

McLEAN CITIZENS ASSOCIATION RESOLUTION
ON THE FLUOR DANIEL PROPOSAL FOR BELTWAY HOTLANES

Adopted by the MCA Board on March 3, 2004

Whereas, the Board of Directors of the McLean Citizens Association (MCA) has studied the Fluor Daniel proposal for Capital Beltway High Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lanes submitted to the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT);

Whereas, the MCA previously found deficiencies in the alternatives presented for comment by VDOT in the May 2002 Beltway Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Whereas, the HOT lane concept allows motorists not qualifying for HOV treatment to use the premium HOT lanes by paying a toll the amount of which will change with the amount of traffic in each time period and produce revenue to pay off bonds and operating expenses.

Whereas, Fluor Daniel proposes to add two HOT lanes in each direction in the center of the Beltway on which HOV3, vanpools and express bus services would ride for free and other vehicles choosing to use the HOT lanes would pay a variable toll ranging from \$1 to \$4.80 per trip. Tolls would be collected through monitoring equipment without toll booths. Large trucks would not be allowed on the HOT lanes.

Whereas, the HOT lanes will extend from west of Springfield to south of Georgetown Pike, and will have access connecting directly to I-66 and the Dulles Access and Toll Road and three other intermediate access points at places other than intersections.

Whereas, only two of the entrances to the Beltway include direct connection to the Hot Lanes and for all the other entrances, it is necessary for vehicles to drive first in the unrestricted (COLD) lanes before they can enter the HOT lanes and, in most case, return to the COLD lanes before they exit the Beltway.

Whereas, in response to the criticism of the fact that the 2002 EIS alternatives identified more than 300 homes and businesses that would have been displaced, the Fluor proposal stays largely within the existing right-of-way and would displace only 4 to 6 residences and no business properties.

Whereas, the Beltway does not meet current Federal safety standards and the Fluor proposal would meet current standards for the entire mainline roadway and for a majority of interchange ramps but requires waivers for 12 ramps including 5 in McLean for the Route 123 and Route 7 interchanges.

Therefore be it resolved the MCA finds that the HOT lane concept can significantly improve the previous proposals for Beltway widening. It recommends that the details of

this proposal be given careful study and evaluation by VDOT to cover, among other matters, the following questions:

(1) Cost Analysis: VDOT should undertake a careful value engineering study that covers a period of at least 30 years. The economic analysis should ensure the proposed toll costs of \$1 to \$4.80 are sufficient to recover the payments required for toll revenue bonds, the federal Transportation Infrastructure Finance Innovation Act loan and other costs without forcing the operator to invoke toll policies that would result in an undesirable distribution of traffic between HOT and COLD lanes.

(2) HOT Lane Accessibility: The need to cross four lanes of traffic for drivers getting on the Beltway at points not having direct access the HOT lanes must be analyzed in terms of the distance required to do that safely both at current levels of use and also at increased levels of future use of COLD lanes under the proposal. This limitation appears to reduce the theoretical advantages of using HOT lanes since most HOT lane users will continue to contribute to COLD lane congestion in getting on and off. This may prove especially problematic in McLean at the high-volume Route 123 and Route 7 interchanges. While this may save initial capital cost and avoid possible displacements outside the present right-of-way, it may also reduce the effective lifetime of the Beltway by allowing COLD lane congestion to reach an unacceptable level prematurely. The tradeoffs need to be explicitly analyzed and explained to the public. Analysis can begin with the production of a matrix showing for each interchange pair the number of HOT lane and COLD lane miles vehicles would need to traverse. In addition to the specific Fluor configuration, an intermediate configuration in which direct access to HOT lanes at Routes 123 and 7 should also be analyzed.

(3) Toll Policy: The Fluor Daniel proposal for a flat charge to all users irrespective of distance traversed and irrespective of whether they are able to use direct access to HOT lanes needs careful study. It obviously favors long distance users over users going shorter distances. This study might take a form similar to the I-15 Managed Lanes Project Planning study done by Wilbur Smith Associates for the San Diego Association of Governments in 2002, but with the recognition of the complication that users here would receive differing value depending on whether or not they are provided direct access to the HOT lanes. (See <http://argo.sandag.org/fastrak/library.html#Anchor-Manage-59716>).

(4) Dynamic Pricing: The Fluor proposal to use simple and inflexible time-of-day pricing should be compared to the San Diego I-15 use of a system in which rates could be changed in six-minute intervals in light of current congestion.

And it is further resolved that in the case of the twelve safety waivers proposed for interchange ramps, the specific FHWA (or AASHTO) requirements should be stated in full, the magnitude of the deviation requested specified, and a detailed analysis of the safety and highway performance implications of the waivers provided so that the trade-offs can be evaluated. Will resort to the waivers result in interchanges that will need later major modifications that would have been avoided if standards were met in the first place?

And it is further resolved that the proposal must be carefully coordinated with the State of Maryland. With only 4 lanes in each direction on the American Legion Bridge, northbound Beltway traffic must merge from 6 lanes into 4 lanes before crossing the Bridge and this could create substantial congestion to the McLean portion of the Beltway. This problem should be resolved before a commitment to proceed is made. While there should be coordination of HOT lane plans on other area major roads as well, failure to coordinate successfully with respect to the American Legion Bridge could have a crippling effect.

And it is further resolved that the plan should implement the County Trail Plan at all the affected Beltway crossings.