

Report of the Transportation Committee for August, 2005

In July, it was disclosed that the contractor for Phase I of the Dulles Rail Project preliminary engineering, the Dulles Transit Partners (composed of Bechtel and the Washington Group), estimated that costs could rise to an amount as high as \$2.4 billion dollars depending on design alternatives chosen by the Department of Rail and Public Transportation. The previous public estimate at the conclusion of the extensive public hearings had been only \$1.5 billion. The MCA Transportation Committee met on July 19, 2005, at the McLean Community Center, to hear first hand information and exchange views. Presentations were made by Marcia McAllister of DRPT and Jennifer Aument of DTP. Committee members strongly urged curbing the costs

There was exploration of potential cost-saving adjustments in the Locally Preferred Alternative of rail through the heart of the Tysons business area adopted by the Commonwealth Transportation Board, WMATA, Fairfax County, and Loudoun County. Included among them were the possible elimination of the 5,000-foot tunnel and its replacement by an elevated structure and simplifications in station design. Also explored were the various legal and financial constraints on planning and questions were aired concerning alternatives to the Locally Preferred Alternative. The adequacy of the contractual arrangements between DRPT and DTP and the possibility of competitive bidding were also discussed.

After the meeting DRPT and DPT undertook intensive work, including the commissioning of an outside consultant, on a crash basis to refine the proposal to meet both cost constraints and design needs in time to meet the Federal Transit Administration deadline for a project update of August 15, 2005. On August 10, DRPT announced the official and more refined estimate of \$1.8 billion – or 25% less than its contractor's estimate several weeks earlier. DRPT proposed reducing the length and depth of the Tysons tunnel proposed earlier, putting the Tysons 7 station on the surface, and redesigning the support structures for elevated portions. It decided not to eliminate the pedestrian access bridges or take any of the more drastic steps considered. As enumerated in the report filed with the FTA several days later, DRPT reported the following changes:

- Narrower track centers (outside station areas);
- Simplified station designs;
- Simplified aerial guideway structures and architectural treatments;
- Use of at-grade mezzanines instead of aerial mezzanines at some stations;
- Shorter and shallower tunnel section and shift of portal location on Route 7;
- Alternative design for retaining walls;
- Alternative design for the Tysons Central 7 station;
- Relocation of Tysons West station bus bays;
- Redesigned traction power system; and
- Revised design for the connection with the existing Metrorail Orange Line.

DRPT has informally indicated that some further cost reduction may be forthcoming and that a Value Engineering analysis, such as long recommended by the MCA, will be made. Among other things, possible reduction of charges proposed by Dominion Electric Power is being negotiated. The Committee anticipates a further meeting with DRPT to review progress on the project in detail.

Members of the Transportation Committee have been informally exploring the possibilities of limiting access to Georgetown Pike by trailer trucks and providing a more accessible Fairfax Connector bus stop at Spring Hill Road near the westbound ramp from the Dulles Road.

Submitted by Bill Byrnes, Chairman