

Budget & Taxation Committee Report for the September 2005 MCA Board Meeting

The Committee has been actively involved in a myriad of issues associated with the proposed extension of Metrorail to Tysons Corner and beyond, which, in turn, would enable a major increase in the density of Tysons Corner. One of the major reasons for the Committee's activity was the announcement that the estimated costs for rail expansion increased by approximately 50%. In addition, the MCA has been advised that there is strong likelihood that the expansion of rail would not reduce traffic volumes in and around Tysons Corner. Moreover, the MCA has been informed that the increase in population density could create incredible stress on public infrastructure, which, in turn, could force real estate taxes even higher to pay for necessary additions to public facilities.¹

The Committee drafted, and the Board approved, a resolution urging that the County's Coordinating Committee studying Tysons-related transportation issues also ensure that all public infrastructure impacts from both rail and redevelopment are identified and the associated costs and benefits quantified in the study. Further, the resolution requests the County restudy Bus Rapid Transit as a lower-cost alternative to rail. We expect, however, that the major proponents of rail and redevelopment (*i.e.*, major Tysons landowners, developers, affected contractors and their political allies) will likely oppose our positions. In a related matter, Rob Jackson joined Susan Turner and several other non-MCA members at a July 21 meeting with Congressman Frank Wolf's staff to express our concerns.

At our July meeting, the Committee met with the County's program auditor John Adair. Mr. Adair discussed the County's efforts at reducing employee travel expenses by replacing a policy of expenditure reimbursement with the same per diem allowances for employees used by the federal and Virginia state governments. He also reviewed the progress being made in reducing the number of motor vehicles owned and operated by the County. Except for special purpose vehicles, no individual or agency would normally be permitted to have vehicles driven less than 4000 miles annually. It is expected that the County will increase the annual mileage floor to 4500 mile and then 5000 miles over the next few years. In addition to reducing the County's investment in motor vehicles, the County hopes that total maintenance costs can also be reduced, as the motor vehicle fleet size gets smaller in number.

County officials have also spoken with FCPS Superintendent Jack Dale to see whether there are similar possible savings from a reduction in the number of FCPS vehicles. Mr. Adair reported that Superintendent Dale was receptive to this looking into the matter.

Mr. Adair reported that, after a newspaper article² discussed the problems with the police and fire departments' computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system that is provided under a no-bid

¹ Subsequently, we obtained a copy of a 2004 memorandum from County Executive Tony Griffin to the Board of Supervisors warning that Fairfax County's wastewater treatment system cannot handle any development beyond what is already in the County's Comprehensive Plan. As this memorandum confirms our very fears about public infrastructure, we have been circulating it widely.

² *Washington Post*, Tuesday, April 26, 2005, p. B05.

contract with PRC (now Northrop Grumman), Gerry Connolly pushed for resolution of the operating problems. According to Mr. Adair, Northrop Grumman agreed to fix the problems without charge to the County. The system appears to be working correctly now, even though the public safety groups want a brand new CSD system. Therefore, Chairman Connolly and the rest of the Board of Supervisors are now questioning why a new CAD system must be purchased at all. Not surprisingly, the fire and police departments are resisting the Board of Supervisors' thriftiness.

Mr. Adair's office is also inventorying 750 miscellaneous parcels of land owned by the County in the name of the Board of Supervisors. About half of these properties are small rights-of-way, but others are significantly larger in size. After completing its inventory, the staff will evaluate individual parcels for possible uses as parks or affordable housing sites, for example.

We requested that the County consider developing a better system for tracking proffers and conditions imposed by County as part of a rezoning application. Mr. Adair identified the Department of Public Works and Utilities as the agency responsible for tracking proffers. MCA members noted a variety of problem situations caused, in part, by a failure of the County to track and enforce zoning conditions.

During the months of August and September, the Committee is likely to work on a resolution addressing the County's practice of making supplemental appropriations from tax revenues that exceed projections. We are also likely to continue our efforts in support of the MCA's expressed concerns about the proposed extensive redevelopment at Tysons Corner.

Respectfully submitted,
Rob Jackson, Chair
Budget & Taxation Committee