

**POSITION OF THE COMMITTEE FOR DULLES
WITH RESPECT TO
DRAFT EIS FOR THE EXTENSION OF RAIL TRANSIT THRU DULLES AIRPORT
July 31, 2002**

The Committee for Dulles was founded in 1966. Its purpose is to encourage the effective and efficient development of Washington Dulles International Airport as a regional and a Virginia resource, and to encourage supportive and compatible land uses adjacent to the airport. Since our beginning 35 years ago, the Committee for Dulles has strongly supported the development of a seamless rail transit system to Dulles Airport and to stations beyond the airport in Loudoun County.

Direct, high-speed access to and from Dulles Airport is the primary concern of the Committee for Dulles. Nevertheless, broader issues relating to the development of the overall transit system and its stations are also considered to be within the purview of our organization. One of the important prerequisites for an effective and efficient rail transit system is land development adjacent to the transit stations that will encourage effective access to the system and foster transit ridership. While not directly subject to the authority of the implementers of the transit system, these local land use issues are inextricably related to the overall operating effectiveness of the extension of the rail system in the Dulles Corridor and therefore, its overall feasibility.

1. The Committee for Dulles strongly recommends that the **full Rail Alternative be selected from the beginning, and urges the rejection of the Baseline, BRT, BRT/Rail and Phased Implementation alternatives for the following reasons:**
 - a. The Baseline Alternative, or “no build” option, would strangle Dulles Airport. Highly effective ground transportation is an essential part of any airport development equation. Even with the extreme reduction in flights following 9/11, the most recent projections for flight activity at Dulles substantially exceed the projections anticipated just a year ago. Such an increase in air traffic will inevitably create a corresponding increase in ground traffic. Since there is a very real limit to the number of highway lanes that can be built within the Dulles Corridor without extreme right of way acquisition challenges, a highway only option would severely restrict passenger and freight access to the airport.
 - b. The BRT Alternative could handle only a small fraction of the number of airline passengers, airport workers and other commuters projected during the first decade of the system’s operation. With this in mind, the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority and many of the largest commercial real estate owners in the Corridor have strongly advocated immediate development of the full rail system. The financial and technical support of both of these groups is essential to any implementation of a Dulles Corridor transit system.
 - c. The BRT/Rail Alternative would not meet the needs of Dulles Airport as noted previously, and would not effectively meet the long term needs of the extensive business and residential areas in the Dulles Corridor west of Tysons Corner. Since nearly a very high percentage of the transit trips to Tysons Corner come from the west, this alternative would not adequately serve this ridership demand. There is reason to fear that if this option is put in place, rail to Dulles Airport could be delayed indefinitely, and possibly would never be built. The Airports Authority has made it quite clear that an option without rail to Dulles is unacceptable.

- d. The Phased Implementation Alternative could eventually meet the airport and Dulles Corridor community needs. However, it too would very likely be unacceptable to the Airports Authority and the majority of the commercial real estate owners. Much of the BRT capital investment and operation is not readily convertible to a rail transit system without considerable expense and short term lost of operational effectiveness. Again, there is reason to fear that if this option is accepted, transit service from the west would really be little better than it is today and a full rail system to Dulles Airport might never be built.

In asserting this position, the Committee for Dulles is very mindful of the challenge in making available greater early-year funding allocations than would be necessary if the more cautious BRT mode was implemented first. Nevertheless, because of the total cost savings over the life of the project, we urge construction of the full rail mode from the beginning.

2. The Committee for Dulles strongly supports the concept of planning for intensive, urban scale mixed use development allowing for significant residential, commercial, retail and public uses within a reasonable walking distance of the rail transit stations in the Dulles Corridor. This type of development should generate better utilization of the rail system by bringing more potential users within the immediate service perimeter of the system. While local land use policy is not within the direct purview of the EIS, local government emphasis upon effective land use at each station should considerably expand potential transit ridership well beyond the estimates used by the consultants to evaluate the economic feasibility of the system in the Draft EIS report.
3. Effective pedestrian and bicycle access to transit stations is essential. Both Loudoun and Fairfax County planning officials and elected representatives must take responsibility in assuring that there is close coordination with VDRPT, WMATA and VDOT to assure that pedestrian access is not an afterthought in the development of land uses in the primary transit impact areas. A comprehensive access plan for each transit station is essential.
4. An essential element of the design of each rail station in the Dulles Corridor is effective access via a well-developed feeder bus system. Each station must be carefully designed to assure that future expansion of feeder bus access can be readily implemented. Kiss and ride drop-off points must fit conveniently into this mix. Considerable care should be put forth to minimize potential conflicts between feeder buses, automobiles and pedestrians. To the extent possible, exclusive feeder bus lanes should be developed in the vicinity of station sites. Transit ridership would be severely reduced by traffic congestion that makes the use of the feeder bus no more effective than the use of the private car. Over time it is possible that some form of internal shuttle bus / people mover system will become economically feasible to serve the urban centers.

Close coordination among VDRPT, WMATA, VDOT and local planning officials is essential to assure that the feeder bus system works effectively. Local elected officials bear the primary responsibility in assuring that this close coordination exists.

5. The Committee for Dulles supports the construction of the CIT / Dulles Station rail station near Rock Hill Road southwest of Herndon.

The Committee for Dulles urges that careful consideration be given to bus access between this station and the Smithsonian Air and Space Dulles Center complex over and above usual feeder bus access. The planning for this station should give special attention to accommodating a future light rail or other permanent transit linkage with I-66 utilizing the Route 28 Corridor.

6. We urge both affected jurisdictions to work closely with VDRPT and WMATA to plan effectively for adequate structured parking opportunities at all transit stations. Parking needs will vary from station to station. The Reston Town Center station and the Route 772 station in Loudoun

County may serve primarily as destination stations with limited opportunity for long-term commuter parking. Nevertheless, the parking needs of these station areas must be given special attention. We are particularly concerned by the language in the Loudoun County Comprehensive Plan that specifically prohibits transit-related parking at the Route 772 station even though this station is the terminal station in Loudoun County. While we agree that commercial, residential and public uses should be emphasized at this station, we believe that the total prohibition of transit-related structured parking will prove detrimental to reasonable access to the transit system, and result in serious "bootleg" parking violations in the neighborhoods surrounding the station.

While we understand the desire to provide significant parking for transit riders at the Route 606 station, we are greatly concerned that this single location cannot fully accommodate the very heavy parking demand that will result from focusing all Loudoun County commuter parking at this station. This situation will exist even with very significant improvements to the access at this interchange and to Route 606. As strong advocates of Dulles Airport, we are troubled by the potential for very severe congestion impeding airport-oriented traffic and adjacent land uses at this location.

We strongly urge VDRPT, WMATA and VDOT to work closely with Loudoun County planning officials to give a comprehensive review to the overall parking and access questions related to both transit stations in Loudoun County.

7. Local officials must take a more proactive approach to urban design considerations and the planning of internal circulation systems associated with the very urban development anticipated within transit station impact areas. Reacting to private sector proposals is not sufficient. It is already apparent that at several of the transit stations, especially the Reston Town Center and Route 772 stations, exclusive busways, light rail systems, or similar methods must supplement a greatly improved pedestrian circulation system in order for these important activity centers to function effectively.

Once again, the Committee for Dulles has steadfastly advocated rail to Dulles since the organization was first conceived more than 35 years ago. Today we strongly urge all affected state, local, regional and federal officials to expedite their final review of this phase of the EIS, and to move quickly into the final planning and design phases necessary to make the Dulles extension of the rail transit system a reality.