



SHARON BULOVA
CHAIRMAN

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
County of Fairfax
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

12000 GOVERNMENT CENTER PARKWAY
Suite 530
FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA 22035-0071

TELEPHONE 703/324-2321
FAX 703/324-3955
TTY: 711

chairman@fairfaxcounty.gov

February 23, 2010

The Honorable Members of the Alexandria City Council
Alexandria City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

SUBJECT: Fairfax County Board of Supervisors' Concerns Regarding the Interchange Justification Report (IJR) for Interstate 395 and Seminary Road and Board Preferred Alternative for Additional Study as Part of the Environmental Review Process

Dear Council Members:

I am writing on behalf of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to advise the Council of the Board's concerns on the recently completed Interchange Justification Report (IJR) for Interstate 395 and Seminary Road and the Board's preference of alternatives to be carried forward into the environmental review process. As you know, the Virginia I-95/395 HOV/HOT Lanes Project is a regionally significant project that will provide critical access to five current and future military bases in the corridor and enhance travel mobility within five local jurisdictions. The five military bases alone will be home to nearly 90,000 employees. As such it is critical that regional traffic capacity and accessibility to these military installations be paramount in the planning and design of the interchanges within the project.

The connection from the HOV/HOT lanes to the Mark Center site is especially critical to accommodate new development resulting from the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) recommendations in the northern part of the I-95/395 corridor. In particular, the federal decision to locate jobs at the Mark Center rested on the assumption that the HOV/HOT Lanes public transit and network capacity improvements inside the Beltway would be in place to serve traffic to the site shortly after the Mark Center facility opened. The additional HOV/HOT Lanes capacity, combined with a direct transit/HOV access ramp into the Mark Center, would provide the needed level of access to the Mark Center. The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors is extremely concerned that without direct ramp access from I-395 HOV/HOT Lanes into the Mark Center property, traffic that otherwise would be on I-395 will instead divert to other less desirable arterials, collectors, and neighborhood streets in the region. For instance, the existing woefully under-capacity interchange of I-395 with Route 236 (Duke Street/Little River Turnpike) and Routes 236 and Beauregard Street are expected to be particularly impacted without a direct access ramp from I-395 into the new BRAC installation at Mark Center.

The Honorable Members of the Alexandria City Council
February 23, 2010
Page Two

The Board's main concern is to view the site's impact from a regional rather than a local perspective. As such, the Board believes that a lack of adequate transit/HOV access and service to the Mark Center site as well as insufficient on-site parking will certainly cause substantial delays along the I-395 corridor and severe deterioration of air quality in the area. It is, therefore, imperative that any option exercised include unfettered transit and HOV access to the Mark Center site. Given the prior successes in minimizing the environmental impact on other projects, the Board foresees similar opportunities to mitigate any environmental impact on the Winkler Botanical Preserve.

An Interchange Justification Report (IJR) on direct access options at Mark Center is nearing completion and an environmental document is expected to be initiated early this year. Eight different alternatives were presented for access to Mark Center from I-395. The Board of Supervisors understands the significance of this study and the impacts that each alternative will have on Northern Virginia's regional transportation network. The Fairfax County Board strongly prefers Alternative D, combined with potential additional ramping to/from the south parking garage (as shown in Alternative E), and asks that this hybrid alternative be carried forward for additional analysis in the environmental study. Brief additional comments on each of the alternates considered in the IJR are attached.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or County Transportation Director Kathy Ichter if you need additional information or wish to discuss this matter in more depth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sharon Bulova". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and "B".

Sharon Bulova
Chairman

Attachment

The Honorable Members of the Alexandria City Council
February 23, 2010
Page Three

cc: The Honorable James P. Moran, U.S. Congressman, 8th District of Virginia
The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly, U.S. Congressman, 11th District of Virginia
The Honorable Frank R. Wolf, U.S. Congressman, 10th District of Virginia
The Honorable Robert M. Gates, Secretary of Defense
The Honorable John McHugh, Secretary of the Army
Members, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
Colonel Jerry L. Blixt, Fort Belvoir Garrison Commander
Colonel Mark Moffatt, Fort Belvoir Deputy Garrison Commander for BRAC and
Transformation
Richard Baier, Director of Transportation and Environmental Services, City of Alexandria
James S. Turkel, US Army Corps of Engineers
Morteza Salehi, Northern Virginia District Administrator, Virginia Department of
Transportation
Ronaldo Nicholson, Regional Transportation Program Manager, Virginia MegaProjects
Program, Virginia Department of Transportation
Thomas Fahrney, Northern Virginia BRAC Coordinator, Virginia Department of
Transportation
Anthony H. Griffin, County Executive
Robert A. Stalzer, Deputy County Executive
Katharine D. Ichter, Director, Fairfax County Department of Transportation
Mark Canale, Fairfax County BRAC Coordinator, Fairfax County Department of
Transportation

Fairfax County Comments on the Alternatives Identified in the October 2009 Interchange Justification Report (IJR) at I-395 and Seminary Road

No-Build Alternative: With the major BRAC relocation to Mark Center in the City of Alexandria (now under construction), Level of Service (LOS) at the I-395 / Seminary Road interchange and intersections along Seminary Road will degrade substantially from their existing condition. Without major improvements, including direct access into the Mark Center and resulting time savings for transit and HOV users, it will be very difficult to induce Mark Center employees to utilize transit and the HOV lanes for their travel to the site.

Alternatives A1, A2, B1, and B2 are problematic due to a combination of poor or no preferential transit/HOV access, no direct access from the south, and added congestion and driver delay at the Seminary Road interchange and intersections along Seminary Road. These issues are due to the alternatives' required use of access through the Seminary Road interchange, limited access to the Mark Center site, inadequate storage at the south parking garage entrance, inadequate queue length to access the south parking garage, and resulting discouragement of transit and ride-sharing use via the I-395 transit/HOV lanes.

Alternative C is preferable to alternatives A1-B2. However, concerns remain with this alternative because it provides no direct transit access, site access is limited to the south parking garage, it discourages ride sharing and use of the HOV lanes, and it requires extensive infrastructure.

Alternative D has several major benefits over the A, B, and C alternatives. It provides direct site access using reversible lanes, encourages transit and HOV use by providing access from the HOV lanes, avoids delay and congestion at the Seminary Road roundabout interchange, and provides a cost savings to the HOT lanes project by offsetting the need for bus-only access ramps to the interchange. The cost analysis of this alternative should take this last factor into account. Consideration should be given to combining this alternative with additional ramping to/from the south parking garage (as shown in Alternative E). It is recommended that Alternative D, with consideration of modifications mentioned above, be one of the options carried forward into the environmental analysis phase of the project.

Alternative E presents a potentially feasible option to Alternative D. However, capacity is reduced due to the forced turns at the entrance from the HOT lanes. Alternative E also requires extensive infrastructure with associated higher cost. Whether the additional cost to accommodate the return to the northbound HOT lanes is justified should be evaluated. Bus volumes and estimated time savings vis-à-vis the return to the HOT lanes ramp via Seminary Road should also be assessed.