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[00:00:03] Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Jimmy Beerman, Drainsville District Supervisor, and I'm reminded of the scene in the iconic movie Mean Girls when Tim Meadows says, I will keep you here as long as it takes. And a woman says to him, you're only allowed to keep him here until 4 p.m. So I'm only allowed to keep you here until 4.30. So I'm going to say thank you in advance to everyone speaking today so that everybody over here doesn't need to thank everyone because we're going to keep this moving as fast as we can.

[00:00:35] We have a really great agenda today. We're going to get updates on the I-495 next project, but also I-495 south side. We're going to get an update on DMV moves and metro. And we're going to also talk about local authority for setting speed limits.

[00:00:51] So first, assuming no objection, we'll approve last month's Transportation Committee meeting minutes. Yeah, I thought there would be no objection to that. So with that, let's jump right in with, I know that Michelle Shropshire is here from VDOT to talk about 495 NEXT and the 495 Southside project.

[00:01:13] Thanks, Michelle. Go ahead. Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Michelle Shropshire, Mega Projects Director for VDOT Northern Virginia District. I'm joined by Ron Paul Shaw, who is our project engineer on the 495 NEXT project, and also have Bill Cutler, who is our district engineer for VDOT.

[00:01:29] This afternoon, we want to talk about 495 Next Project first. Just as a reminder, this is a $660 million project to extend the express lanes two miles from the Dulles Corridor Interchange to the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

[00:01:46] It's a public-private partnership with our concessionaire Transurban. We've been under construction since 2022, and we anticipate finishing these express lanes up and opening to the public by the end of next year. in completing the project in mid-2026. Just as a general construction update to let you know what's happening on the project, we've been working on building to the outside on 495 right now.

[00:02:15] We're getting ready to shift traffic to that construction we've been working on early next year and then construction will commence on the express lanes in that median area. We've also been doing a lot of work on bridges if you've driven through the corridor you'll have noticed that we've completed the live oak drive bridge we have completed a portion of the georgetown pike bridge we've also done work on old dominion drive and we've had a lot of noise walls that are under construction we're about 45 percent complete with that so a lot of construction activities

[00:02:49] underway and a lot more to come up also wanted to give a brief update on the revegetation plan I know this has been important to the communities that surround the project. We presented an initial concept at our public meetings last April.

[00:03:07] And since that time, we have held various public drop-in hours over the course of the summer and into the fall. We've also presented and answered questions at a few public meeting opportunities with local communities. We have had some defined themes that have come from these public input opportunities.

[00:03:30] These themes are highlighted on the right-hand side of the slide before you. We've had requests for as much year-round vegetative screening as possible, to have some vegetative screening to limit the views of the noise walls. We've had questions about general maintenance and warranty of the plantings, preference for trees over shrubs, And then we've had some specific questions about individual properties.

[00:03:56] We are focusing our efforts to complete the design work on this revegetation plan over the next few months toward the end of the year, and then we are going to review that VDOT and our partners at Transurban, and then we'll be ready to present that back with our county staff partners and get that back out to the public early next year.

[00:04:21] One of the key things that we wanted to discuss with you today and make you aware of is we have a relatively major operation that's planned for early next year along the corridor. We're calling this our Big Beam Weekend, and we anticipate that this will take place in late January, and this is to set the girders for the bridge that will be over 495 northbound.

[00:04:46] This will be from the Dulles toll road, Dulles interchange that will carry the new express lanes over 95 or 495. We'll be setting five large bridge girders and these girders are about 11 feet deep.

[00:05:03] They're about three feet wide and they weigh about 70 to 80 tons each. So these are some very large girders that we'll be setting. We'll be setting these over a weekend period that will occur again late January. we're targeting that. On the graphic you see on the screen, you'll notice the yellow arrows point to the first span. We'll be setting those in advance of that weekend. So that'll be regular nighttime work that we handle with nighttime lane closures because that's not over active traffic.

[00:05:37] And then the red arrows you'll see, you'll notice that that is work that is directly over 495 northbound. And that is the work we're talking about for the traffic diversion that I want to speak to you about. Why this weekend-long operation? Much like the weekend-long operation that we just successfully had at Georgetown Pike, this is to shorten the duration that we impact travelers to just a shortened time period. We can concentrate the public awareness campaign and we can allow our crews to safely work on this in a condensed time frame period over just one

[00:06:15] weekend. The next slide is probably what you're most interested in and this kind of highlights exactly what our operation will include. We'll be getting on a Friday evening and then we'll carry through the operation until the early morning hours. On a Monday we'll get out of the lanes before the a.m. rush hour. The work zone will actively begin in the vicinity of Route 7 where we will divert the traffic that's in the express lanes out of the express lanes and we'll divert

[00:06:50] that traffic to join the general purpose lanes of 495 northbound then there'll be a series of lane reductions to take all of that traffic both the express lanes traffic that's joined the general purpose lanes and the general purpose lanes down to just two lanes and then just north of 123 we'll take a diversion of all of that traffic into the express lanes and then all of the traffic will travel in the express lanes through our through our work zone area and then where the express

[00:07:26] lanes end today normal lane configurations will resume all lanes of the beltway will be open again you'll notice on this graphic also that the eastbound and the westbound dullest toll roads will be detoured those will be signed detours for this event as well there'll be no impacts on southbound 495 so that will be operational as it as it is today we've been working already on operations and potential incident management plans we've been coordinating internally with

[00:08:02] our own operations staff as well as with a whole host of others that you see listed here on the screen, the state police, the Fairfax County police, fire and rescue, the metropolitan area transportation operations coordination, MATOC. We have been providing and preparing maps to give out to first responders for areas to include the detours, emergency access points within our work zone and work area. We're looking at various signals along that area on the arterial streets within the impact area for potential retimings that might need to be implemented, and we have

[00:08:41] other measures such as wrecker services that we'll be staging throughout the work zone as well to handle some of the traffic. Communications and public outreach approach. We are working on a robust outreach plan to inform travelers of what will be happening, much like we did with Georgetown Pike. This will be a little bit more robust. We'll have some paid and earned media. We'll be targeting travelers both in the region and outside of the region. We'll be making use of our message board

[00:09:15] systems within our area and those along other interstates within Virginia to get the message out about this. And then finally, our next steps will be continuing our project level planning that we've been having. We have weekly meetings to coordinate all of this work, and then we continue to have external meetings with our partners and stakeholders to plan this work. We're having meetings with first responders and other incident management agencies. We'll be continuing to plan and then kick off that outreach component and deploy those public outreach campaigns

[00:09:54] right after the first of the year. And then we'll be geared up for this big beam weekend in early January. So I'll pause there and take any questions. There may be about the 495 next project. Thank you. Just a quick comment. There was a new bridge put over at Georgetown Pike. And I want to commend the

team because you guys finished about eight hours early. So if you can do the exact same thing here, we'll all be very happy. Fingers crossed.

[00:10:25] I know that the actual slowdown is really in Supervisor Palchuk in my districts, but I think that people all around the county, if you are shrinking the beltway down to two lanes in one location, are going to feel this.

[00:10:40] So a public outreach campaign from all of our supervisor districts, I think, would be really useful. I don't know how you do this thing without having a time when you have to sort of shut something down. It's sort of the necessary evil to an infrastructure project, but I very much hope, and fingers crossed, it goes like the last one.

[00:11:01] Any questions, Chairman McKay? Yeah, just late January, I hope it's not also a big blizzard weekend, but my prayers are with you on that front. I guess the only question I have is on page three, the revegetation plan, because obviously this has been a pretty highly visible process we've been dealing with trying to address some of the landscaping and vegetation issues.

[00:11:26] You have done a really good job here with a lot of community input, a lot of meetings with stakeholders, but then it just kind of abruptly ends October of 2024. So I'm just wondering, are we going to get an opportunity to see a revised plan that incorporates some of the comments in, or how are we going to know if the public comments had any impact on the actual plan itself, and when will that plan ultimately be finalized in terms of, hey, this is it, this is the plan now moving forward?

[00:11:57] We've been keeping track of the comments that we have received. They haven't been very much in volume, to be honest. we've gotten just just a few modest comments at these office hours that we've been hosting but we have been keeping a record of those as i mentioned we have we're working to finalize the plans now we'll be reviewing those between now and the end of the year and then after the first of the year we should be ready to present those again with county staff and others to share what that the plan is another presentation and and we won't be having a public meeting per se but we'll be able to share those with interested parties.

[00:12:37] Okay. I think that's helpful. And I see the public input themes here, but I had no idea how voluminous those were. And so obviously look forward to seeing that version when it comes back after the first of the year. So thank you. Good job.

[00:12:53] Supervisor Palchuk and then Supervisor Alcorn. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you so much to Michelle and your whole team. Again, yes, this was after having sat through I-66 for several years, At least on our end, this one has been more seamless. And I guess two suggestions, recommendations for your, I like that big beam weekend, maybe working with our FCDOT, our public transit partners.

[00:13:20] It's just one weekend, it seems, the main diversion, just to give people, encourage them to use alternate forms of transportation to get where they're going. If they're going to Bethesda, we have a new bus, but limited hours. And then clearly public outreach, but I assume you are targeting and having a one-on-one conversation.

[00:13:42] I just took the bridge this weekend with the affected homeowners that I think are mostly Drainsville, the ones who are looking at the revegetation or walls near there, right on their property, next to their property.

[00:13:58] The impacted homeowners, there have been opportunities, yes, for those communities and the communities that are impacted along the project to comment, come in during our hours. And we also have been sharing information. We share our project newsletter.

[00:14:17] It's e-blasted out. And we also have our stakeholder list where we put out information on the project on a regular basis. And that includes updates as to what has been going on with the revegetation plan. Okay, excellent. Because, yeah, that was probably the most helpful piece once it got down to the nitty-gritty on 66 was those who were directly impacted.

[00:14:37] Sometimes we or you would miss things that they were able to help us address quickly. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If you could go to slide six, just a question about the detours, and specifically, so the Dulles Toll Road and Dulles Access Road will both be closed for the duration of the weekend, is that right, and detoured?

[00:15:04] Yes. Okay, and where are those going to be detoured? So I'll let Rand Paul. Yeah, so the Dulles access road will still stay open. Okay. So the airport access will always be maintained for that weekend. Only the toll road will be closed.

[00:15:20] Okay. So the Dulles, if you are traveling on the Dulles toll road westbound, you will be able to take the ramp that goes from the westbound to the 495 northbound all the way up to the Georgetown Pike, and then you make a U-turn and come back to the 495 southbound.

[00:15:36] Okay. To go back to the tall road westbound. Okay. If you are coming on the eastbound, then you can come to the 123, and from 123 you will go back to the Scots Run where there is an express ramp, and you will again merge with the express traffic to go back to the 495 northbound.

[00:15:57] Okay. So the idea is to divert ultimately onto the toll lanes, not through Tyson's. No, because we are mainly, for the detour, we try to utilize as much interstate as possible, avoiding the arterial street.

[00:16:14] Okay. All right. Thank you. Any other questions on this topic? Hearing and seeing none, let's go into the next one, which is the 495 Southside Express Lanes Study.

[00:16:31] Okay. All right. To kick off this, I first like to always just highlight our regional express lanes network that we have in Northern Virginia. We have 94 miles of managed lanes.

[00:16:47] A recent quote that was just mentioned last week at the Governor's Conference was Northern Virginia has the world's most sophisticated managed lane network in the world, and I think that's something that the region can really be proud of. We have 495, 95, 66 outside the Beltway, inside the Beltway.

[00:17:08] We have lanes under construction right now on 495. We also have the OPITS ramp that is getting ready to open next month. And then we have 495 Southside that's under study that we're going to talk about today. So it's a really robust system of managed lanes.

[00:17:23] I think one of the other things that's impressive about this managed lane network is all of the other benefits that the region has been able to derive from this system, not just for toll-paying customers, but also those that travel for free on these lanes every day. We have 18,000 carpool or HOV3 trips that happen on our network every day. We have 2,600 bus trips that happen on our managed lane networks every day. We also have school buses that use

[00:17:59] these. We have received millions of dollars in transit payments that pay for capital improvements and ongoing operations monies from these lanes that just wouldn't have been possible and also added benefits from bike and pedestrian improvement. So it's really a big accomplishment from these and I think it kind of sets the stage to talk about the Southside study that we're conducting right now. It is an environmental study to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act. We're evaluating transportation improvements that would extend and provide continuity of the

[00:18:37] express lanes on the southern section of the Beltway where we currently do not have managed lanes. This is an ongoing study that we're doing in conjunction with various federal, state, regional, and local partners. We have regularly scheduled meetings monthly and weekly with these stakeholders, some of which are listed on this slide. This next slide shows the specific study area which i'm sure most of you are familiar with on the western end we begin at the springfield

[00:19:10] interchange and then we move eastward across the woodrow wilson bridge to into maryland at the 210 interchange and again last segment of the beltway where we do not have managed lanes currently the genesis for the study really was from the 2045 the visualized 2045 plan from tpb that really wanted to look at this last section of the Beltway where express lanes were not implemented.

[00:19:41] We kicked off our study in early 2022, and we have been working through that study. It is a NEPA study, so we have a purpose and need, as I mentioned, to evaluate transportation improvements to extend those express lanes. The needs for the study include system continuity, providing additional travel choices, travel reliability, safety, and then being consistent with those regional and local plans. We have three study alternatives that we're moving forward in the

[00:20:18] study right now. We have the no build, which is the existing condition that's required by NEPA, and that is a benchmark. And then we have the one express lane alternative and the two express lane alternative. On the next slide, we just have a graphical representation of the one express lane alternative. This would provide one express lane in each direction. This would begin on the western end near the railroad bridge that is just west of Van Doren Street and then would carry eastward to

[00:20:53] the Maryland 210. Our two express lane alternative is similar in nature. It would be two express lanes in each direction. This would mimic the configuration that we have on the western side of the Beltway. We would have two express lanes in each direction that would begin in the same location just west of Andoran Street. The two express lanes would carry across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge to the vicinity of 295 and then we would taper down to one express lane and this is

[00:21:27] just to transition back into the existing beltway alignment and that would carry east to the 210 interchange we've been working on some traffic analysis and so we wanted to kind of set the stage for that this traffic analysis is to support the nepa efforts that are underway for the project i think it's important to note maybe some differences about this corridor versus 95 versus

[00:21:57] or 66 versus in terms of directionality we don't have that defined a.m p.m back and forth that you might see on some of those other corridors that review reverse commute pattern you'll see on the graphic in front of you that the eastbound direction is in blue and the westbound direction is in orange so in the morning you see the westbound direction has a pretty high peak and then in the afternoon you'll see that that eastbound almost matches it and it's important to

[00:22:33] note that the the weekends are a little bit sporadic on this section of 495 as well and unpredictable if you've traveled on that section. On our next graphic we have set this up to talk about existing and future traffic conditions. We set this graphic up to look like what you might see on one of your travel apps on your phone this is the at the top of the graphic in the orange box we have the am condition and existing means 2023 traffic conditions and future is our horizon year

[00:23:11] we're using for our NEPA study which is 2050 so we'll talk about the lines you see at the top of the graphic in the top box am the second line from the top is heading in the westbound direction so That's if you're traveling from Maryland toward the Springfield Interchange.

[00:23:31] And you'll notice when you're leaving Maryland, you have some congestion from Maryland 210 toward the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. And it starts to dissipate as you approach the bridge. But the very top line on that graphic is the 2050 line.

[00:23:49] And you'll see that that starts to stretch across the bridge and toward Route 1 area. Similarly, in that top graphic, in the third line down will be the 2023 heading in the eastbound direction.

[00:24:07] So if you're traveling from Virginia toward Maryland, you'll see that there is some congestion around Van Doren Street, but that very bottom line is the 2050 traveling from Virginia toward Maryland, and you'll see all the way from the Springfield Interchange all the way to the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, there's some marked congestion.

[00:24:26] If we look at the bottom portion of the slide, that's the PM condition, you'll see some of the same issues heading from Maryland. You'll see that the top line is the 2050, and you'll see that that congestion heading from Maryland toward Virginia in the afternoon, that congestion grows in the 2050 condition.

[00:24:52] and then you'll notice the third line down that is the 2023 you see some congestion building just west of andoren street and then it gets markedly more congested as you head toward the woodrow wilson bridge but then the very bottom line 2050 you see red all the way from the springfield interchange to the woodrow wilson bridge that kind of sets us up to talk about our very next slide where we start to introduce and compare some of our travel times we introduce travel times not

[00:25:28] just for the existing and no build condition but also what they will be if we build the project with our study alternatives one express lane versus two i think it's important to note for the regional traffic model it is predicting in 2050 that there'll be approximately 300 000 vehicles that will travel across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. So that is a significant amount of traffic. If you'll notice on the left-hand side of the slide, that is our morning peak hour

[00:26:02] volumes. And at the very top there, you'll notice in the westbound local lanes between the existing and the no-build condition, there's about 16 minutes of travel time difference if we do nothing. And that improves if we have the express lanes built.

[00:26:20] If you look over on the right-hand side of the slide, in the eastbound local direction, that's vastly different. You go from 31 minutes to 152 minutes if we build nothing, so that's almost two hours of difference.

[00:26:36] But you'll notice with the express lanes built, you know, you have considerable travel time savings. You will notice at the top right-hand side of the slide, you'll see two boxes in red, and that is a

slight uptick if the express lanes are built, you know, about three minutes of travel time difference.

[00:26:58] That is due to the area where the merge from the express lanes back into the travel of the existing lanes would occur. But I would mention we still are moving more vehicles with building the express lanes. you're moving more more people more cars and the travel time savings in the a.m. that you see on the left hand side of that graphic would also counteract that we also want to talk about a little bit some of the other benefits that we would see many of these I'm sure you're you're

[00:27:32] very familiar with on the left hand side of that graphic I know most of you were at this event we had the monument drive garage and transit center opening in june that was paid for with concession funds from the 66 outside the beltway project and then just a month ago we cut the ribbon for the new fairfax county connector express bus service between tyson's and bethesda those funds are a combination of funds from the commonwealth but more importantly from our concession project on

[00:28:06] 495 next with a continued transit payment. Those are just two real examples and current examples of what can be achieved from a managed lane project. We're also familiar with the DRPT transit and TDM study that was conducted in conjunction with the Southside project and to help inform and benefit that. From this, a new bus service was identified between Prince George's county maryland and tyson's and we have committed to include that in the air conformity analysis

[00:28:42] that's underway with tpv right now this new bus service will be dependent on this project being procured as a successful p3 project but this was included in the modeling that is being currently conducted now and that is a commitment that we would incorporate in the project if it is moved forward successfully with project financing included. We also wanted to mention bike and pedestrian improvements that are important to these large-scale P3 projects. We've had successful

[00:29:19] implementation both on 66 and 495 next, and following that example, we are looking with the 495 Southside project to include areas that may have gaps or areas where we could convert sidewalk to shared use path. Specifically, we're looking between the Springfield Interchange and South Van Doren Street. We're looking near Eisenhower Avenue between South Van Doren Street and the Eisenhower Connector, and we're looking along Cameron Run between Telegraph Road and Route 1. This is a NEPA study, so we're looking at those in conjunction with the localities and their

[00:29:57] approved plans right now to be able to include some of those improvements in the project. Another aspect that's been important is preserving space for future metro rail. At the bottom of this graphic, you'll see an area where we have demonstrated the two express lanes alternative at the top of that graphic.

[00:30:21] And then at the bottom of the graphic, you can see where that can be converted in the future to accommodate one express lane and then metro rail in the future. This is allowing us to take advantage of the space that currently exists on the Woodrow Wilson Bridge today, and then in the future, we would still be able to operate an express lane and have that important metro rail service. We have a number of ways that we can commit to this and meet that commitment. One is through the NEPA document that we're working on today.

[00:30:51] This would be a commitment with the Federal Highway Administration, would be enforceable by them, and would have implications to our funding on our project if we did not meet that commitment. we also have made commitments through tpv commissioner britch wrote a letter to that effect just earlier

this summer making that commitment and then also in our contracts our concession agreements we would incorporate requirements to be able to make this conversion in the future that would not be compensation events that has been successfully done on the 66 outside the

[00:31:28] Beltway project, and so we have a real example of that that is active and in place on that project. I wanted to highlight just a few recent activities. As I mentioned, we have ongoing meetings on monthly and weekly basis with our partners, stakeholders, both within Virginia and Maryland on the project.

[00:31:49] We meet with stakeholder groups, citizen groups, as requested. We had a meeting earlier in October with the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens, and we're also conducting outreach with elected officials as requested on the project. We have our study schedule that we're working to.

[00:32:07] This is just our generalized schedule. We have had two rounds of public meetings, first in 2022 and then September of 2023. We'll be planning another round in early 2025, and then we'll be having a public hearing on the project mid-2025, and then we're anticipating the vote at TPV on inclusion of the project in the Visualize 2050 plan late next year.

[00:32:34] And that's my presentation. I'll be happy to answer questions. Thank you. I'll open it up, and I know that Chairman McKay probably has some comments. Yeah. First of all, thank you very much for the update. You know, I still believe this project is essential.

[00:32:51] I know not everyone feels that way, But, you know, this corridor of 495 was, in my mind, deliberately left behind for, you know, some challenging equity reasons. And it's time to fix that, especially to provide transit incentive for people in this portion of the county, whereas every other part of the county has that.

[00:33:12] There is no transit benefit, really, for traveling on 495 in this area, nor is there an incentive to carpool. And I think the numbers that we see here are staggering. Most troubling is obviously the no-build numbers that we talked about here before.

[00:33:29] And this region, through a federal earmark and through a lot of pain in construction, built a Woodrow Wilson Bridge that would sustain us for many, many decades moving forward. And what this shows is that even despite that infrastructure, if we just rest on our laurels and do nothing, we will have negated the benefits that bridge brought to us, which feels eerily similar to what we're dealing with with the American Legion Bridge.

[00:33:53] And so it is my hope that this project stays on track and that the study schedule that you have here stays on track because I do think it's essential to improving travel times and encouraging transit and carpool in this area. I guess the question that I have in looking at the study schedule and knowing we've run into some turbulence is probably the best way to describe it at TPB, which to me is stunning.

[00:34:20] Because when you look at these travel numbers, you know, you look at where people are coming from and where they're going. Yeah, they're leaving Maryland to come to Virginia to work. I mean, that's what we see every day in this section of the Beltway. That's just the reality that we're dealing with. And if Maryland doesn't support this project in the hopes that that somehow will change overnight, that's not going to happen.

[00:34:41] And I think the future traffic projections that you have here kind of show what would happen. And so I guess my question is heading towards mid to late 2025, the TPB is going to be voting again on whether to include this in the visualized 2050 plan.

[00:34:59] And I guess hopefully that happens and folks understand how important this is to the region. If that doesn't happen and there's still resistance from our counterparts in Maryland to this plan, have you given thought to truncating the project at all and what happens to the benefits?

[00:35:19] I would hate to see that happen, but I would also hate to see the entire project go away because of resistance in Maryland. And so if we are forced into a position where we have to change the layout of the project to keep it from extending deep into the state of Maryland, are we also looking at that as an alternative?

[00:35:41] And what does that do to the traffic and other benefits that are in this presentation? At this time, we are looking at just the study alternatives that have been presented, and I think we're hopeful that we will be successful in making our case with the traffic and the information that we're working on right now to be able to convince the region, and that's again our partners in Maryland, that it's a needed project and that we are working on traffic analysis to be able to demonstrate that we won't be creating traffic backups

[00:36:16] in maryland and there'll be a beneficial project for the whole region so hopefully we'll be able to achieve that goal and and not have to truncate the project and and and make this for the region a a viable project for everyone right 100 my goal at least and i would hope all of our goals uh to achieve that as well i'm just i'm concerned that if we don't give a look at what the consequences are of that. We will be too late then to try to salvage what's left of the project. And if the

[00:36:52] benefits are not as great, but there's still benefits to truncating the project, I think in fairness, the TPB and we need to know that, hey, if you had to do that, there's some real tangible project benefits to this. They're not nearly as great as if we were to move forward with one of scenarios here that's not a no-build scenario. But I think, I don't know that we need a sophisticated analysis of it, but it's going to be a question that's going to get asked for sure. And I would hope that we would have some high-level scientific analysis of that, maybe not to the level that

[00:37:29] we're seeing here in the work that you've done. But I do think we need to know that because one of the concerns is, which I think is ludicrous because you still can't get across the Potomac River, but I'm hearing these concerns about traffic diverting off onto Route 1 or Van Dorn Street or the GW Parkway, and that's nonsensical to me because if you do that, you still can't get across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, and so I'm just hoping that we're able to refute that piece of it and that in the back of our back pocket, we have what would happen if you truncated this project, and is that better than the no-build scenario, and by what order

[00:38:08] of magnitude so that we have that as a lifeline. I hope we don't get there, but I just am hoping we're prepared to deal with that. Thank you. I have Dan, then Dahlia, then Rodney, then Pat, then Walter. And please, lots of interest is good, but please be brief.

[00:38:30] Thanks. I'll try to be brief, but I think in general the community is not particularly supportive of this, and I don't know that that can be changed. But I think there's some things that have to be addressed. And the core of that is the gridlock that already exists.

[00:38:48] So it's hard to explain to a community that this will somehow improve things when it's already gridlocked eastbound in the afternoon hours. And efforts to, frankly, get more support from VDOT to maybe make an incremental difference here or there has not been reciprocated.

[00:39:05] So I'm going to start with that, which probably isn't good or bad. But it's what it is. That's all I can say. And that gridlock extends into the neighborhoods. And I have to know, when I'm looking at the minutes that are on here, I'm looking, is that a rainy day or not? Or is that a day that the bridge has already got problems?

[00:39:23] So we know that, in general, those are the core issues. Number one is the gridlock that already exists. And will this really make much of a difference in that? I think we're all very skeptical. I'm open to it, but we're skeptical to it. Seconding is all of the different on and off ramps that this might require.

[00:39:43] And the whole objective that community has had for decades now preceded me for sure. And a key part of what we actually the FCDOT got done is the HAT study, the Huntington Area Traffic Study. If you're not familiar with that, a key part of that which VIA has accepted and we're moving forward with is to minimize the offerants and on-reps and really the above-grade changes that that would require.

[00:40:14] And that is a key part of what people are very concerned about, is we're interested in keeping this a community and not creating this another pass-through for commuters. That's what Richmond Highway has been. That's what Route 1 has been for decades and what we're moving away from.

[00:40:30] And we're concerned that this potentially adds to the cut-throughs, et cetera, as a result of what we know is Cooley issues and challenges with the bridge. And then we know we have other kinds of mobility that we need, obviously the transit.

[00:40:48] And I know there's many in the community that are, maybe I'll say they're cautious or maybe skeptical is a better word, that, in fact, that something that is very lucrative to a company with respect to this will somehow disappear when Metro is ready to take a heavy rail across.

[00:41:08] So I know that's a huge part of the concern that we have. And the issue of Maryland and whether or not we, and I know this is expressed to you, if we don't have some kind of true engagement and true handoff with Maryland, We don't see how this really is going to create something improved over what we have now.

[00:41:30] And then the core for us that we see is to try to minimize all that as a better relationship and a better connectivity with what WMATA is or isn't doing. I know there's some general plans that WMATA has, but I'd say to go back and summarize, we don't want more high-level, above-grade ingress, egress.

[00:41:52] We need to address the absolute gridlock that we have now at Fort Hunt Road and Richmond Highway Intersection and get more support and effort from VDOT to help mitigate some of that. And we need other ways to have reduced the amount of cut-throughs that are already occurring and that, frankly, are going to get worse if your general travel lanes have much higher pass-through level or reduced levels versus express lines.

[00:42:24] So we're truly going to create a Lexus lane, and that's not what, in general, our community is going to support and reliable support. So there's a lot of work to be done is kind of where I'm saying we are and a lot of things that need to be proven. And we need to move the conversation in a way that people feel like it truly could be a win-win because right now it doesn't feel that way.

[00:42:47] Well, and that's where I think our traffic analysis is starting to point. that the 2050 no-build shows there will be just increased gridlock if we do nothing along this quarter, not just on the interstate, but on the arterials as well. And so I think that that is the first step in demonstrating that. I think we've mentioned in our public meetings, the number one goal with the project is to limit the extra right-of-way that would be needed. I mean, obviously, when you build a project, there's some right-of-way needs, but the idea is to stay within

[00:43:22] the footprint the best that we can and to limit those impacts and then we've talked about all of the other benefits i think that you can gain from some of these projects multimodal type benefits that could include some of those things that you're talking about that are important to the communities in those areas and getting other modes of mobility around that might not be able to happen without the funding that is derived from managed lane projects i think those are all key parts of the conversation and and those I think need to be more in-depth and and have better outcomes than what what I in the community feel is is where we are

[00:44:00] right now thank you thank you thank you Supervisor Palachuk yielded her time to Supervisor Lesk thank you very much I appreciate that I'll go quickly so first I'm gonna align myself with some of the comments that were just made by Supervisor Stork particularly with the arterials Franconia and South Van Doren hopefully there will be some evaluation and information that can be shared in those public meetings about what's going to be the impact on those arterials because I think that foundationally is a question that people really want to

[00:44:36] have some answer to um additionally I want to thank you for the comments you made about the pedestrian and bicycle improvements that will be at South thing during in the interchange so that's really really important so thank you for that and then I wanted to ask we've been trying to get the answer to this I'm not sure if we're at a place where you can right now but do we now have any sense of what the maximum areas of disturbance are going to be with either option one lane or two in terms of the limits for the project well this is a NEPA study

[00:45:12] So we will have generalized areas, but it's not a engineered, like we haven't moved forward to the project development phase of the project where we have, you know, gone out and done hard survey, engineered drawings, so we wouldn't know exact limits of disturbance.

[00:45:30] We'd have generalized areas. I think that's a good story. I mean, I guess the point I'm making here is right now there are a number of property owners who've been kind of suspended with their reviews for their projects because they have no sense of what we're talking about in terms of that land disturbance.

[00:45:48] So I don't know when you're going to be able to share that information, but that's going to be extraordinarily helpful for those individuals. So I'll look forward to that. I don't know if you have an answer now or possibly when that would be available. We would have a better idea of a schedule for that once we have some determination on if the project can move forward as a P3 or not, and that will be dependent someone on inclusion in the CLRP, and then we'll have a definitive schedule on how we'd be able to schedule the project for procurement and then advance to construction.

[00:46:24] Do you have an estimate? I mean, I'm not holding you to it, but just getting a sense of what we can express to those who are asking us about the timing for this. I wouldn't want to venture to say right now on that, on a construction start date at this point. Okay. And then last question is, if we've thought

about the commuter choice program being used, if we are going to go forward with the project, how we can help minimize some of the, you know, issues with congestion in the project itself?

[00:46:58] So if the project is a successful P3 project, it would move forward, then that could be annualized transit payments, things of that nature. It could be worked into the terms as we set up that concession agreement.

[00:47:17] And things like I mentioned earlier in the presentation, that specific bus route or other things, could be worked in. And that, again, depends on some of the financing and the terms as we move through those concession deals. I hope so because I think it helped improve mobility, and I think it's a thing the community would certainly support.

[00:47:36] So just wanted to throw it out there. So with that, I'll conclude my questions, and thank you, Mr. Sherman, and thank you, Supervisor Palchek. Supervisor Herity, and then Supervisor Alcorn. And I'll try to be real quick. Thank you for pointing out the benefits of the express lanes to carpoolers and buses because it's often overlooked when we talk about Lexus lanes.

[00:47:58] It really does provide us a way to run mass transit and get people there quicker, which is the number one reason they will take buses. Is there a question? Is there a federal requirement? I couldn't remember to keep rail across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge.

[00:48:16] Is that a federal requirement? Is that a state? It was originally in the neighborhood document when the bridge was originally constructed. So we're going to have to. In a regional compact. Okay. Do we know what the cost is going to be to keep that option in of the conversion?

[00:48:37] Is that something we're going to figure out what the cost is as a part of the NEPA process? We don't have that information. I know you don't now, but is that going to be a part of it? We are working with WMATA, and we're going to have some technical sessions to talk about as best we can with information that's available, conversion in the future, how that would work, constructability issues, and those sorts of topics.

[00:49:08] So we're going to talk about that. Our technical teams between us at VDOT and WMATA, so we'll get to some of those details. Obviously, my concern is driving the cost of that project too high because we're going to have to keep that corridor for future rail with the WMATA system and the shape it is in today.

[00:49:31] Is that ever going to be a reality or probability, especially when you've got the ability to run bus rapid transit and other systems in that corridor, as we have successfully done in other corridors? But it would be interesting to see what the price tag would be.

[00:49:50] If there's a way to get that, that would be interesting. Supervisor Alcott. Thank you. I just wanted to thank VDOT for listening to folks in terms of expanding what's being studied under this NEPA process.

[00:50:07] I know the commitment on this not being a compensation event should Metro Rail come through significant and also looking at the single lane as well as the dual lanes is a big step.

[00:50:28] So thank you all very much for doing that. But I guess, and this is really just more of a comment, even, you know, looking at slide 10, you know, even with the express lanes, that afternoon still

looks really bad. So, I mean, it just occurs to me that, you know, there have to be some other approaches come up with here.

[00:50:56] I mean, it looks horrible without this, but it looks bad even with it. So it just occurs to me that 2050 is going to be rough in the afternoons. Chairman McKay?

[00:51:11] Actually, I was going to comment on the same thing Supervisor Alcorn did because I hear the concern about the arterials around here. Those arterials right now, if there's an incident on this section of the beltway, mimic the no-build. If you, I mean, honestly, if there's something that happens on the Beltway, you can forget Van Dorn and Route 1, which is why I'm so challenged understanding this concern, because this concern, if we do nothing, and you're looking at 152 minutes on that eastbound local,

[00:51:46] you can guarantee Franconia Road, Route 1, Huntington Avenue will be the roads people are cutting through to get around that. Guaranteed. I mean, we know what this looks like. We see it today. So I would just say if we're going to look at the impacts on those roads, in fairness, let's look at what the no-build impact is as well.

[00:52:07] Because to me, the number one driver of the traffic on those roads is what happens to be happening on the Beltway at that moment, at least on some of them. And so if we're not serious about fixing the gridlock that exists on the Beltway by thinking about carpools and transit, you won't be able to move on these roads around this area.

[00:52:27] And I think that's what these numbers show. So I just want to make sure that's a part of what we look at if we go looking at these other side roads is, you know, obviously what is the impact of, you know, elevated roadways or other things that might impact the community that would need to be installed?

[00:52:44] Absolutely. But also the biggest impact I'm worried about sitting here today is what happens if we do nothing on those roads. And I think that's something that hasn't really been spoken about very clearly with the community Because their concern is increased traffic in those areas, and they're not linking it.

[00:53:04] There's somehow some confusion that this project is going to bring more traffic to those areas. And the reality is the gridlock on 495 is going to be what brings more traffic to those areas. So I hope we look at that. If we do look at it, we look at it fairly and comprehensively because there seems to be misinformation out there somewhere.

[00:53:22] It just doesn't logically line up. Thank you. I'll close by, you know, taking a little risk here to synthesize the comments of my colleagues and say I think it's very clear that what you've provided and what's being studied here is extremely useful, especially with the no-build.

[00:53:42] But it's also clear that there are other outstanding issues that need to be studied. And going back to Chairman McKay's original point, that it's also worth studying essentially – you could call it the half-build. You could call something if we don't go all the way towards what we want to do.

[00:54:01] And like we've learned in other parts of the county, public outreach and public engagement is absolutely critical, obviously. And like we know in other parts of the county, going back to, again, something Chairman McKay just said, if the Beltway is backed up, every road around there is in trouble.

[00:54:22] So we need to figure out how to make sure that the Beltway isn't backed up. And I'll only close by saying I really, really hope that Maryland gets on board with helping us with Beltway traffic. Thank you.

With that, we're going to move to the next item on the agenda, which is actually not the next item on the agenda.

[00:54:38] It's the third item. We're going to go in backwards order and go with local authority for setting speed limits. As you may know, we were given local authority to bring down the speed limits in certain jurisdictions, like our neighbors in Falls Church City, that can be really easy because they don't have that many roads and they just decided 20 is plenty. But in our county, we have a lot more roads, a lot more opportunities here. So I'm going to turn it over to Vanessa Holt, who's going to tell us a little bit about some of the ideas for how we're going to use, could potentially use,

[00:55:14] our local authority for reducing speed limits. Go ahead. 10 minutes. Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Vanessa Holt. I'm an engineer in the traffic engineering section at FCDOT, and today I'm going to be discussing the county's authority to reduce speed limits on certain 25 mile per hour roads.

[00:55:35] Today's conversation is a follow-up to the September Board Transportation Committee discussion that we had. I'm going to give you a brief overview of what's been done in other jurisdictions, review VDOT's guidance for the process, and then discuss recommendations and considerations with you all for implementing both a pilot study and then some considerations for future implementations beyond that pilot. And lastly, get your feedback and answer any questions that you might have. As we discussed in September, HB 1071 became law in July of this year.

[00:56:08] The authority allows the county to reduce speed limits on roads that are currently posted with signs as 25 miles per hour to less than 25, but not less than 15 miles per hour. And for a road to be a candidate, it must be located in a business or residence district. And the county is required to pass an ordinance and provide written notice to VDOT 30 days prior to changing a speed limit.

[00:56:36] As Supervisor Palczyk mentioned at our September meeting, the city of Falls Church has reduced speed limits on most of their residential streets to 20 miles per hour. They selected those streets because they would need very little to no additional enforcement, and they replaced about 100 signs total to do all of those changes, and their total budget was $100,000, just to give you an idea of scale. Montgomery County, Maryland also implements 20 mile per hour reduced speed limits on a road-by-road basis. They started with a pilot with five roads in 2021, and they've expanded to

[00:57:14] over 100 roads. There are several other mostly urban jurisdictions that have implemented speed limit reductions using a default speed for all roads of a certain type. The district, Portland, Seattle, and Cambridge, Massachusetts all reduced their speed limit on most of their local residential streets to 20. In Portland, they studied 58 sites and they saw that 57% of those sites had a decrease in average speed. And 69% of the sites saw a decrease in the number of vehicles driving greater

[00:57:50] than 30 miles per hour. And the reason that that is meaningful is given the link to crash severity for our most vulnerable road users like pedestrians in particular. Cambridge, Massachusetts had pretty similar results and the results were very mixed on a case-by-case basis. Like I said, 57% had decrease in average speed. Some saw increases, and their studies both found that roadway context and characteristics were, you know, really had a factor in whether or not a speed limit reduction was effective. Things like road width, the condition of the pavement, and presence of curbs affected

[00:58:24] those outcomes. So VDOT has issued us guidance for their process for locality requests. So first, we would need to send a notification to VDOT that we want to change the speed limit on a specific road. That notification has to include an approved ordinance and a map showing all the sign locations where we would be adding new signs or replacing existing signs. VDOT would then review, provide comments back to us, at which point we would need to apply for a land use permit for locality reduced speed limits, which is a new category of land use permit that they've created specifically

[00:59:03] for this use. After obtaining the permit, we would then install signs, notify VDOT. VDOT would then confirm that the sign locations meet all MUTCD and VDOT requirements, and at that point record the speed limit change in their statewide database. If the county proposes a reduced speed limit on a road that has an existing school zone or traffic signal, we will need to review any context-specific concerns on a location-by-location basis. Current VDOT guidance says that the county would be responsible for procuring and installing all new speed limit signs and replacing existing ones,

[00:59:42] but we plan to have ongoing discussions with VDOT as we move the pilot through implementation. VDOT included some additional recommendations in their guidance document, and the purpose is to enhance the effectiveness of the speed limit reductions that we decide to pursue. They recommend coordinating with local law enforcement as we develop a program, which I think Supervisor Harity had mentioned the last time we spoke, we want to make sure that we're selecting roads that have what they call self-enforcing characteristics.

[01:00:14] So things like pedestrian activity, sidewalks, marked crosswalks, on-street parking, things that would contribute to, you know, drivers maintaining a lower speed. I know Chairman McKay mentioned that when we spoke in September, you know, on certain roads with certain characteristics, it's very difficult to maintain a 15 to 20 mile per hour speed when you're driving a vehicle. VDOT also notes that reduced speed limits on roads that are very wide and straight likely wouldn't be obeyed for those reasons I just discussed. They recommend that any road segments that we select are at least 0.2 miles, which is about a thousand feet

[01:00:52] long, because drivers are more likely to follow speed limits that are uniform and we need to consider continuity with other existing speed limits on the roads that we're choosing to pursue reductions for. So for our pilot study, we are recommending that we set a target, reduce speed limit for 20 miles per hour. VDOT's guidance recommends that we reserve that 15 category for streets like Dead End and cul-de-sac streets. And like we touched on before, I think 15 would be a difficult target for a lot of drivers to maintain. We anticipate that we could accommodate

[01:01:32] accommodate implementation for three pilot roads with our existing staff resources. So we're recommending that the board and board aides and FCDOT staff work together to select candidate roads for the pilot study. We can screen for roads that meet the minimum qualifications, so the residential business posted at 25. And then we're proposing to screen those candidates using the vulnerability index to ensure that we're considering equity, like Supervisor Jimenez noted noted last time we spoke and then just considering input for board members as well so

[01:02:06] get a list of roads that would meet the qualifications and then get your input in that if our list ends up being still long we need a further screen we could look at roads that began the RTAP process I think you brought that up last time but didn't qualify we'd like to get input from the police on any potential enforcement challenges we can use the spot improvement screening ranking and then existing context as

well. So we have a lot of additional data points that we can use to further screen the list if we end up having a very long list. We're proposing that once we narrow the list

[01:02:41] down, that we present those pilot roads to the local communities and then gauge their receptiveness. We want to work with the board offices to connect with those communities, but, you know, if a community ultimately doesn't want it, you know, we think that maybe we should go to another road on the candidate list and reach out to another community. So beyond the pilot, we're proposing to report back to the board within a year of pilot implementation, we would conduct before and after speed studies, gather feedback, and evaluate any issues that we had during implementation, present the results to you all, and then you all can decide how and if you want to proceed with future implementation.

[01:03:22] Quickly, some of the items I think we need to consider if we decide to move forward beyond the pilot include how are we going to select roads in the future? Who would make those requests? Would they come from residents, HOAs and civic associations like we do with other processes? Would they come just from board staff?

[01:03:39] If we did propose a community-led process like we do in RTAP, for example, it would require a significant amount of staff time and resources. And then when we receive requests, how would we prioritize them, particularly if we got them from residents? You know, how would we decide, you know, would it be first in, first out?

[01:03:57] Would we be using data, things like that? how would we consider equity in a request-based process and then also just how to consider those speed continuity and driver expectation issues within established communities that have you know for example all 25 mile per hour roads right now um again we would need to consider how we would want to do the community engagement at that point also depending on the scale of the program we decided to move forward um funding and resource needs are really dependent upon how we decide to move forward. There are a lot of roads in the county that would potentially be eligible right

[01:04:35] now. And so depending on how we implement it, there could be a need for additional staff and resources depending on the scope and scale. I think Supervisor Bierman had mentioned, should we implement it under an existing program like RTAP? That's something to consider because it would give the community buy-in. Some other considerations, if we lower speed limits, you know, more roads would probably qualify for traffic calming, potentially impacts to existing $200 fine for speed signs. And, you know, VDOT's process and their guidelines for any speed limit change includes field review, preparation of maps, their review process. So

[01:05:13] it's all going to take us some time to process any of these requests. So the feedback I'm asking from you all for the pilot study, I'd like your input on how we're going to select the roads in the pilot, if you're okay with the approach generally that I laid out, or if you have comments.

[01:05:29] Are you okay with moving forward with selecting three streets for the pilot? And are you okay with the target 20-mile-per-hour reduced speed limit? And then if you have any comments at this time about implementation beyond the pilot, I'd like to hear your feedback as well.

[01:05:46] And that's all I have. Thank you. A quick poll of members of the board of supervisors. Who has had someone ask you about this program? Yeah, okay. So I just don't think three roads is going to work for the pilot.

[01:06:02] I don't know that it has to be nine because apparently we've got two who didn't, but it's got to be more than three because each one of us, I've gotten multiple requests all over my district, not saying that we're going to do it all over my district, but I do think the idea of a pilot study makes sense.

[01:06:23] I think the idea of trying to figure out, I also appreciate that you've identified other considerations for how we do this, equity considerations, prioritization. This is not, unfortunately, like a lot of things in government, it's not as simple as it necessarily seems.

[01:06:43] But I personally think that if each supervisor district has the opportunity, given the number of requests that we are receiving, to try and determine where we're going to put or pilot this, I think each supervisor district needs to have that opportunity.

[01:07:01] And so I guess my question is, what goes into – you said you thought that you had staff time, staffing that would allow you to do three roads. What is it going to take to scale that up? Hi, Neil Freshman, Fairfax County DOT.

[01:07:18] So Vanessa and I have been discussing this, and essentially in the pilot, we're proposing to use our existing RTAP staff to collect data. And most likely, we would have to do field visits for more locations than are ultimately selected.

[01:07:38] So it's the field work. And then also, we haven't gone through the VDOT process yet of what we have to submit. We're hoping it goes smoothly, but that's why we're doing a pilot. And, you know, if we want to go beyond three, we could do it similar to the way we do, let's say, traffic calming or other RTAP programs, where we phase them. So we work on them in time. We have a schedule and we take them forward as we

[01:08:10] have the capacity to do so. Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yeah. First, I definitely support us doing a pilot. My concern with three is actually not to do with the magisterial districts, but to do with just the different environments that we have in the county. I'm not sure through three you're going to be able to capture all the different environments we have you know quasi rural heavy industrial or heavy pedestrian traffic area and so I'm not sure we're going to

[01:08:44] get enough sample to tell us where in what environments in the county might steer the criteria we use for future implementation if we don't test it in enough different physical environments so i don't know what the number is i think to fairly represent the the diversity of geography in the county you're probably going to need more than three um i do think 20 miles per hour sounds fine i'm not sure all the reasons how we got to that other than you know it's what seems to be the norm to answer that question i think it's fine the last one for implementation beyond

[01:09:19] the pilot study i think we've heard a lot of challenges that you're going to have uh but frankly, I'm hoping the data from the pilot helps steer us towards the answers to that question. I don't think we should be answering those before we know what worked, what didn't work. You know, I'm focusing back on the speed cameras, and we had all hoped for a certain outcome, and it turned out that's exactly what they were doing. It was changing driving behavior. It was measurable. We had data to support expanding it to the next step. I would like to see that data for this,

[01:09:55] what worked and what didn't work before we try to solve for a longer term, you know, application of this moving forward. Understanding from you that we have been presented with what staff believes could be a lot of complications with that. Let's see what the pilot shows us and learn from that

before we have to necessarily tackle that piece of it. So I would just say let's take a look at more than three, whatever that number is, that you think you can get a fair geographic representation of the different features of the county where these could be applied, and then let's take a hard look at the data to determine what the next steps beyond the pilot would be.

[01:10:33] Agreed. Supervisor Smith. Vice Chair Smith. So, when I, I'm having a hard time with new things these days, when we're looking that we're doing too much and we've got to see what we can't do.

[01:10:52] And so to me, if we're going to do this, it should be focused on a problem. Where do we have a problem? Where do the police see this is dangerous and it's bad? Over time, I've seen that the rationale is, this is my thinking, that if you can't give a ticket until you're 10 miles over the speed limit, 35 is too much in the neighborhood.

[01:11:19] Okay, I've come to accept that. But I'm going to be looking at everything with limited resources. I'm going to be looking at all the things that we want to do. And so for me, I don't know the right number for the pilot.

[01:11:35] I really appreciate Neil's comments about trying to use the resources we have now until we figure out more. But to me, there needs to be a piece of what dangerous problem are we solving by doing this in the locations we do it. And, you know, I think we do need to check it out and see if it provides a benefit or a difference for that.

[01:11:56] But I am really cautious about right now having any mindset about expanding until we know a lot more and we weigh this with all the other things we do. Supervisor, sorry, Supervisor Walkinshaw and then Supervisor Palachuk. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[01:12:13] And, you know, I'm on board with the pilot. You know, I think for me, and I said this at the last meeting, I don't know how this doesn't ultimately become part of the RTAP process. Maybe that's just one piece of it.

[01:12:29] But I don't know how through the RTAP process we go to communities and say, here's the list of options you have, speed hump, signage, and we don't give them this as an option, maybe when it's appropriate pursuant to the standards that we set.

[01:12:48] And to Supervisor Smith's point, you know, in the RTAP process, if a community chooses this reduced speed limit, perhaps in lieu of speed humps, I think, correct me if I'm wrong, that'll be a net savings to us.

[01:13:04] Because the installation of speed humps is more than replacing the speed limit signs. Yes. Yes. Okay. All right. Just make sure I wasn't way off there. Yeah.

[01:13:18] So I guess for the pilot, you know, what I would recommend is maybe even looking at a community that has gone through the RTAP process and through the balloting process rejected speed humps, as we know, you know, it's sometimes the case, to see whether that community would be interested in a 20-mile-per-hour speed limit, which might give us an indication that this could work as part of the RTAP process.

[01:13:49] And then if long-term we have this as an RTAP option, that's kind of like, you know, part A of reduced speed limits, we then maybe have targeted, you know, county-directed speed limit reductions in key areas that make sense, that have maybe the design elements that you shared to the chairman's point.

[01:14:12] But I just don't see how we can not offer this as part of the RTAP process when communities are asking for things, assuming that VDOT would allow us to do that. Agreed. Supervisor Palchik.

[01:14:28] Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I'm very happy to follow that because I was listening to Vice Chair Smith and wondering some similar things, right, as we, A, make sure that we look at the cost to implement through the pilot compared to some of our other programs.

[01:14:44] not like a very detailed cause, but I assume it's going to be pretty similar, unless there's something we've missed that we can learn through the pilot. And with that currently, the main difference might be who is in charge of the signage, whether it's us or VDOT, compared to the existing program. Again, this is Neil Freshman. So yeah, according to the VDOT guidance that has been released, the county would be responsible for the speed limit signage, and there might be other additional signage necessary in order to have a speed limit change.

[01:15:24] And I guess I mean compared to existing programs. Well, we already do install signs for various programs, so we would build onto that, but of course this would be additional funds to do these signs. And I think a good reference is the numbers Vanessa provided of another jurisdiction.

[01:15:52] The city of Falls Church had replaced 100 signs, and their budget was about $100,000. And I can tell you're driving through there every day, and it's very effective. But I also wanted to point out that to that point, when we look at geography, many of our older parts of the county have narrower roads, right?

[01:16:12] So we definitely have to understand the different existing engineering studies. And I absolutely agree with Supervisor Rockenshaw that I don't see a reason why unless this is somehow not a successful pilot, but hopefully it's not the case.

[01:16:28] I mean, we talk about the three E's of improving safety, right? Education, enforcement, and engineering. Engineering being the most effective but also the most costly. So I think this is both education and enforcement, if done right, and gives us an additional tool that in comparison to other tools like engineering is quite low, right, and quite high on return on investment on that, quite not as costly.

[01:16:56] So appreciate our concerns with the costs, but I know as we continue to see pedestrian fatalities or tragic incidents, crashes, that I absolutely hope we make it a larger pilot, that we grasp as much information as possible, and clearly work with our partners like the police who created a very successful pilot for the speed camera program.

[01:17:23] Supervisor Alcorn, last comment, but note that you will be cutting into the time we're talking about your other favorite subject. metro so go ahead i was just going to say the uh i i support the pilot you know one suggestion on the variation is maybe looking at where we already have traffic calming in place but maybe it's not been working quite as well um it's as one option to look at and you know maybe other places where there's not existing traffic calming and then the other point just to remind everybody this is This is kind of a phased-back authority that we had asked for.

[01:18:02] We have a lot of roads that are 35 mile per hour, 40 mile per hour that need probably lower speed limits too, but we don't have that authority. So this is a big step, at least for those roads that might make the most sense.

[01:18:17] Thank you. Thank you. With that, I lied. We started four minutes late. We're going to go at least four minutes over. We're going to go to the last subject, which is DMV Moves, to get an update from Clark

Mercer with COG about what's going on with DMV Moves and Metro funding and all of those fun issues.

[01:18:37] So thank you for being here, and the floor is yours. Put these guys on. There we go. Clark Mercer, director at COG. It's nice to see everyone. Here we have a 430. Hard stop, so I'm not going to trespass on your time, but want to give an overview.

[01:18:54] 434. Okay. All right. Excellent. I want to give you an overview of what DMV Moves is, why it was put together, what our timetable mission and goals are. I started at COG last January, so I think many of you know I was down in Richmond for 12 years and worked with many of you on Metro funding issues.

[01:19:14] I think since the day Metro opened, institutions observed that the funding model for Metro was not sustainable and needed to be addressed. So we've got 10 minutes to talk about a 50-year-old funding issue that hopefully we're going to solve. Last year, there was a funding gap for Metro that the region stepped up in a big way to fill to the tune of $480 million.

[01:19:38] And that, as a backstop, I think folks know this. The way we fund Metro in Virginia is different than in Maryland and in D.C. In Maryland, the Metro bill goes to Annapolis. They pay it out of the capital, and they don't split it with the localities. In D.C., they don't have that luxury from the capital to the, you know what I'm saying.

[01:19:57] dc pays their bill and they pay the the most out of the three virginia pays the third amount out of the three states and the state typically splits that bill with localities so the caos and we'll talk a little bit about mr hill in a moment his role with this but tend to pay i would say the most attention of the regional partners in terms of what the bill with metro is so there have been lots of studies and commissions and groups put together to one look at the funding model for metro and two look to how we can drive efficiencies and better coordinate across the region.

[01:20:29] We don't just have Metro, while Metro provides about 87% of the transit in this region. We've got a dozen bus companies, we've got VRE, we've got MARC, we've got Bus Rapid Transit, we've got Capital Bikes. We have a lot of things that fall under that transit umbrella. So number one, when we talked about putting together an effort to look at transit in this region, we need to look at all of transit, because all of transit is facing some fiscal challenges over the next several years.

[01:20:54] most relevant. Here, VRE is facing the exact kind of fiscal cliff that Metro is facing in the next couple of years. So that was number one. Number two, I wanted to make sure that we had all stakeholders at the table. So DC, Maryland, and Virginia, legislative branch, executive branch, but also all of the local and stakeholders that we work with. So we have two work groups in DMV Moves. One is a community partners group that's led by Jack McDougal. He's the chair of the Board of Trade. And that includes representatives from all the business groups that you work with. So Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce, Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance, Federal City

[01:21:29] Council, all of your large businesses, a lot of businesses that rely heavily on metro, so the nationals are at the table, monumental sports are at the table, commanders are at the table, groups like 930 Club that run a lot of music, different venues, all of your environmental groups are at the table, your labor groups, your unions are at the table, your advocacy groups for riders, your advocacy groups for those with disabilities. It's a large table. It's bigger than this. And the reason we did that was folks may not agree on recommendations at the end of the day, but I said I'm not comfortable leading an effort or co-leading an effort where anyone's

[01:22:07] left out. I want folks to be able to raise their hand if you have a question about any aspect of how transit or metro is funded or operated. You need to be able to ask it. You need to be able to answer it. So that's the community partners group. The government partners group is led by your CAO, Mr. Hill, and that includes all the CAOs from Maryland, D.C., and Virginia, and includes the CFO's office, which is a rather robust operation from the District of Columbia, and it includes all the transit operators. So everyone running a bus company, VRE marks at the table, V-dot, M-dot, D-dot are all there as well. And Brian was asked if he would take this

[01:22:47] leadership role. And I didn't tell him I would say this, but he was asked because Brian really does play a leadership role in this region with his counterparts. They respect him, they listen to him, and Brian really doesn't suffer for a lot of nonsense, asks tough questions, and will hold both COG and Metro's feet to the fire throughout this process. So he was asked because if we can work through a process with his stamp of approval at the end, I feel confident we can get other folks on board as well. The task force includes representatives from Governor Youngkin's office, Governor Moore's office, Mayor Bowser's office, we have the

[01:23:23] executive branch covered, legislative branch, we've got Delegate Sickles and Senator Serville here from Virginia, we've got multiple members of DC City Council, and then we've got a delegate and Senator from Mayor and Delegate Corman who leads transportation and budgeting in the state of Maryland. So we have the right folks at the table here in this room. We've got Chairman McKay, and we've got Supervisor Lusk. And I will say when I asked Chairman McKay if he would entertain participating in this effort, he first, I don't know if he declined at first, but close to a decline, and framed it as we've been through this before as a region. We've done a lot of studies

[01:24:02] on metro, on transit, on how we can make this work more efficiently and effective, and nothing's been done. So I've got no interest in sitting through a series of meetings over the next year or two with no action. And if you're willing to commit to putting some recommendations on the table that will push us, the elected officials, to take action, then I'll participate.

[01:24:21] And that's the goal. I will say with the time we have here, just kind of an open statement. If you have questions, if you have constituents that have specific questions about funding, governance models, let me know. Let Brian know. We will get you the answers.

[01:24:38] I know roughly rough order of magnitude. And rough order of magnitude is this region's going to have to come up with anywhere between six, 700 million and a billion dollars starting in FY28 to fund the system that we have today. And if you think that's somehow unique or special to WMATA, it's not. LA has a $3 billion hole. New York has a $2 billion hole. Chicago has a $1 billion hole. It is across the entire country, this transit cliff. And we can talk about why that is. COVID, inflation was a big reason. Obviously, we're hopeful that inflation doesn't rise as quickly as it has risen, but prices aren't going back down to where they were

[01:25:14] four or five years ago. They rose rather steadily, rather quickly, and when you are an operation that employs a lot of people, has a lot of infrastructure, that costs a good amount of money. At the COG board retreat this summer, we had the Chicago folks involved in looking at their transit issues come and talk with us and kind of give us their observations that are a little bit further ahead with the planning, but nobody's found the silver bullet. I want to say that to backdrop of this and with WMATA providing 87% of

the transit, the commitment that they made to me and to COG, I said, look, I'm newish at this role at the council.

[01:25:53] We have a really good reputation for providing reliable data, objective data. If we do this, you're going to have to be open and transparent and answer the questions that we have. And if you don't, we're not going to be quiet about it. We're going to push you on it. And in their defense, they've answered questions that we've thrown at them.

[01:26:10] They get a lot of questions. going to kind of go to some efficiencies that can be driven one of them is looking at all the requirements that have been hung on metro over the last 50 years and maybe taking a step back and looking to streamline those six or seven audits that they go through every year they're just finished their ninth year of clean audits but that's one example they answer a lot of questions they are leading the leading transit agency in the country with recovering ridership so they're back to 81 of the ridership they had pre-pandemic and that's 43 consecutive months of growth so last week was kind of a banner week for them. They had the highest ridership since 2020 with trips of over

[01:26:46] 900,000 trips daily, Tuesday through Thursday, and 1 million combined trips on the weekend. And, you know, we talked, you all talked two presentations ago about 495 in the Beltway, and the number of folks sitting in traffic. 1990, this region had 3 million people. We've got 6 million now. We're going to add a million and a half over the next 20 to 30 years. So those projections about what it looks like sitting in traffic if we don't do something is correct. And And like I tell everyone that prefers to drive and then prefers to drive with no one else in their car, if we don't have a robust transit system, you're never getting anywhere.

[01:27:19] So the two are connected here. I think you've probably heard all the statistics, but it's worth repeating. The COG footprint in Virginia goes to Prince William. It's 4% of the geography of Virginia. It's 44% of the GDP. And there's $330 billion in property value around metro stations.

[01:27:39] The metro system itself, 1.2 million metric tons of greenhouse gases are avoided by transit each year. There's 1.2 million auto trips avoided each day by 2025. And over half of the region's 240,000 businesses, more than 70% of its 2.5 million jobs, are within a half mile of a metro stop.

[01:28:00] So DMV moves, we'll talk about the money, which I'm sure folks want to talk about. But there's two pieces to DMV moves. And we started with defining what it is we want out of transit. And it's kind of hard to talk about how much something's going to cost if you can't agree on what that something is.

[01:28:18] So the task force spent a good amount of time kind of defining what they want out of transit in this region. And there's some DMV goals. All of this is on our website that I can share with you. I'm not going to read through each of these goals, but it touches on environmental. It recognizes the economic engine.

[01:28:35] I was listening to that discussion on 495. I'm born and raised in Alexandria. I live near Telegraph Road. There's no company that's going to locate in this part of the state if we can't move folks around So we've got up. We've got to solve these issues and not to be cliched But you know in all of the above approach to get things moving is probably apropos Before I get into the the areas where there's we can achieve I think better coordination and efficiencies for the system You know we have looked at metros capital and their operating budget We've compared that against operating and capital budgets within this region and nationally and happy to share

[01:29:13] Those benchmarks, but they have grown at between 2019 and 25 at an average of 3.8 percent And if we look at our own county and city's budgets, and we look at other transit operating operators budgets 3.8 percent is a fairly reasonable clip to be growing at When we look at their personnel and we look at the the head count broken down by who's in general administration Who's in facility maintenance vehicle maintenance vehicle operations?

[01:29:40] When you look at the other 11 major transit providers in the country, we've got those breakdowns as well, and they're consistent in terms of the headcount they have and who's doing what kind of job. So areas that we've talked about improving, and I think if you're going to talk about increased funding for a service, you want to make sure that service is being provided in an effective and efficient fashion.

[01:30:06] So there's six areas that we're talking about improving. One is integrating and aligning fair policies across the region. It's a little bit confusing if you're a student, if you're elderly, if you fall into a bucket, depending on how much you make, where you get discounted fees. It can mean something different if you're in Fairfax County, if you're in Loudoun, if you're in the district or if you're in Montgomery County.

[01:30:27] So we've talked about putting some guideposts out there. Should kids under 18 ride free? What should our discount policy be for those who make a certain amount of money? You know, Loudon County, it's interesting, they're discussing going fare-free for youth, and they're also recommending that Metro increase its fares to help offset some of its budget issues.

[01:30:48] So being consistent with what our fare policy is would be helpful, and it would give the users a bit of a better experience. Adopt a shared service guideline for when and how often transit operates and measure performance. So this was part of the Better Bus redesign a few years ago, looking at all of our bus routes and measuring them in terms of A through F, are enough folks riding buses? Are we treating our roads in a way that buses can move from point A to point B in an efficient fashion? And you should be able to compare the Fairfax connector routes to metro routes to dashes. Right now you can't, because not all the providers are willing to provide,

[01:31:27] or I shouldn't say willing to provide, the data they provide is not apples to apples. I think it would be helpful for you all to be able to compare apples to apples. Certainly, there's routes that aren't as busy, but for whatever reason, they're on the map because they serve an important clientele in the county.

[01:31:43] So it's not saying every route is treated the same way, but routes that are high-frequency routes, how do we treat those across the region? And we can provide some examples of this. There's not enough time to dive into this, but there are those kind of grading reports.

[01:31:58] We have the data, and the cost is de minimis for all of our providers to do it. Improving wayfinding, I think this has been in every report about Metro for like 30 or 40 years. It's almost like you have to have a PhD to figure out if you're at the Pentagon and there's eight different signs and route number 135, route number 4, route number 67.

[01:32:17] There's no rhyme or reason for the numbering. There's a lot of like digital wayfinding efficiencies that can be found if we can work off the same platform. So don't think about redesigning the Fairfax Connectors colors and logos and everyone's going to be told what to do. Think more like you're

going to National Airport and when you go to Terminal A, Delta, United, Americans still have their logo, but it's on a sign that makes sense for the user.

[01:32:43] Bus priority strategies to get the best value from high-frequency routes, kind of similar to the conversation that you just had about whether or not, you know, mile per hour should be lowered and what's the rationale for it and what does the data say. So, on those bus routes that we know are heavily traveled, Columbia Pikes, Duke Streets, ones that have proven to move a lot of people, can we find some agreement with VDOT, MDOT, and DDOT to treat the roads, whether that's signaling, whether that's bus-only lanes?

[01:33:14] Now, when you hear bus-only lanes, my first reaction is, well, we're not going to put bus-only lanes everywhere. No, we're not. And no one would recommend, well, someone might recommend we do that, but I'm not recommending that we do that. But as legislators, you would need some real confidence working with VDOT that there's a methodology behind what roads would get treated in different ways for the truly high frequency routes.

[01:33:35] On administrative and cost efficiencies, COG runs a joint procurement for the region. So we purchase on behalf of the counties and cities who are members everything from diesel fuel to road salt to bottled water. We purchase a lot of really high technical homeland security equipment that a lot of the counties and cities don't have procurement folks with the expertise on staff to figure out the requirements for it. And we drive some real cost savings. I think Arlington County last year saved $800,000 by procuring the goods that they do through us. So for transit, are we doing enough to make sure that we're procuring all the items that I just mentioned, but also things that

[01:34:09] are, you know, that you use in transit? Buses is the most obvious example. And the history is that a lot of, we have 12 or 13 different bus companies, everyone orders a slightly different bus. Just like when you're getting a car, you want this different thing, you want that different.

[01:34:25] And all of a sudden, we've got 13 different types of buses across the region. If we can make that more uniform, we can buy in bulk and drive down savings. There's other areas that we just don't necessarily think about. You've got a Fairfax connector. If a bus breaks down, you have a contract on call for a company to go out there and get the bus off the road and repair it.

[01:34:44] Well, we've got 13 different contracts, and Metro's got the largest one. We probably could have one type of contract. We've got bus depot facilities sitting a few miles away from each other with two different companies that you all are all paying the bills for. Could we co-locate those sort of things? So there is an effort afoot to see what efficiencies we can drive.

[01:35:02] And then training certification inspection programs across the region are more consistent. The one that we like to give is an elevator technician has to be certified in Maryland, D.C., and Virginia to go through three different certifications. We have a bus driver shortage in Fairfax County.

[01:35:20] We've got it across the region. You should be able to come to this region and be trained to drive a bus and be able to go from Frederick County, Maryland, to Fairfax, to Alexandria, to D.C., to Metro, and back and forth. It takes a year for Metro police to get a police officer in the field because they have to be certified in Maryland, D.C., and Virginia.

[01:35:40] Audits, I think I mentioned that earlier. Maryland requires an audit. D.C. requires an audit. Virginia requires an audit. The feds require an audit. Then Congress will require another audit. To be

clear, METRO should be held to the highest audit standard that we can all agree to, but probably shouldn't be jumping through six different audits a year.

[01:36:00] Now, when we presented this, one of the questions was, well, how much is that going to save in terms of the budget deficit that's on the horizon, 10 percent, 20 percent? It's not going to drive a sufficient amount of cost savings where the hole that has to be filled is going to, we're going to capture cost savings to eliminate that hole.

[01:36:18] but it is going to make this system more efficient and effective for folks that use it every day and will allow you all to be more confident when you look at taxpayers in Fairfax County that we're running an efficient and effective system. So on cost, we are moving towards cost.

[01:36:35] The two work groups just looked at capital, and in mid-November, the task force will come together. The agenda is not set, but I think it will be a capital discussion. We'll talk about capital in November. We'll talk about operating in December. And the biggest question that we have had, and we brought in two facilitators, Nouria Fernandez, who ran the Federal Transit Administration for the last three years to facilitate, and then Nick Donahue.

[01:36:59] Many of you probably know Nick, worked with him for the last 12 years in Richmond. Nick is very, very good, very, very good at listening and shuttle diplomacy, hearing what folks' priorities are, a lot of the P3 work and hot lanes, all of the CSX work and rail contracts he negotiated on behalf of the previous administrations.

[01:37:18] and has worked with the current administration as well as some more administration. And one of the questions that he has asked, and we'll talk about a little bit on the funding moving forward, is in 2018, the region came forward and provided a rather significant amount of $500 million a year in capital that wasn't indexed anything.

[01:37:36] So that amount of money is flat. And that purchase power has gone down by about 30%. And if it stays unindexed moving forward, starting in a few years, Metro is just going to be paying off debt on its bills that it already has. not going to be able to put much money in the state of good repair. So the question that we had and what we'll talk with the task force this next month about is show us a rotating bond program that goes out over the next 30 to 40 years so that we're not back in this position in five years.

[01:38:06] I think that's the biggest fear that I have heard from elected officials and staff is if this region steps up, you know, show us a capital budget that keeps the state of good repair in good repair and that when you pay off bonds, you're in a position to reissue bonds and have a rotating state of affairs. And we've got some good information from WMATA that shows an ability to do that. On the operating side, which will be the December meeting, one of the issues that Maryland and D.C. and Virginia need to get on the same sheet of music about is this 3% escalator each year with Metro. One reason we had this issue last year was that during COVID,

[01:38:45] everyone was getting a lot of federal money, including Fairfax County, including Metro. So metro suspended sending bills to maryland dc and virginia when they picked that bill back up three years later that three percent escalator they had to go back to where they were three years prior so there's a big hole that needed to be filled last year but there is a difference of opinion across the river in dc and maryland and virginia with what that three percent cap means uh and i and i think one of the the metro

wants to have this conversation whether it's a three percent cap whether you tie something to inflation what that number looks like but i think they're in a position

[01:39:21] to be told here's the amount of money year in and year out, that there's a ceiling on what Metro will be given, what they can bill, and you've got to manage within those limits. But that 3% cap that was put in place a few years ago, I will tell you Maryland has a different opinion as to what the word cap means, and D.C. has a different opinion.

[01:39:43] But on the operating side, I think that's probably the number one priority is whatever commitment is made, if there's a commitment in increased funding made, for Metro to understand what that increase looks like year over year and what it can't exceed. And I would say that if you look at their previous CBA and the current CBA that they just negotiated, their five-year CBA, they have a 0% pay increase for all their staff this year. I could not have gotten away with that at my workplace. And then moving forward, it's between 3% and there's a 5% cap that they're not

[01:40:16] going to be able to exceed, depending on inflation. And that is a much more responsible CBA that was negotiated, I would offer, than the one that they are currently living in that's expiring, which led to some substantial cost increases two years ago. Thank you. That was very comprehensive. I believe that all of us know that we can send questions over to Brian, to you. And with that, I'm just going to end this abruptly and say we're adjourned. Thank you very much.

