



Item #5

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

December 15, 2005

TO: Transportation Planning Board

FROM: Ronald F. Kirby
Director, Department of
Transportation Plannnig

RE: Letters Sent/Received Since the November 16th TPB Meeting

The attached letters were sent/received since the November 16th TPB meeting. The letters will be reviewed under Item #5 of the December 21st TPB agenda.

Attachments



Arlington Coalition for Sensible Transportation

Box 5574, Arlington, Virginia 22205

703 271-0895 www.acstnet.org

December 15, 2005

The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairman
National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
777 North Capitol St NE, Suite 300
Washington DC 20002-4226

Re: Proposed VDOT Study of I-66 "Spot Improvements" in Arlington County

Dear Chairman Mendelson:

The Arlington Coalition for Sensible Transportation (ACST) is writing to protest two amendments to the TPB's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for so-called "spot improvements" to I-66 in Arlington County that the TPB Steering Committee approved on December 2 at the request of the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). Because these TIP amendments are premature, unwarranted, and inimical to the region's best interests, we respectfully ask the TPB to **direct VDOT to substantially modify its scope of work as follows:**

- 1) Analyze Long-Range Public Transportation Needs, VDOT Right-of-Way Boundaries, and Incident Response and Emergency Evacuation Strategies for the I-66 Multimodal Corridor--FIRST!**
- 2) Study and Implement Relatively Low-Cost Traffic-Operation Solutions to I-66 Congestion That Do Not Involve Any Significant Roadway Widening and Have Already Been Found Superior Overall to Adding a Third Westbound Travel Lane.**
- 3) Establish a New and Effective Long-Range Management Plan for Both Highway and Metrorail Operations in the I-66 Multimodal Corridor.**

Background:

In recent years, the TPB has twice authorized VDOT to conduct full and fair studies of all feasible alternatives for reducing congestion on I-66 in Arlington County. In October 2001, the TPB authorized a \$5 million Environmental Impact Study to "analyze alternatives for the widening of I-66 for the reduction of congestion and the movement of people in the I-66 corridor between I-495 and the Theodore Roosevelt Bridge." When VDOT failed to initiate this authorized study by June 2003, Virginia's Commonwealth Transportation Board reprogrammed the \$5 million to widen I-66 in Prince William County.

The Honorable Phil Mendelson
December 15, 2005
Page 2

In May 2004, the TPB authorized a more limited "feasibility study using a community-based planning process to develop 'context-sensitive' transportation alternatives that will improve mobility westbound in the I-66 corridor between Rosslyn and the Dulles Airport Access Highway". (The TPB authorized only \$724,000, but VDOT apparently allocated \$1.24 million). Although Governor Warner, former VDOT Commissioner Shucet, and former VDOT District Administrator Farley had promised a full and fair feasibility study responsive to Arlington's input, interests and concerns, the "Idea-66" study report's incongruous recommendation to add a third westbound lane to I-66 was not substantiated by the study's own findings (Figure 6-2a on page 6-35) and seems manipulated to justify a preconceived conclusion. Besides failing to establish any legitimate basis or significant public benefit for widening I-66, this "Idea-66" study actually found that the planned Dulles Rail Extension and restoration of HOV-3 would significantly *decrease* I-66 traffic volumes from current levels. According to the final report, better managing the four existing I-66 lanes was superior overall to the recommended addition of a third westbound travel lane.

The landmark 1977 Record of Decision by USDOT Secretary William Coleman (<http://www.viriniadot.org/projects/idea66/downloads/Coleman-Decision.pdf>), which authorized building I-66 inside the Capital Beltway after decades of heated controversy, established a critical multimodal urban travel corridor, featuring a major Metrorail line in the median of an urban freeway that was purposely limited to just two managed travel lanes in each direction. With the planned \$4 billion, 23-mile Dulles Rail Extension considered Northern Virginia's top unfunded transportation priority plus proposals to also extend Metrorail's Orange Line to Centreville or Gainesville, the TPB must ensure effective future Metrorail operations in the I-66 median before expanding I-66 for vehicular travel.

Crucial Need--A Long-Range Public Transportation Plan for the I-66 Corridor:

Any added I-66 lanes in Arlington would likely preempt the space needed for third and fourth Metrorail tracks in the I-66 median. These additional tracks are essential for express Metrorail service to the outer suburbs and possibly even for basic Metrorail passenger capacity within Arlington. Without express service, the long and costly proposed Metrorail extensions would likely generate only modest ridership and require higher annual operating subsidies. Regrettably, the I-66 feasibility study failed to adequately consider the long-term needs for effective public transit operations in the I-66 corridor or to recommend any viable long-term plan to manage I-66 traffic congestion.

Widening I-66 for SOVs--Unnecessary, Ineffective, and Unwise:

ACST maintains that better management of the four existing I-66 lanes (e.g., through expanded HOV restrictions and/or the installation of automated tolling technology) could readily keep I-66 permanently uncongested at all times plus allow reliable new express bus service on an always free-flowing highway. We wholeheartedly endorse the

The Honorable Phil Mendelson
December 15, 2005
Page 3

Arlington County Board's April 19, 2005 "Resolution on Idea-66" which we include with this letter. Moreover, we view VDOT's "spot improvement" proposal as a cynical and possibly illegal scheme to skirt NEPA compliance by dividing a major highway widening project into a series of smaller segments lacking significant independent utility.

ACST's "Wiser, Not Wider" Recommendations for I-66 Corridor Studies:

ACST asks the TPB to modify VDOT's current study proposal as follows:

1) Analyze Long-Range Public Transportation Needs, VDOT Right-of-Way Boundaries, and Incident Response and Emergency Evacuation Strategies for the I-66 Multimodal Corridor--FIRST: Prior to any other study to significantly widen I-66 (including for the proposed "spot improvements"), federal, state, and regional transit planning agencies should conduct a comprehensive and objective evaluation of long-term public transportation needs in the I-66 multimodal corridor.

This study should examine:

- whether third and fourth Metrorail tracks will ever be needed in the median of I-66 in Arlington, either for express service for the planned 23-mile Dulles Rail Extension into Loudoun County and the planned Orange Line extension to Centreville or Gainesville or merely for adequate Metrorail capacity within Arlington County;
- whether upgrading existing shoulders on I-66 exclusively for express bus service (including peak-period Metrorail relief service) and for emergency evacuations can temporarily or permanently eliminate any need for third and fourth Metrorail tracks in the I-66 median; and
- correct and clarify the I-66 right-of-way boundaries that are critical to determining the physical feasibility of adequate roadway shoulders, Dulles Rail, and any widening within the space available as stipulated by Governor Warner.
- Concurrent with this transit feasibility and right-of-way study, incident response and emergency evacuation feasibility analyses should be conducted by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Arlington County's Fire, Police, and Emergency Rescue Departments.

2) Study and Implement Relatively Low-Cost Traffic-Operation Solutions to I-66 Congestion That Do Not Involve Any Significant Roadway Widening and Have Already Been Found Superior Overall to Adding a Third Westbound Travel Lane; specifically, improved HOV enforcement and transportation-demand management programs, extended HOV hours, reverse-commute HOV, HOV-3, and automated, variably-priced tolling to keep I-66 permanently uncongested yet allow high-occupancy vehicles to always travel for free. VDOT's previous Idea-66 study found several of these non-widening alternatives to be superior overall to the proposed westbound third lane (see Figure 6-2a on page 6-35).

The Honorable Phil Mendelson
December 15, 2005
Page 4

3) Establish a New and Effective Long-Range Management Plan for Both Highway and Metrorail Operations in the I-66 Multimodal Corridor: No significant widening of I-66 (including VDOT's proposed "spot improvements") should advance without a full, fair, and open Environmental Impact Study of all viable non-widening alternatives to added vehicle lanes that leads to a new USDOT Record of Decision worthy of replacing the Coleman Decision. A new and effective long-term management plan for both highway and Metrorail operations along I-66 is a critical regional need that VDOT and the TPB must not continue to ignore.

In closing, we ask the TPB to support functional and sustainable transportation in the Washington region by ensuring the long-term effectiveness of both Metrorail and highway operations in the I-66 multimodal corridor by modifying VDOT's proposal as outlined above. Advancing an unnecessary, ineffective, and unwise expansion of SOV capacity--while ignoring long-term public transportation and incident and evacuation needs and failing to better manage traffic congestion--harms the entire region, not just Arlington County.

Sincerely,

Allen Muchnick, President
Arlington Coalition for Sensible Transportation

Enclosure: Arlington County Board Resolution on I-66 dated April 19, 2005

Arlington Virginia County Board Resolution

RESOLUTION ON IDEA-66 I-66 INSIDE THE BELTWAY FEASIBILITY STUDY

Revised April 19, 2005

WHEREAS, 30 years ago, the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) did not approve the Commonwealth of Virginia's proposal to build a six-and-eight-lane I-66 between I-495 and Rosslyn; and

WHEREAS, in 1977, the USDOT reversed its earlier decision that I-66 should not be built between I-495 and Rosslyn, by authorizing under the "Coleman Decision" the construction of a four-lane multimodal facility, with management controls and other improvements; and

WHEREAS, almost immediately after I-66 opened to traffic in 1982, I-66 experienced congestion during non-High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) hours; and

WHEREAS, in the 1980s, the segment of I-66 between the Dulles Connector and East Falls Church was widened from two to three lanes in each direction, yet this widening did not resolve congestion; and

WHEREAS, the absence of congestion during current hours of HOV incentives demonstrates the effectiveness of these incentives in terms of easing congestion; and

WHEREAS, in 2003, Governor Warner, at the request of Representatives Wolf and Davis, directed the initiation of the Idea -66 I-66 Inside the Beltway Feasibility Study of westbound I-66 between the Rosslyn Tunnel and the Dulles Connector; and stipulated that recommended improvements be located within existing right-of-way; and

WHEREAS, the study contains obvious errors in depicting the right-of-way boundaries, showing in the vicinity of North Adams Street and McCoy Park virtually the entire existing highway outside the right-of-way, and showing the National Park Service's Spout Run Parkway (a National Park) right-of-way as I-66 right-of-way; and

WHEREAS, the inaccurate right-of-way boundaries shown in the study render it impossible to determine whether widening and a continuous shoulder for emergency response can be accomplished within the limits of existing right-of-way, as Governor Warner has stipulated; and

WHEREAS, in the wake of 9/11, ensuring rapid emergency response capabilities is critical to public health and safety and the study did not demonstrate whether the recommended alternatives provide the additional capacity needed for an emergency evacuation; and

WHEREAS, the presence of a continuous eight-to-twelve-foot shoulder for emergency and breakdown vehicles is preferred for traffic operations; and

WHEREAS, the three priority criteria as recommended by the study (easing congestion, supporting the economic viability of the Dulles Corridor, and emergency evacuation) do not reflect the broad range of criteria that the public process and telephone survey generated, nor the priorities of the Arlington community that makes up most of the study corridor; and

WHEREAS, the recommended alternatives are not responsive to the public's top-choice solution to congestion according to the study's customer poll: to implement bus and/or rail transit improvements; and

WHEREAS, rail to Dulles has been promoted as a key to Dulles corridor viability, yet the study does not address physical and right-of-way compatibility with Metro's future plans; and

WHEREAS, the economic viability of the Rosslyn-Ballston corridor and livability of Northern Arlington are important criteria, just like the economic viability of the Dulles Corridor; and

WHEREAS, the five favored alternatives, all of which feature road widening, and only one of which specifies transit priority, do not provide the multimodal emphasis consistent with reasonable transportation planning alternatives; and

WHEREAS, the Idea-66 technical analysis concludes that the congestion-relief benefits of already planned improvements such as HOV-3 and Dulles Rail are much greater than the congestion-relief benefits of widening I-66 westbound for 6.5 miles; and

WHEREAS, the five recommended alternatives cost an estimated \$112 million - \$233 million that could be used for multimodal improvements;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE COUNTY BOARD OF ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA, HEREBY:

- Requests that the Virginia Secretary of Transportation and VDOT, before initiating the National Environmental Policy Act process, work with the Department of Rail and Public Transportation, in concert with the Federal Transit Administration, to conduct a second phase of the Idea-66 study to complete the multimodal feasibility analysis;
- Requests that transit alternatives including rail expansion be studied in combination with management alternatives; and,
- Requests that in the interim, prior to funding larger capital improvements, VDOT implement relatively low-cost, traffic-operation solutions such as HOV-3, reverse-commute HOV, HOV enforcement and transportation-demand-management programs.

- Requests that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Arlington County's Fire, Police, and Emergency Rescue Departments conduct an emergency evacuation feasibility analysis as part of this second phase;
- Requests that this second-phase effort correct and clarify the right-of-way boundaries that are critical to determining the physical feasibility of roadway shoulders, Dulles rail, and any widening within the space available as stipulated by Governor Warner;
- Requests that future I-66 corridor problem statements and priority criteria emphasize maximizing person throughput, versus easing congestion;
- Requests that future I-66 corridor problem statements and priority criteria emphasize enhancing community livability and broader economic viability, in addition to the Dulles Corridor;
- Requests that future I-66 corridor problem statements and priority criteria emphasize providing a continuous shoulder and every-day-emergency-and-incident-response capabilities, in addition to, or in lieu of, planning for a possible evacuation



**GREATER RESTON
CHAMBER of COMMERCE**

December 14, 2005

The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairman
National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Chairman Mendelson:

Virginia's Governor-elect Tim Kaine has declared improving transportation to be Virginia's top priority. The Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce, representing 900 member businesses and their more than 90,000 employees, agrees.

Widening I-66 inside the Capital Beltway has long been one of the Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce's top priorities and it was one issue on which all three of Virginia's gubernatorial candidates agreed. The Chamber, on behalf of its Board of Directors, wishes to record its support for amending the FY 2005-2010 Transportation Improvement Program to include federal funds earmarked to study short-term solutions and advance spot improvements to improve travel in the I-66 corridor between the Dulles Airport Access Road and Rosslyn. Such improvements are critical to minimizing bottlenecks in the short-term and putting in place the foundation for the longer term solution which is constructing additional lanes in each direction.

Thank you in advance for your support of this important initiative and please feel free to contact me at should you have any questions regarding our position.

Sincerely,

Tracey White

**Tracey M. White
President & CEO**

Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce & Incubator Program

Direct 571-323-3304 Fax 703.707.9049

www.restonchamber.org

Serious Business.

Comments Received on the Regional Transportation Issues

Submitted by: An Individual

David Mosley

Washington, DC 20593

11/21/2005

I have no idea if this is the right place, but I want to address the issue of the installation of parking meters around Coast Guard HQ in Buzzards point. A little while ago the city installed a set of meters that affect one and only one group of people, the hard workingmen and women of the U.S. Coast Guard! Now they are Government employees and as such don't get paid enough to afford to pay for parking on a daily basis, so a majority of the employees that commute to work here in the building started parking a few streets over where there were not any meters. Well some brainiac decided that they should now install meters in that area as well! I can't believe that the City is so desperate for a few quarters that they need to charge these hard workingmen and women who volunteer their lives in the dedication to the welfare of others. Cut these modern day hero's a break and put the meters elsewhere. You would get more bangs for your buck charging for parking around the mall, sticking it to the tourists instead of making life harder for those who make your lives easier. Why should these men and women be charged for something as little as parking when they themselves don't charge a dime for saving the many lives of our fellow American citizens. Please remove the meters and help make these modern day hero's lives a little better, help them keep a little more money in their pockets, thus helping them take better care of their families and their communities.

Larry Bradshaw

Vienna, VA 22182

12/3/2005

Transportation planning, management and execution is an activity that requires significant civil engineering discipline, expertise, integrity, training and competency. Outcomes such as exist in the State of Virginia, where Richmond, Charlottesville and every other major metropolitan region in the State have continuously built and upgraded transportation systems while in Northern Virginia funding and results have consistently fallen behind, slowed or diminished dramatically can only indicate the absence of competency, integrity and discipline. The fact that the engineered solution in every other major metropolitan area in Virginia is to build more roads, and that every other major metropolitan area in Virginia has a "rush hour" that ranges from 1/2 hour to 1 hour morning and evening as compared to the fact that in Northern Virginia the answer is to "do something besides building roads" and we have a "rush hour" of 4 hours every morning and evening, indicates a severe inequity that requires direct and escalating action by the voting public to achieve reform. Such action is required, in my opinion, because no other action, outreach, public meetings or outcry has remedied the situation or achieved reform. Thank you

John Rouse

Arlington, VA 22205

12/13/2005

I write to voice my opposition to the I-66 "spot improvement" widening of the highway. Why does Virginia consider only putting more cars on the road? Why does Virginia conduct transportation development in ways that preclude instituting alternative transportation? Why has Virginia never evaluated, either in the Idea66 study or elsewhere, the transportation alternatives that are out there, bringing Metro to full capacity as just one example? And why doesn't the TPB authorize just such evaluations? Will the term "spot improvement" ever be defined, or will it continue to be synonymous with building and widening roads?
