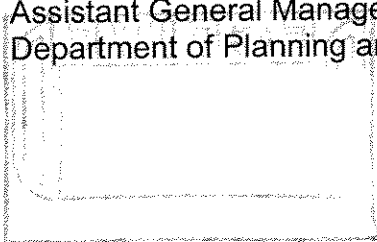
I am excited about the opportunity to work with you to improve regional mobility *by moving from planning to implementation.*

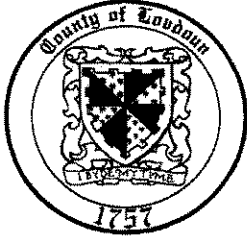
Please feel free to contact me to share your views on whether or how to proceed. I can be reached at (202) 962-2100 or via e-mail at [elthomas@wmata.com](mailto:elthomas@wmata.com).

Sincerely,



Edward L. Thomas  
Assistant General Manager  
Department of Planning and Strategic Programs





Loudoun County, Virginia

---

Department of Planning

1 Harrison Street, S.E., 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, P.O. Box 7000, Leesburg, VA 20177-7000

Telephone (703) 777-0246 • Fax (703) 777-0441

February 20, 2004

David Robertson, Executive Director  
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments  
777 North Capitol Street, NE  
Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Mr. Robertson:

This is to inform you that the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors has initiated a Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPAM 2004-0003) to amend the Loudoun County Revised Countywide Transportation Plan (CTP) to restore the Western Transportation Corridor to the CTP. Draft amendment language and map are attached.

The Loudoun County Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on this amendment on **March 15, 2004 at 6:00P.M. in the Board Meeting Room, Lobby Level, Government Center Building, 1 Harrison St., S.E., Leesburg, Virginia, 20175.** Written comments can be provided to the Planning Commission at the following address: Loudoun County Planning Commission, Department of Planning, 1 Harrison St., S.E., 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, P.O. Box 7000, Leesburg, Virginia, 20177-7000.

The Loudoun County Revised Countywide Transportation Plan is available online at [www.loudoun.gov](http://www.loudoun.gov).

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at (703) 777-0246.

Sincerely,

Ann Eberhart Goode, AICP  
Project Manager  
CPAM 2004-000, Western Transportation Corridor

Attachment



*Insert the following text on p .3-14 of the Revised Countywide Transportation Plan before the section entitled "Transition Area Road Policies":*

### **Western Transportation Corridor**

In August 1987, Virginia and Maryland authorized a study to assess the need for and feasibility of an Eastern and /or Western Bypass corridor around the Washington metropolitan area. The objective of the study was to develop a consensus between the States concerning an eastern bypass, a western bypass, a combination or no bypass. In 1988, findings of the feasibility report were presented to the public. Agreement to use a tiered environmental process was reached in January 1989 and the initial results were made public later that year. Refinements were made to the study and additional public meetings and hearings held. The original phase of the Tier 1 Environmental Impact Study (EIS) considered seven "most reasonable build" alternatives to the bypass, three to the west of Washington. Subsequently, Maryland dropped the eastern corridors of the Bypass from their planning processes and Montgomery County took a position that the Western Bypass should not cross the western portion of its County.

The Western Bypass gained renewed strength in Northern Virginia with endorsements from the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors, VDOT and citizen/business groups. The Loudoun County Board has passed resolutions in support of a Western Bypass along VDOT's W-2 alignment.

From VDOT's perspective, the need for a bypass was based on increasing traffic growth, increasing development in the study area, increasing through traffic congestion at Potomac River bridges, lack of interstate traffic capacity and alternative routes, and the projected number of truck accidents. While in agreement with these factors, Loudoun County has also been concerned with providing direct regional access to Dulles Airport via an alignment as close to the Airport as possible, protection of the historic/scenic byway portion of Route 15 and protection of Goose Creek.

Following publication of a "White Paper" on the Western Bypass in 1993, VDOT announced its intention to proceed with the completion of the Tier 1 EIS. The Study corridors included:

- a. VDOT W-1a, which runs along the north-south power line alignment (paralleling Route 659) and then follows the Route 15 Corridor to a Potomac River Crossing in the vicinity of Point of Rocks;
- b. VDOT W-2, which runs along the north-south power line alignment and crosses the Potomac River into Montgomery County east of Leesburg and west of Goose Creek;
- c. VDOT W-3, which runs along the Route 28 alignment.

AND

Add Western Transportation Corridor to the Revised Countywide Transportation Plan.

Western Transportation Corridor





**Andrew Austin**

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**From:** Carl R Henn [carlhenn@juno.com]  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 07, 2004 9:28 PM  
**To:** cogdtp; TPBPublicComment; county.council@montgomerycountymd.gov  
**Subject:** Fw: Running Out of Oil -- and Time

Please read this article by Paul Roberts in the today's Los Angeles Times. It is time to take the oil crisis seriously and past time to start investing more in transit and to stop building new highways.

Carl Henn  
193 Hardy Place  
Rockville, MD 20852

<http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/sunday/commentary/la-op-roberts7mar07.1,7320937.story>

**ENERGY**

## **Running Out of Oil -- and Time**

**Panic will strike if we're not prepared with new technologies.**

By Paul Roberts

Paul Roberts writes about the energy industry for Harper's Magazine and other national publications. His new book, "The End of Oil: On the Edge of a Perilous New World," will be published in May.

March 7, 2004

SEATTLE — The news last month that the vast Saudi oil fields are in decline is a far bigger story than most in the media, or the United States, seem to realize. We may begrudge the Saudis their 30-year stranglehold on the world economy. But even the possibility that the lords of oil have less of the stuff than advertised raises troubling questions. How long will the world's long-term oil supplies last? As important, what will the big importing nations, like the U.S., do the day world oil production hits its inevitable peak?

For more than a century, Western governments have been relentlessly upbeat about the long-term outlook for oil. Whenever pessimists claimed that supplies were running low — as they have many times — oil companies always seemed to discover huge new fields. It's now an article of faith among oil optimists, including those in the U.S. government, that global oil reserves won't run out for at least four decades, which seems like enough time to devise a whole suite of alternative energy technologies to smoothly and seamlessly replace oil.

But such oil optimism, always questionable, is now more suspect than ever. True, we won't "run out" of oil tomorrow, or even 10 years from now. But the long-term picture is grim. In the first place, it's not a matter of running out of oil but of hitting a production peak. Since 1900, world oil production — that is, the number of barrels we can pump from the ground — has risen in near-perfect step with world oil demand. Today, demand stands at about 29 billion barrels of oil a year, and so does production. By

2020, demand may well be 45 billion barrels a year, by which time, we hope, oil companies will have upped production accordingly.

At some point, however, production simply won't be able to match demand. Oil is an exhaustible resource: The more you produce, the less remains in the ground, and the harder it is to bring up that remainder. We won't be "out of oil"; a vast amount will still be flowing — just not quickly enough to satisfy demand. And as any economist can tell you, when supply falls behind demand, bad things happen.

During the 1979 Iranian revolution, the last time oil production fell off significantly, world oil prices hit the modern equivalent of \$80 a barrel. And that, keep in mind, was a *temporary* decline. If world oil production were to truly peak and begin a permanent decline, the effect would be staggering: Prices would not come back down. Any part of the global economy dependent on cheap energy — which is to say, pretty much everything these days — would be changed forever.

And that's the good news. The term "peak" tends to suggest a nice, neat curve, with production rising slowly to a halfway point, then tapering off gradually to zero — as if, since it took a century to reach a peak, it ought to take another 100 years to reach the end. But in the real world, the landing will not be soft. As we hit the peak, soaring prices — \$70, \$80, even \$100 a barrel — will encourage oil companies and oil states to scour the planet for oil. For a time, they will succeed, finding enough crude to keep production flat, thus stretching out the peak into a kind of plateau and perhaps temporarily easing fears. But in reality, this manic, post-peak production will deplete remaining reserves all the more quickly, thus ensuring that the eventual decline is far steeper and far more sudden. As one U.S. government geologist put it to me recently, "the edge of a plateau looks a lot like a cliff."

As production falls off this cliff, prices won't simply increase; they will fly. If our oil dependence hasn't lessened drastically by then, the global economy is likely to slip into a recession so severe that the Great Depression will look like a dress rehearsal. Oil will cease to be viable as a fuel — hardly an encouraging scenario in a world where oil currently provides 40% of all energy and nearly 90% of all transportation fuel. Political reaction would be desperate. Industrial economies, hungry for energy, would begin making it from any source available — most likely coal — regardless of the ecological consequences. Worse, competition for remaining oil supplies would intensify, potentially leading to a new kind of political conflict: the energy war.

Thus, when we peak becomes a rather pressing question. Some pessimists tell us the peak has already come, and that calamity is imminent. That's unlikely. But the optimists' forecast — that we don't peak until around 2035 — is almost as hard to believe. First, oil demand is climbing faster than optimists had hoped, mainly because China and India, the sleeping giants, are waking up to embrace a Western-style high-energy industrialism that includes tens of millions of new cars. Second, even as oil demand is rising, oil discovery rates are falling. Oil can't be produced without first being found, and the rate at which oil companies are locating new oil fields is in serious decline. The peak for world discoveries was around 1960; today, despite astonishing advances in exploration and production technology, the industry is finding just 12 billion new barrels of oil each year — less than half of what we use. This is one reason that oil prices, which had averaged \$20 a barrel since the 1970s, have been hovering at \$30 for nearly a year.

Oil companies, not surprisingly, are getting anxious. Despite the fact that the current high oil prices are yielding massive company profits, companies are finding it harder and harder to replace the oil they sell with newly discovered barrels. On average, for every 10 barrels an oil company sells, its exploration teams find just four new barrels — a trend that can go on only so long. Indeed, most Western oil firms now say the only way to halt this slide is to get back into the Middle East, which kicked them out

during the OPEC nationalizations of the 1960s and '70s. This has, in fact, become the mantra of the oil industry: Get us back into the Middle East or be prepared for trouble. And the Bush administration seems to have taken the message to heart.

Now, of course, the Middle East is looking less and less like the Promised Land. Western analysts have long feared that the Saudis and other oil-state leaders are too corrupt, unstable and bankrupt to step up their oil production fast enough to meet surging world demand. Last week's revelations, in which some Saudis themselves expressed doubt over future production increases, have only heightened such concerns.

Put another way, we may not be able to pinpoint exactly when a peak is coming, but recent events suggest that it will be sooner than the optimists have been telling us — perhaps by 2020, or even 2015 if Asian demand picks up as fast as some analysts now expect. What this means is that we can no longer sit back and hope that an alternative to oil will come along in time. Such complacency all but ensures that, when the peak does arrive, our response will be defensive, costly and hugely disruptive. Instead, we must begin now, with every tool at our disposal, to find ways to get "beyond petroleum" if we are to have any hope of controlling the shift from oil to whatever comes next.

## Debbie Leigh

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**From:** Dorothy Camer [takoma20912@yahoo.com]  
**Sent:** Saturday, March 06, 2004 4:04 PM  
**To:** cogdtp  
**Subject:** Attention: Chris Zimmerman

Mr. Zimmerman was correct in the discussion on the Koji Nambi show that congestion cannot be eliminated. Congestion, however, can be reduced to the point that it does not increase the commute during peak traffic. One method of reducing commute and the need for more roads is to apply existing technology to increase the occupancy/vehicle. Two current patents, # 6,240,363 and 6,675,150 properly applied can do this at very low cost. Using the former to increase riders' confidence that they will have a ride if they wait for a bus will encourage people to use buses. The latter will decrease the need for do-it-yourself driving and thus reduce the need for driving to Metro stations. Eliminating parking at Metro stations will save money as well as make the land around the station available for more development.

You chief of staff, Ron Kirby, is well aware that small vehicle transportation is more desirable and can move people faster than large buses. He has also found when he worked for the Urban Institute that public authorities are more concerned with labor than on customer responsiveness. In our modern society we have the ability to emphasize the customer without losing sight of labor needs.

Transportation planners approach traffic problems by restricting movement. It's time to change that view and consider methods that will meet all the mobility needs of a modern society without increasing costs. This is discussed in my book "CarFree Mobility, How a Community can kick its auto-dependency", which can be viewed at <[www.geocities.com/takoma20912](http://www.geocities.com/takoma20912)>

Dorothy Camer (301) 270-5708

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## Andrew Austin

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**From:** Beth Williamson [bwilliamson555@comcast.net]  
**Sent:** Monday, March 01, 2004 9:22 PM  
**To:** TPBPublicComment  
**Cc:** Jim Snee  
**Subject:** Safety Issue

I want you be aware of a very unsafe situation in King Farm in Rockville. Cars are parking on Redland Blvd. in King Farm. Cars coming over the hill or around the corner do not expect to see cars parked on this heavily traveled road. I have witnessed several near-miss accidents. Cars should NOT be allowed to park on Redland Blvd.

For some strange reason, parking on Redland Blvd. is legal. Why, I don't know. Allowing cars to park on Redland Blvd. creates a very unsafe environment. Shouldn't safety be a priority? Or are you waiting for an accident to occur before you make parking on Redland Blvd illegal? Do you just not care about the residents in this area?

Please keep my neighbor safe. Please put up "NO Parking" signs on Redland Blvd. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Beth Williamson  
bwilliamson555@comcast.net

## Andrew Austin

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**From:** Contact@highwaysandcommunities.com  
**Sent:** Friday, February 20, 2004 12:15 AM  
**To:** TPBPublicComment  
**Subject:** mwcog.org - Transportation/Public Comment

NAME: Douglas Willinger

ADDRESS: 911 Larch Avenue

CITY: Takoma Park

STATE: MD

ZIP: 20912

PHONE: 301 891 3676

EMAIL: Contact@highwaysandcommunities.com

SUBJECT\_INTEREST: Where are DC's highway projects?

COMMENTS: Where are the DC highway projects in the CLRP? Why no mention of a South Capital Street Tunnel, undergrounding of the SW/SE Freeway, I-395 Tunnel NY Avenue extension, etc?

This is a classic disregard of the urban core!



no 220



Plus, announcing a new weekly feature:  
Unsolicited advice for the rich, famous and foolish.

# The Washington Post Magazine

JANUARY 11, 2004

## Swept Off Our Feet

When did it become an act of defiance — or just plain crazy — to stroll through the Washington suburbs? By MARY BATTIATA



# A Walk on the Wild Side

*Disappearing sidewalks,  
impassable crosswalks,  
unstoppable traffic,  
malevolent driving.  
Does it have to be such  
a jungle out there?*

By MARY BATTIATA

IT'S STRANGE ABOUT THE SHOES. There are a lot of shoes out here, shoes without people attached. Ghost shoes: a flattened leather boot, a new black patent leather military dress shoe, a faded blue canvas sneaker. And it's always one shoe, half a pair. How do you lose one shoe?

Such are the mysteries of the lonely pedestrian. And I do mean lonely. I'm 24 miles and five days into a 50-mile hike west out of Washington, walking the commuter routes, the fastest roads from downtown to the suburbs. Except for a few people at bus stops here and there, I haven't seen a soul afoot. There's no one walking.

And no wonder. The cars on this stretch of Route 50 in



Fairfax County are roaring past me at 55 mph, 10 miles over the posted speed limit. There's no sidewalk, so I'm proceeding down a narrow shoulder of gravel beside a painted white line, with my shoulders hunched and the strap to my kit bag tucked tight and out of reach of passing side-view mirrors. At the intersection up ahead, a right-turn-only lane lets cars take the corners without stopping. A maroon van rounds the corner on two wheels and nearly clips me. Just past the intersection, a blue asphalt footpath appears briefly—a lifeline!—but then dives under the grass without warning, like a sea serpent on an old map.

Every mile or so, I stumble across another shoe. How can there be so many shoes along the roadside when no one appears to be walking? And for that matter, how much longer am I going to be able to hold on to my own? I'm already gripping my reporter's notebook like a shield, hoping it makes me look vaguely official, like a county worker or someone with a legitimate right to be out here.

I can remember when—in a suburban Washington childhood in the '60s and '70s—walking was common, routine even. We walked to the shopping center, walked to school. I can even remember walking on the Beltway in

and traffic surged around them. They had a hunted quality, like people trying to cross Sniper Alley in Sarajevo. Every year streets and intersections seemed to get wider. Pedestrians were now sharing their space with right-turn-on-red traffic and left-turn-on-green.

It all seemed a very long way from the righteous path taken by metaphysicians of walking like Henry David Thoreau, who in his essay "Walking" praised going about on foot as an aid to clear thinking and good citizenship. Wasn't walking our American right, a virtue, in fact, that promoted hardy self-reliance and was as embedded in our history and character as freedom of speech? As in "Our Town," Thornton Wilder's play about life in fictional Grover's Corners, N.H., in the early 1900s, where people rely on their daily sidewalk encounters to take the measure of life itself.

What were we losing, locked in our cars while the streets became ever more unwalkable?

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and local jurisdictions were spending tens of millions of dollars on studies and public awareness campaigns. But that was a Band-Aid on a larger problem that

*'You're walking out there?' a Fairfax County police officer said, incredulously. 'I drive that way every morning from South Riding—cars blow by me, and I'm in a marked car.'*

suburban Maryland the night before the roadway opened.

But somewhere between then and now, walking as an option in suburban America seems to have virtually disappeared. The facts bear this out. Between 1980 and today, the number of children walking to school has fallen from 70 percent to less than 10 nationwide. Walking as a means of getting from here to there is 36 times more dangerous than driving, according to the Surface Transportation Policy Project, a research and advocacy group. Nationally, only 5 percent of all trips are made on foot, but pedestrians account for more than 13 percent of all traffic fatalities. Nationally, 78,000 pedestrians were struck and injured by cars in 2001, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration; 4,882 were killed. By the late '90s in Montgomery County, pedestrian deaths were starting to outnumber homicides.

At a certain point, I began taking this situation personally. Crossing ever-widening suburban intersections had become an ordeal. I saw that older people and those with small children often couldn't make it across in time, stranded on the median, marooned as the light changed

no one knew how to fix. In La Plata, one intersection had actually been outfitted with traffic kiosks equipped with orange flags. Pedestrians were encouraged to grab a pennant, bear it across the traffic lanes and leave it on the opposite side for use by the next hardy traveler. Was this progress?

So I decided to walk, which is always good for thinking. I would walk not on wooded bike trails or out-of-the-way hiking paths, but rather on the commuter roads, where I would act as if I had as much right to be out there as any car. I would howl on behalf of my fellow walkers, and venture out to see if there was any hope on the horizon.

My modus operandi would be to walk in chunks of four to six miles a day, mark my spot at the end of each day and resume from that point. Every step westward, therefore, would be made on foot. To get home each night and back to the next day's start point, I would rely on whatever worked—Metro, bus, taxi, thumb.

As I began to map my route, however, misgivings mounted.

"You're walking out there?" a Fairfax County police officer said, incredulously. "I drive that way every morning from South Riding—cars blow by me, and I'm in a marked car."

At the town library in Leesburg, where I'd driven to

**Mary Battiata is a Magazine staff writer. She will be fielding questions and comments about this article Monday at 1 p.m. on [www.washingtonpost.com/liveonline](http://www.washingtonpost.com/liveonline).**

look at maps, the researchers blanched when I pointed to a thread-wide line that looked promising.

"Oh, God," a librarian said, shaking her head. "You can't walk on Route 15—it's too dangerous."

I drove to the roadside in question, and stepped out of the car to read a historical marker. I was promptly blown sideways by the gust of a flatbed trailer barreling by. The driver leaned on his horn for good measure, in warning or greeting or both.

"I'm surprised your editors are letting you do this," a national expert on pedestrian safety said soberly when apprised of my plan. "When we go out along those kinds of roads we wear reflective vests and hats."

My destination was Gilbert's Corner, a tiny dot on the map where Route 50 intersects Route 15. On paper, it looked rural, and the name had a pleasing echo of Thornton Wilder's fictional town. It was still well within the commuter zone, the suburban development that has overtaken eastern Loudoun County in the past decade. Still, I imagined a place where a walker might find a country store, or at the very least a Coke machine. A restroom would be nice, too.

I'd driven all over Northern Virginia as reporter and resident, but I'd never laid eyes on Gilbert's Corner, named for a Maryland man who built a stucco filling station there in the 1920s.

William Gilbert sold Sinclair gasoline for 12 cents a gallon, but his establishment was most famous for its milk and ham sandwiches, which in the '30s and '40s were known to travelers from New York to Florida. "Be sure to stop at Gilbert's," the saying went.

I could already taste the ham sandwich. What I couldn't know as I set out was that Gilbert's Corner had also been very much on someone else's radar screen. Gilbert's Corner wouldn't solve the shoe mystery, but it would provide an unexpected answer to the larger question of what the future of walking could be.

But where to start? It had to be downtown Washington, the focus of so many commutes. It had to be along roads whose attractions had long been dulled by countless car trips. I wanted to find out what might arise from these roadsides if I took them at a slower pace.

I decided to begin on the Mall, the broad expanse of

sandy gravel and grass sometimes called America's Front Porch. It is a walker's dream, and one of the most important examples of pedestrian-friendly urban planning in the United States. I took a cab down to Fourth and Jefferson, in the shadow of the Smithsonian, where, as coincidence would have it, an entire exhibit on the history of transportation in the United States—trains, planes, trolleys and cars—would soon be opening.

WAVES OF AFTERNOON CARS were already washing up against the traffic lights on Constitution Avenue. I wanted to cross the Potomac on the Theodore Roosevelt Bridge, which is part of Route 50, a historic highway that starts in

Ocean City, Md., and goes all the way west to Sacramento. From the bridge I would head west to Fairfax City, dogleg southwest on Route 29, past Manassas National Battlefield Park, and from there head back up to 50, and west again, three more miles to Gilbert's Corner.

Road maps that offered detail down to the last pebble were opaque about sidewalks. It was impossible to tell whether the Roosevelt Bridge was walkable or not. I *thought* I remembered seeing pedestrians there. The map showed a mysterious line of faint dashes, but it was incomplete.

At Constitution Avenue I hit my first barrier, an orange striped sawhorse

blocking my route entirely. So I turned right, headed for Key Bridge. Washington Circle, originally designed as a military defense, was an efficient and bucolic oasis of calm. Thousands of cars were moving through it at rush hour, but the center was quiet. There were benches to rest on. These would be the last benches I'd see on my entire trip. Most of them were occupied by people in varying states of mental distress.

Without the protective armor of my car, I felt as vulnerable as a hatchling.

I TOTTER OUT OF THE METRO into the Tinkertoy skyline of Rosslyn, with its tall buildings made of '70s Christmas ornaments and drugstore sunglasses. I've driven through Rosslyn a thousand times, but things look different on foot. The land is big and you are small. The roiling aluminum sculpture at the corner of Wilson and North



Oak looks, for the first time, like the traffic arrows the artist probably intended. At another corner, giant concrete balls seem eminently bowlable.

Beyond Rosslyn, Route 50 stretches out into real highway. The grass medians teem with wildflowers and jumping insects. They are tiny nature reserves. Crickets and cicadas chirp and rasp, long green grasses nod feathery heads at the afternoon sun, which lights up the ruby tangles of sumac. Except for the roar of the traffic, it's almost pleasant.

WESTWARD HO. I'm just east of Seven Corners, where 50 meets Leesburg Pike meets Little River Turnpike meets Wilson Boulevard meets Sleepy Hollow meets Hillwood. Both sides of Route 50 have started to clog up with serious retail activity—a Target, a Barnes & Noble, a Home Depot.

As I cross from Arlington County into Fairfax, I'm about to encounter one of the area's most pernicious myths about pedestrian accidents.

The myth is that Latino and other immigrants figure highly in pedestrian accident statistics because of their cul-

Northern Virginia—Rosslyn, Tysons Corner, Fairfax City, Ballston, the Pentagon. The roadside is busy with pedestrians at all hours, but especially during morning rush hour and afternoons, when school gets out. There are grandparents leading small children, young mothers pushing strollers toward the elementary school nearby, teenagers in groups of four and five, young couples. They all want to cross Route 50.

But the Route 50-Patrick Henry intersection is poorly designed for pedestrians. There is a crosswalk and a walk signal, but the walk-signal button on the westbound side of 50 is bolted to a pole that appears unconnected to the light itself. Pedestrians share the first part of the crosswalk with fast-moving, right-turn-only traffic shooting onto 50 from Patrick Henry. The signal gives people 22 seconds to cross eight lanes of traffic, including two right-turn merges whose traffic is not controlled by the light.

For pedestrians who don't want to cross here, the next legal option is half a mile away at Seven Corners itself, a route that requires hiking up a ramp to the top deck of the interchange, traversing a series of traffic islands and signals, hiking back down the ramp on the opposite side of the

I dart across Fairview Park Drive and slither down a grassy slope. My relief at making it through is tempered by the knowledge that three more interchanges like this lie ahead.

ture—their limited grasp of English, their unfamiliarity with complicated roadways.

It is true that three of the most dangerous roadways for pedestrians in the Washington area have high immigrant populations—the so-called “international corridor” at University Boulevard and New Hampshire Avenue in Langley Park, Route 1-Richmond Highway in southern Fairfax County, and Seven Corners in eastern Fairfax. It is also true that, proportionately, immigrants are injured far more often. But language skills and familiarity with traffic signals are not the central problem. The problem is road design, or the lack thereof. These intersections are textbook examples of all the ways that roads designed for speed and maximum traffic flow are hazards for anybody who has to walk on them.

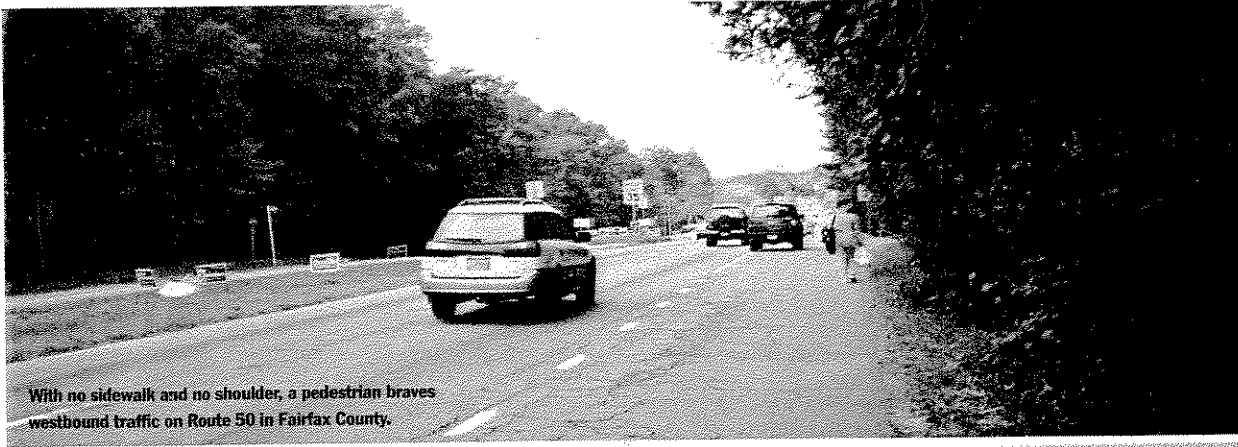
This is the case at Route 50 and Patrick Henry Drive. For traffic heading west, away from Washington, the traffic signal at Patrick Henry is the last chance to enter the sprawling Seven Corners shopping center. Miss it and you sail on out to Merrifield and the Beltway.

This stretch of Route 50 is lined with blocks and blocks of garden apartments and low-rise condominiums. Residents flock to the big-box discount stores on either side of the street. Bus stops set back from the main road serve routes that fan out to every major population center in

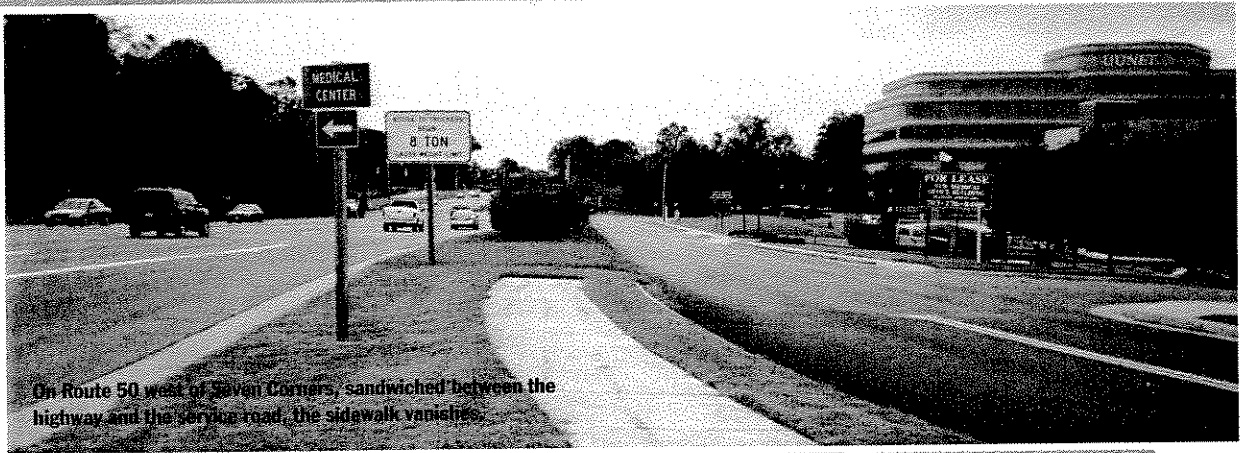
boulevard and retracing one's steps half a mile back to the shopping center and apartments.

Confronted with these choices, many people here opt for door No. 3. They walk up the road to a point about halfway between Patrick Henry and Seven Corners and sprint across when the traffic lulls. Any pedestrian struck by a car here—and there have been several in the past year—would appear in police and news reports as the guilty party, but the people who “ford” the road there are actually making a highly rational choice. At the intersections, the traffic is eight lanes or more and there are right- and left-turn lanes to contend with as well. In the middle, the traffic narrows to four lanes (plus service roads) and it's easier to eyeball. People sprint across the road there day and night, so many that footpaths have been worn into the grass, and the county has erected two small signs that say “Use Crosswalk,” with little arrows pointing back toward Patrick Henry and Seven Corners. During one 10-minute stretch I watch more than a dozen people run across the road.

Back at Patrick Henry, 40-year-old Hilda Martinez, a housekeeper and recent emigre from Peru, waits, too, frowning with anxiety. Martinez recently learned the hard way that the signals cannot be one's only guide to crossing. She was nearly struck by a car in the crosswalk of the



With no sidewalk and no shoulder, a pedestrian braves westbound traffic on Route 50 in Fairfax County.



On Route 50 west of Seven Corners, sandwiched between the highway and the service road, the sidewalk vanishes.



The top deck of the tangled Seven Corners interchange, looking west.

on-ramp from Patrick Henry to Route 50 in late October. She had the legal right of way, but the oncoming car was speeding and did not stop. She avoided injury only by leaping back onto the curb. A few weeks later she saw a woman hit at the same spot by a car that didn't stop. The woman was injured, not killed. Martinez was shaken. "I shook my fist."

If they're able, Martinez says, pedestrians struck by cars in this area often try to leave the scene, fearful of police contact because of their illegal immigrant status. Martinez, who is a legal resident and does not have a car, has to cross Route 50 here several times a day, walking her 4-year-old son, Rodrigo, to and from preschool. Her native city of

Lima, Peru, is much more congested than Seven Corners, but that city's narrower streets force cars to drive slowly, and take more care around walkers. "Here there are so many lanes," she says. And the pedestrians are sometimes at fault, too. "Sometimes people don't pay attention; they walk across the road like they are walking in the apartment courtyard. They stop in the middle of the street."

Martinez shakes her head. "It's very dangerous here."

THE SEEDS OF ALL THIS were sown in the 1950s, and were part of a public safety plan. This was when the Northern Virginia suburbs began to boom, and Congress

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARY BATTISTA

## Walking

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

decided that an upgraded federal highway system would help evacuate American cities in case of nuclear attack. The idea was that when the bomb hit, we'd save our skins by piling into our Chevys and Nash Ramblers and speeding out of town; some of those highways were to be restricted to civil defense vehicles only. All across the country, states created bureaucracies to build and maintain these smooth, wide arterial wonders. These roads meant it was possible to live farther out from the city center, in subdivisions that offered the peace and pleasures of a quasi-rural lifestyle. Suddenly, there was no need to live within walking distance of a grocery store or a bank (which in many cases got into the act by installing handy drive-thru windows). It was a car party.

The hangover arrived in the 1980s, as commute times lengthened and once-idyllic subdivisions became islands surrounded by an ever-rising tide of cars.

ways, either. Their watchwords are sharing and common sense, and they promote a set of practical, low-tech design tools collectively known as "traffic calming." These are changes to road design that, for example, encourage cars to drive the posted speed limit, and give people a place to walk. The new urbanists argue that if communities want to encourage walking, they will need not only better sidewalks but other amenities like shade trees and benches. Road design will have to change, as well as the mentality of engineers who for decades have built highways and intersections with one criterion in mind, something called "level of service," a standard that measures how quickly and efficiently an intersection handles traffic. "Level of service" needs to provide for everyone, including walkers and cyclists, new urbanists say. To commuters who worry about the effect on commute time, they brandish timed traffic studies that show "traffic calming," if done correctly, decreases congestion and lengthens the average commute

AT A CONFUSING but legal crossing near Target on Route 50, with a stoplight but no crosswalk, a Latina and I are imperiled by a conscientious motorist. We are in the middle of the roadway, waiting for a lull in eastbound traffic. As we wait, a light-colored sedan draws to a stop in the nearest lane. The driver, an older man, smiles at us and gestures, "Go! Go!" We hesitate. There are two additional lanes of traffic beyond this car. We have no way of knowing whether drivers in those lanes will stop. We raise our hands apologetically and wave the driver on. He isn't moving. "Go! Go!" he waves again. He's sitting stock-still in traffic in a 45 mph zone where the speed is often closer to 60. The longer he sits there, the more likely it is that some distracted driver yammering on a cell phone or tinkering with a CD player will slam into all of us. (Later I learn that Virginia law requires that motorists yield to pedestrians in a crosswalk, and stop completely if they are driving under 25 mph.) We get across, eventually, but not everyone does.

In the darkening parking lot, I hitch a ride with a former circuit court judge. 'It's really amazing that you agreed to accept a ride with me,' he says. 'I could be anybody.'

Acres of subdivisions and strip malls began to overtax road capacity. More roads were built, and those got crowded, too. Little provision was made for pedestrians. (In the 1990s, states were still spending \$72 per person in federal transportation money on highways, and just 55 cents on pedestrian facilities.) A response to this problem has been slow to emerge, but it has arrived, in the form of a loose confederation of urban planners, pedestrian and bicycle advocates, road designers and others who have begun lobbying to roll back America's car-dominated landscape in favor of an America where people have as much right to public space as cars. Under the flag of "new urbanism," these design evangelicals have begun to spread their gospel, town by town, street by street, in small projects in communities across the country.

The new urbanists don't talk about doing away with the car—they know it's too late for that. And they don't talk about pedestrians dominating the road-

time by less than five minutes.

To skeptics, the urbanists point out that the old system is at a breaking point, and drivers are paying a huge cost. Recent studies have linked the ills of suburban sprawl—traffic congestion, pedestrian accident rates, long commute times and a resulting decline in walking—to America's new obesity epidemic. A study by the Surface Transportation Policy Project measuring the health effects of sprawl found that people who live in areas where "nothing is within easy walking distance of anything else" are more likely to be overweight and have high blood pressure. The same study also found that it is generally safer to walk in the centers of old cities than in their sprawling suburbs. New York City, Manhattan in particular, is the safest place of all. The suburbs of the cities in the American South and Midwest are the least safe. Washington falls somewhere in the middle—the city is a decent place to walk, its outer suburbs are not.

Most pedestrian accidents nationwide—59 percent—occur in situations like ours, where a crosswalk is not available. And if cars happen to be moving at high speed, the peril is great—the chance of surviving after being hit by a car moving 40 mph or more is only 13 percent.

AT FAIRVIEW PARK, the Taj Mahal of interchanges heaves into view. It is a triple-decker threat that catches me off guard, like a waterfall that suddenly confronts a distracted canoeist. In the distance are green hills and dales dappled with corporate headquarters—Verizon, Raytheon.

On the map, the interchange is a blue spaghetti tangle where Route 50 fragments into up ramps for the Beltway and Fairview Park Drive. And in reality there is no provision at all for pedestrians. I now have two choices: I can backtrack several miles and try to cut through a subdivision, or I can continue climbing to the top of the interchange. Up there,

above the Beltway, I see a man in a dark suit, carrying a briefcase, running down the grass median of Fairview Park. It's David Janssen, in "The Fugitive." He gives me courage, and an idea. I dart across Fairview Park and slither down a grassy slope to the bottom deck of the interchange, the roaring through-lanes of 50, where I finally cross under the Beltway itself, along 50's narrow shoulder. My relief at making it through is tempered by the knowledge that three more interchanges like this lie ahead.

Later, at the Dunn Loring Metro station, I buy a newspaper. My horoscope for the day reads as follows: "Hurrying arrangements for this evening may be regretted. Don't take shortcuts as they could backfire and become expensive."

THE ROAD SIGN SAYS I'm 29 miles from Middleburg, and 63 from Winchester. Political campaign signs stud the median every few paces on Route 50. They're laid out at intervals designed to catch the eyes of commuters.

I pass an Outback Steakhouse with a flame-painted Hummer parked out front; this reminds me it's way past lunchtime. I know there's a '50s-era diner somewhere up ahead. I check my digital pedometer to see how far I've come and find that it has erased today's mileage. (Pedometers seem another sign that walking is in trouble, having gone from unremarkable daily activity to the kind of hobby or sport that requires racks of expensive gear. The turquoise cube I bought came with a fold-out manual of many pages and took more than an hour to program.)

The 29 Diner turns out to be one of those places that look their best at 45 mph. The interior is the genuine article, a bona fide greasy spoon that is a world away from the shiny aluminum nostalgia of modern diner copies. This place has peeling blue paint, cracked marble tabletops and an exhaust fan that looks like a lunar landing vehicle covered in moon dust. A big yellow-and-orange sign on the door warns "videotaping in progress." The clientele this afternoon is subdued—a pair of immigrant African cab drivers, a suburban couple on their way home from the hardware store. But the waiter is an immensely cheerful Nigerian man named Dot, a student in business administration at Strayer University. Until recently, he walked two hours a day to work and back,

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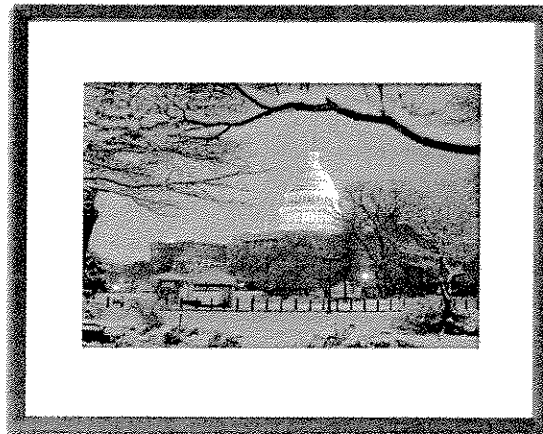
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on a complex route that included short-cuts through subdivisions and across roadways. Now he lives 10 minutes away from the diner. He thinks the sidewalk situation in Fairfax is quite good, especially when you compare it with Nigeria.

THE SIGNS on Route 29 near Monument Drive announce the Fairfax County Government Center, a sprawling complex set on many acres of park and parking lot, surrounded by land on which fields of townhouses are already rising. I hike across hundreds of empty parking spaces. I am in search of enlightenment.

Some of the highest-ranking officials in the county have offices on the top floor of the spectacular glass county headquarters. It's here I find the aerie of Katherine Hanley, outgoing chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, filled with zoning, water and park maps, and offering a view of treetops and hiking trails. It's a week before the November elections, and Hanley's office phone rings constantly. In her long career, she has

some county road projects; their scale is reminiscent of Stalinist central planning.

"It's hard to get VDOT to mark a crosswalk," Hanley says. (Local politicians can't blame it all on VDOT, an activist says later, arguing that county boards can't just let developers build and build and build and then expect the highway department to connect all the dots.) Like a lot of jurisdictions, Fairfax County has been taking steps to make things better, Hanley says. It has increased the fine for failing to yield to pedestrians in a crosswalk from \$100 to \$500. It has appointed a pedestrian coordinator to lead policy change. It has funded safety awareness campaigns. It has rounded up some federal money to start filling in missing sections of sidewalk. Her own goal has been to fill in the gaps in pedestrian walkways between Metro stations and bus stops.

"In many ways it's a retrofit—but it is an attack on all fronts," she says. To date in 2003, she says, there have been 60 percent fewer pedestrian fatalities than last

from speeding traffic down here, but others have come before me. There's a black pocket comb, a glass bottleneck, a flattened tin that once held smoked oysters, a smashed side-view mirror—all the ingredients of a Woody Guthrie song. Out from under and in the clear, I pass a culvert blossoming with goldenrod, white pine saplings, cattails and wild persimmon. And now there's another ramp, and then one more, this last one draining cars off I-66. As I scoot past there's a lot of honking. I decide to ignore it. It gets louder. I quicken my step. Now a white pickup pulls over as it passes me. A guy leans out: "Hey, you dropped your hat back there! That's why we were honking." I knew that.

The hat sits like a pancake back in the middle of the ramp. Traffic streams off the interstate. I leave the hat.

The sun is setting now. At the old stone house at Route 234, I turn left and head uphill, on a wide mown path through tall grass to the Manassas National Battlefield Park visitors center, in

## Back in my car, I find myself exhibiting all the aggressive driver behavior I've been fuming about—speeding, failing to notice crosswalks. The pedestrians *are* hard to see.

logged thousands of miles crisscrossing the county and presided over the widening of dozens of roads and intersections. Now she is ready to retire.

So how would she rate the county's walkability, on a scale of 1 to 10?

"Where are we now, or where would I like to be?" she parries. "I'd like us to be a 10, but I don't think we're there yet."

How did it get so hard to walk?

Part of the problem, Hanley says, is that Fairfax County, unlike the state's cities and towns, does not legally own or control its roadways or roadsides. Those are the property of the Virginia Department of Transportation, or VDOT, in Richmond. (Neighboring Arlington County is one of the few counties in the entire country that chose to retain local control back when these things were being decided in the 1930s.) So time and again when a citizen petitions for a sidewalk, the request must be sent down to Richmond.

This explains the curious character of

year, down from 10 to 4, a drop she attributes to education, police vigilance and the work of activists like retired fire and rescue worker Dave Lyons, who has made pedestrian safety along the aging Route 1 corridor in the southeastern part of the county a personal campaign.

Like many Fairfax residents, Hanley drives almost everywhere. She worries about interchanges that are so huge they turn the communities around them into islands. (The Fairfax Board recently shot down a state plan to widen the Beltway in Fairfax from eight to 12 lanes, and rebuild several interchanges at a cost of \$3 billion and 200 homes.) Hanley had a revelation not too long ago when her car broke down on the way to a lunch appointment. She had to walk. It was hard.

ANOTHER MONSTER—the intersection of Routes 29 and 28 at Centreville. It is 10 lanes above, nine lanes below, including ramps and turning lanes. I walk along Route 29 under I-66. I'm two feet

search of a phone. It is closing. "Try up at the mall," says the park ranger, arms folded implacably. Where's that? "About 500 yards up the road, that way," she says, jerking her thumb vaguely leftward up 234.

It's getting dark, and 234 has no shoulder to speak of. I need to get back to my car in Fairfax, but I'm stranded. No bus, no taxi, no Metro, no phone. In the darkening parking lot, I hitch a ride with a former circuit court judge from Michigan who's been roaming the battlefield all day, and is on his way back to a motel in Tysons Corner to meet up with the wife and kids.

He talks politics as we leave the parking lot in the family van. Then he pauses. He was recently accused of sexual harassment by a female parolee, he says—falsely, he adds. The town insisted on settling out of court, he says, even though he was innocent. "It was very upsetting," he says. And then: "It's really amazing that you agreed to accept a ride

with me. I could be anybody.”

Back in my car, heading toward home, I am curious to find myself exhibiting all the aggressive driver behavior I've been fuming about all day—speeding, failing to notice crosswalks. The pedestrians *are* hard to see, just shadows that appear in the corner of my eye as I drive along. The posted speed is 50, but most cars are doing more than 60. My adrenaline is pumping long before I cross the Arlington County line. In this frame of mind, my instinctive reaction to a cyclist pedaling along a slower secondary road is intense irritation. I'm all jumped up and my internal road hog is furious. It's so hard out here already, what is this *clown* doing in *my* lane, churning along well under the speed limit, with his watery, blinking taillight, forcing everyone to slow down and wait for a chance to swerve around him?

In other words, the toxic combination of road conditions, the distance and my own fatigue have turned me into a jerk of the first order, a danger to that cyclist's well-being and to my own. This reverse commute has been a perfect illustration of the reasons for the high injury rate. The conditions are so favorable for mayhem that it's surprising more walkers aren't mowed down every year.



ROUTE 234, also known as Sudley Road, is a narrow, curving two-lane that thinks it's a highway. It has a double yellow stripe down the middle, gravel shoulders the consistency of waterbeds, and it's full of speeding dump trucks, cement mixers and SUVs. I climb the verge, cut inside a pasture fence and walk on, well away from the road. There are Civil War cannon and haycocks on distant hills. By midafternoon I reach the crossroads of Sudley Springs and the shady yard of Sudley United Methodist Church, its cemetery surrounded by towering trees. The congregation is so old that the property appears in Civil War photographs (the original building was destroyed by

fire and has been rebuilt). Some of the pictures show stumps of trees that were hacked down to avoid giving cover to enemy infantry. A plaque on the church grounds commemorates the day that “people, some on their way to worship, some already in the church” were suddenly confronted with thousands of federal soldiers, marching down Sudley Road. In the battle that followed, federal and Confederate forces used the church as a field hospital, and performed surgery on its altar.

Inside, the Rev. Ralph G. Satter, a transplanted Californian, is busy with paperwork and thoughts of his Sunday sermon. An acoustic guitar sits in the corner of his office. Sunlight streams through the window. He wears green corduroy trousers, a green shirt and a small wooden

Route 29 at Centreville: yet another shoe without its mate.

cross on a black cord around his neck.

He's a walker. And the best kind of walking, in his opinion, is the kind that allows one to lose track of time. “In terms of our spirituality, that's the best thing,” he says. But that's harder and harder to do. “Our traffic situation out here is already horrendous. We're in the rural crescent already, you've got to have at least 10 acres to build, but a lot of development's already been grandfathered in. They're finding ways to do it.”

About 1,200 worshippers show up each week for Sunday services. A sign out front advertises an upcoming oyster and turkey dinner.

Do the congestion and traffic and driving take a toll?

“Oh sure,” Satter says. “Everything we do affects our psyche. The way we spend our time, the fact that we mostly drive in cars, isolated. It's very impersonal.”

On my way out, Satter tells the story of Amos and Mary Benson, church members who were walking home from services at the time of the Civil War and heard moaning coming from a ditch. It was a Union soldier who lay near death. They brought him food and water and eventually took him home. He survived and became a Union officer. After the war, he returned to Sudley Springs and raised enough money to retire the church's debt.

The graveyard just outside Satter's office is surrounded by a black iron fence.

Slanting afternoon light illuminates a worn tombstone marked with two small faded flags—the Stars and Stripes, and the Confederate Stars and Bars. The worn tombstone lettering is barely legible, but if you squint you can just make out the names of Amos and Mary Benson, early Northern Virginia pedestrians who saved a life instead of losing their own.

SEARCHING the map for an alternate route north that doesn't involve hair-raising encounters with dump trucks, I find Sanders Lane. But getting to it will require a detour through a farmyard and fording Catharpin Run under the roadway. On the way I meet a man wiring a campaign sign—“Families for Friedman”—onto a metal post.

“We've got all kinds of battles going on out here,” says Greg Gorham. He is president of the newly formed Sudley-Catharpin Citizens Association. It has modeled itself on the much older Sudley Mountain/Stone Ridge Citizens Association, and has just won its first big victory—preserving 136 acres of land from developers' bulldozers with the help of the Civil War Preservation Trust.

There is all kinds of wrangling going on out here over roads and development, Gorham says. There's the battle against the battlefield byway, which would take



traffic around the battlefield, but eat up sacred ground, and which some locals fear would be the first step on the slippery slope toward construction of the so-called western bypass, Northern Virginia's equivalent of Montgomery County's intercounty connector. Some say it would be the beginning of the much-dreaded, much-debated Outer Beltway.

All of these battles are about a larger question, a chicken-and-egg conundrum about road construction—namely, does building new roads alleviate congestion, or just attract more of it?

People out here have learned the hard way to be wary of new road projects, says Gorham. "I-66 was supposed to solve the traffic problem, but it just brought a whole lot more people out here. They build a new road, and as soon as they open it, it's packed."

The traffic on 234 is so bad, says Gorham, that he doesn't dare get out of his car and walk on it. No one does. "I'm the guy who signed up to pick up the trash on this road and I can't even do it," he says.

This used to be country, and there are still paddocks and horses along here, but westbound traffic is backed up all the way to Gilbert's Corner, now about three miles away. All around, subdivisions are rising. The developers out here are so successful their billboards mention their seats on the New York Stock Exchange.

When I ask to use the Citgo phone to call a cab, the station owner volunteers the mechanic on duty to ferry me back to Sudley Springs. He's just getting off duty, about to head home to Middleburg, seven miles west of here. "She walked all the way from Sudley?" he says, shaking his head. Driving me will take him about 20 miles out of his way, but he is gracious about it, especially after I offer to pay him cab fare. We pile into the front seat of his van, brushing aside cigarette packs and papers, and drive back down Route 234 through the darkness. As usual, from behind the windshield, the menacing lanes of 234 look benign and even beautiful, smooth, and dark, their double yellow

board announces the imminence of a 100,000- to 800,000-square-foot development to be known as Gilbert's Corner Phases I and II.

It must still be a gleam in the developer's eye, apparently, because the only action at this corner at the moment is traffic streaming north, south, east and west. Route 15, which crosses 50 here, is a major north-south truck route. There are right- and left-turn lanes to move the traffic along, but even so, at rush hour, the backups are epic. This is Mad Max Road Warrior territory. You'd have to be a starry-eyed dreamer, a cockeyed optimist, or really determined, to think about reclaiming it for mere humans on foot.

Which is where Susan Van Wagoner and the Route 50 Corridor Coalition come in. Van Wagoner is a painter who specializes in portraits of the hounds and horses that are to Middleburg what Harleys are to motorcycle gangs. For the past eight years, she and a group of citizen activists, architects, road planners and others have led a fractious but ultimately

'They build a new road, and as soon as they open it, it's packed,' says one activist. 'I'm the guy who signed up to pick up the trash on this road and I can't even do it.'

CATHARPIN RUN'S CREEKBED under 234 is a blanket of bottles and cans that must go back to the 1940s or earlier. Back up top, on the northern side of the creek at last, I find a deer carcass on the road shoulder, directly in my path. From a distance I assume it is roadkill. And maybe it was, or started out that way. But someone has hacked a deep wedge across the animal's forehead, just where its rack must have been. The wound is not bloody, oddly enough. Instead, it looks like a medical book drawing, a neat cross section of red muscle tissue, sinew and bone. The deer is too recently dead to be rigid. It's eyes—clouded black—are the only sign that it's been dead for a while. Maybe a hunter shot the deer, took his trophy and left the carcass behind, but it seems unlikely. This looks like roadkill closely followed by roadkill repo.

IN EASTERN LOUDOUN, the bright lights of civilization beckon from a Citgo station. Commuter traffic streams by.

line glowing like a beacon in the van's headlights. We talk about cars. The mechanic has a posse of them. He buys them cheap, restores them with care, and then hates to sell them. He's had Lincolns, Cadillacs. He likes to drive. The cars make him feel good. And anyway, he adds, lighting up a smoke, it sure beats walking.

THE LAST THREE MILES to Gilbert's Corner are a straight shot. The westbound side of 50 is wide and grassy. The road narrows from four lanes to two, but even then, the sightlines are good. I see trucks and wide-loads coming from a long way off, and cross the road back and forth to avoid them.

As I approach, I see that Gilbert's Corner is . . . nothing. Instead of ham sandwiches and glasses of milk, there are three bare corners, a lot of traffic and a boarded-up white building, the ghost of the old filling station, surrounded by No Trespassing and No Parking signs. A bill-

successful fight to make their 20-mile stretch of Route 50 from just east of Gilbert's Corner through tiny Paris, in neighboring Fauquier County, a model for the principles of the new urbanism.

The idea is to keep Middleburg and the other little towns out here—Aldie, Upperville—from collapsing entirely from the pressure of raging through traffic. The beginning came in 1995, when Van Wagoner and others learned of VDOT's plans to build a four-lane bypass around Middleburg, at a cost estimated variously at \$35 million to \$50 million. The state's plans also envisioned at least three more such interchanges for other towns along Route 50. Estimated cost for the whole stretch: hundreds of millions of dollars. "You didn't have to be a genius," Van Wagoner says, to realize that eventually those big new interchanges would need to be connected, and two-lane Route 50 would turn into a four-lane freeway. This, the locals said, would be the death knell for the scenic

towns, and town life, along the route.

The Route 50 coalition was born and began asking questions, which led its members to the leaders of the new urbanism, and "traffic calming" and a federally funded pilot project that its backers say could be a model for the rest of the region, and the country, too. The project proceeded in stages—years of "charrettes," or design meetings, where everyone from local storekeepers to fire and rescue workers and state highway officials was invited to come and draw on the blueprints. The central notion was that if you want people to drive at 25 mph, you don't build a road that looks like it's designed for 60 mph. Instead, you design it so it looks like you should drive 25, and then, as it turns out, people do. You build in some curves, some raised crosswalks (which reduce pedestrian accidents by a factor of 10, according to the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments), you use brick and other varied paving materials to let drivers know they've left the highway and there are humans afoot.

With the crucial support of Republican lawmakers Sen. John Warner and Rep. Frank Wolf, the coalition won federal money to fund the project, which is now in its final design stages. Based on a model in use in Denmark, the Route 50 plan is considered one of the most innovative in this country, and is frequently cited at national transportation and urban planning meetings. At VDOT, early skepticism has changed to enthusiasm. While VDOT engineers will withhold evaluation of the project's effectiveness until it is complete, the agency's top official in Northern Virginia describes it as "remarkable—perhaps the foremost traffic calming project in the country; we're breaking new ground here." At the same time, the price tag for "calming" the entire 20-mile Route 50 corridor is estimated at \$28 million, roughly half the cost for the now-abandoned Middleburg bypass alone.

Local political support has been "very strong," says Jim Burton, a member of the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors. Two successive generations of the Loudoun County Board have supported the project (though the disposition of the new board, elected in November, is not yet known). Commuters, too, were part of the planning process. Most of them came around, says Burton, though some of the


more far-flung motorists are still unhappy.

"There are people who live out in Winchester," says Burton, "who'd rather have an autobahn so they can drive 100 miles per hour to get to work in Arlington and D.C., but those of us who live in this area are opposed to turning Route 50 into a four-lane. They did that to Route 7 west of Leesburg, and it opened up that area to intense development."

Inside Middleburg itself and the other towns, the changes will be slight—road speeds and widths will stay largely the same, but some of the contours of the road will change. (Timed tests show the changes will increase the average commuter's time on this 20-mile stretch by less than four minutes.) But Gilbert's Corner will revert to a design that looks more like it did back in the milk and ham sandwich days. Instead of a traffic signal and three-mile backups at rush hour, traffic will be regulated by a series of four roundabouts. Three of them will siphon off local traffic before it gets to the intersection. The final roundabout, at Gilbert's Corner itself, will slow traffic to about 15 to 20 mph. That might sound like a fantasy, but engineering studies indicate that even at rush hour, the backup at the roundabout will be no more than three or four cars. National studies of roundabouts already in use in Maryland and other states show the circles reduce traffic accidents at intersections by 60 to 70 percent. The level of service at Gilbert's Corner is expected to go from one of the poorer in the region, to one of the best.

"It's not about making life difficult for cars," Van Wagoner says. "What it's really about is sharing the space."

There will be a pedestrian walkway through Gilbert's Corner, too, should you happen to be walking out that way in spring 2008, when the project will be complete if all goes according to plan. The walkway will cut right through the center, but because traffic will be moving more slowly through the intersection, your chances of surviving the crossing on foot should be quite good.

It will be something very new, or maybe very old. "There's an early-afternoon calm in our town," says the narrator of "Our Town." "A buzzin' and a hummin' from the school buildings; only a few buggies on Main Street—the horses dozing at the hitching posts; you all remember what it's like." 

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