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[00:00:01] Good morning, everyone. I know we're slow to get started in part because you're all waiting for Chairman McKay to walk in, but he actually won't be here this morning. He is testifying with the General Assembly's committee on federal workforce cuts. So he won't be able to attend. So you're stuck with me. I think it's a pretty good place to be stuck, but that's okay.

[00:00:27] We've got a full agenda today for the Board of Supervisors Transportation Committee meeting. First, I will take any comments, revisions as to the meeting minutes for the February 25th meeting. Not surprisingly, no one has any comments or changes to those minutes, so consider them adopted.

[00:00:51] Even though we don't formally vote, it's a bit of a chairmanship dictatorship here with respect to meeting minutes. With that, I will turn it over to Director of Transportation, Director of FCDOT, Greg Steverson, to introduce some of our guests here from the big house, from VDOT, and we'll get started.

[00:01:11] Thank you. So good morning, everybody. Greg Steverson, Director of FCDOT. So first item out the gate, I want to say back in a meeting in January, in a board meeting in January, the board had asked for VDOT to come in and talk about some after-action items related to snow removal. And so Monica Batia is here with Bill Cutler and Ellen Kamalakis from VDOT to talk about some of those topics. So I'll turn it over to Monica. I'm going to pass it to Bill.

[00:01:47] I didn't know the seating was relevant. Let's get started. I have my colleagues on each side. Bill Cutler, District Engineer for VDOT's Northern Virginia District. Glad to have you here. Monica Batia is our Deputy District Administrator over Maintenance, Operations, and Business.

[00:02:03] Also joined by Ellen Kamalakis is our Assistant District Administrator for Communications. We have our slides up. Yeah, is there a way we can queue up our slides? Oh, yeah. There we go. Okay, so go back to topics covered. There we go, topics covered.

[00:02:19] So I'm just going to go through, we are going to go through these topics quickly. some information about our district, the priorities process, planning and execution of our snow season, our January 6th response, which I know is of interest to you all, which is one of 11 emergency response storm events that we had throughout this past winter season. Also, expectations and perceptions moving forward. So next slide. So our Northern Virginia district, of course, is made up of four counties, Arlington, Fairfax, Prince William, and Loudoun, a population

[00:02:57] of two and a half million residents, which is roughly 30 percent of the state's population, also home to about 40 percent of the jobs in Virginia. And we support the important and impressive NOVA economy. So in other words, we recognize the importance and the value of the work that we do. It affects quite a lot of people. I'm proud of the almost 800 career public servants at Nova District, VDOT, who are dedicated year-round to serving this community and others, whether they're in maintenance, operations, business, planning,

[00:03:35] design, or construction. When emergencies come forward, they're all eligible to participate and help support the team effort. In Northern Virginia District, we have over 14,000 lane miles, which is five times the distance between here and Los Angeles. You can see our roadways are broken down into interstates, primaries, and secondaries, which includes subdivision streets. There are over 16,000 subdivision streets in northern Virginia. VDOT's proud to be responsible for them and take

[00:04:11] care of them. It is a little bit different than some of our neighbors. Arlington County takes care of their own subdivision streets, and the state of Maryland also has their counties take care of those streets. So it is different in Virginia, and we recognize the responsibility that we have. Monica?

[00:04:27] Good morning, everyone. So we are going through this slide, which is talking about historical winter weather data. As you can see on here, that 2022-23 is something where we hardly got anything.

[00:04:44] And then we got, last year we got snow, but it was not over the same event. It was over multiple events, so it was not like where we got a whole lot of snow at the same time. This year, of course, we got snow, which was pretty, one event, we got snow which was around 6 to 10 inches.

[00:05:04] And in that event, which was January 6th event, we had frigid temperatures for a very prolonged time. So, obviously, if you see this chart, it tells you that we kind of have variation, and we kind of prepare for everything that we are doing, going back to events like 2015, 2016, when we had the snow, not Magadon, but the Snowzilla.

[00:05:29] We had that time because Magadan we had in 2010. And then to the next slide, whenever we are preparing for snow, we have operations priorities that we stick to, and obviously the number one priority is public safety.

[00:05:46] And then regional mobility and efficient functioning of our entire transportation system. We want to make sure that there is least disruption to our economy. So for all this planning and execution, we start this process in June and conclude it in May.

[00:06:05] So in the priority process, the interstates come first. We make them passable, and then we make them bare pavement. Same for our high-volume roads, which are primary and secondary high-volume roads. We make them passable and then make them bare pavement.

[00:06:21] But then we come to the subdivision streets, and I just want to make sure that we have a definition of passable that we'll be discussing in further slides, but we have always committed to make them passable, but not bare pavement.

[00:06:37] But sometimes, just by the nature of what the temperature is, it could result in bare pavement, but our commitment is to just make them passable. And that passable's definition we will discuss on another slide, and we'll see.

[00:06:52] So we have additional priorities, and that is we actually, especially on our high-volume roads, we want to make sure our shoulders are available because those are very important for incident clearance. And then we have these park and ride lots that we want to make sure they are ready for other modes of transportation and making sure the access to metro stations and transit centers is made available.

[00:07:16] So this is the definition of passable, and I know there were many questions on the definition of passable in subdivisions for us. Of course, we take care of our hotspots that includes the hills, curves, intersections to help with traction.

[00:07:31] And then our major goal in our subdivisions is to make a path of 8 to 10 feet for emergency vehicles so nobody gets stranded if they have emergencies. And in future slides, you will see that in this particular event also when we had so many different challenges that we were fighting, especially with frigid temperatures, we had no emergency vehicles that were stranded.

[00:08:02] And then we always say that we have to drive with extreme caution, and that's what we are trying to do. It's not going to be, the roads could be still snow-packed, and it's not curb-to-curve or bare pavement in subdivisions. So the next is what we are doing for each event.

[00:08:23] whenever we have inclement weather events, snow events, we are actually doing our planning and we are executing our steps to make sure that however we plan, we actually execute on it. So just so you know, I know we are talking about weather monitoring. We do weather monitoring with National Weather Service throughout the year. On Mondays and Fridays, they brief us every Monday and Friday. And then some of our lead people in our maintenance and operations actually have the notification alerts. So if we have any alerts, warnings, or advisories, they keep us on that.

[00:08:57] And any time we are looking at any inclement weather, they will actually brief us even more frequently. So after that, once we know that there is any inclement weather that's coming our way, we start our resource coordination. We actually make sure our equipment is lined up, our materials Those are all in place and all our stakeholders are aware of what their duties are.

[00:09:21] And when I talk about stakeholders, in our case in snow, whenever we are getting major snow events, we do have a lot of contractors that help us with that work. So we make sure everybody's all lined up and they know where they have to show up and how we are going to execute the plan.

[00:09:38] Next comes the public messaging and we have wonderful communications department that take care of a lot of messaging and that is key to make sure a public is kept informed mobilization we actually whenever we are ready we actually come up with different mobilization plans what level we are going to go to how many pieces of equipment we are going to call so that's all detailed a lot of work goes into that we do pre-treatment and pre-treatment is also something that we mostly do if we are getting snow but then if it's preceded by rain sometimes

[00:10:13] that treatment washes away, so we do not do it. But 90% of the time, we are able to do the pre-treatment, and it does help us. And that pre-treatment actually is on our interstates and high-volume roads. And then we go to our operational response period, where we are actually looking at what we have gotten and what is the best response and how we can do it the fastest and the best. And then come to demobilization, where we see that things are getting better and resources are not needed anymore and we start demobilizing.

[00:10:47] So now we come to our January 6th snowstorm. This was the one where, of course, within the district we had 5 to 10 inches of snow and it was in the middle of a multi-day deep freeze. There was a state of emergency declaration.

[00:11:05] Northern Virginia District actually mobilized for this event at our highest level of mobilization, which is level 5. There was 3,000 plus pieces of equipment And our incident command was activated at McConnell Peace Talk, where we usually do our incident command.

[00:11:22] And we have representatives from Fairfax County there, from different agencies that are there. 911 is there. We have the state police there, Fairfax County Police, and the EOC for Fairfax works with us while we are activated there.

[00:11:38] So I'm going to talk a little further about the details of the weather with January 6th. So the key that we want to pay attention to is January 4th through the 11th. This is the time frame that we were looking at. As you can see, there were three hours, once the storm started, of above freezing temperatures between January 6th and January 11th.

[00:12:03] Very cold temps preceded and followed. This is uncharacteristic of a storm for us. From January 4th through 11th, we'll remember these dates. That is the fourth coldest span of time within a 25-year period.

[00:12:24] On top of that, that is the 6.1 to 10 inches is the second most amount of snow for that period of time, for all time, second only to the 96 blizzard. So the point that we're making here is we either get very cold temperatures or we get a certain amount of snow.

[00:12:46] We don't get the combination of that. The key for us that you're going to hear throughout this presentation is the deep freeze, the deep freeze, the deep freeze. So I, as Bill said, I lead the communications group in the Northern Virginia District.

[00:13:01] At the beginning of every storm, we huddle up to look at the dynamics of what we're expecting for the storm. And we put together key messaging to explain to the residents the expectations of us and what we need from our partners, the residents, in helping to keep them safe and helping for us to have the most efficient snow-clearing operation.

[00:13:26] So for this storm, we had five key messages, the first being the below-freezing temps, common message you're going to hear throughout this conversation. The below-freezing temps were really the key for us. It has an impact on infrastructure.

[00:13:44] It is going to freeze the roads. It is going to burst pipes. It is going to freeze up trees and branches. These all, when you involve snow and ice into it, it has direct impacts on our infrastructure and how we respond to it as well.

[00:13:59] The ice was key. We have a phrase that we use because we plain language a lot of messaging is, ice is never nice, and there's not a strategy to driving on ice. It is absolutely correct. There is no strategy to driving on ice, and I'm sure the police department could pull some numbers on that.

[00:14:16] Stay off the roads is key here, where that is not a common thing for us to message. It's more common in the rest of the state. We recognize here the vibrancy of the economy, the number of essential personnel that we have here. And so rather than be the boy who cries wolf, we save that for very special occasions.

[00:14:37] This was one of those occasions, and we knew that. We also message to prepare for a multi-day response. It is going to take us several days. We couple our messaging with Dems or VDEM, emergency management, on being prepared for multi-day events, have your kid at home, have your emergency car kid if you must go out, all of these kinds of things we do in conjunction.

[00:15:01] And then, of course, what is passable in subdivisions, which you see are handy in the graphic, which, spoiler, it's not going to be the last time you see it. As you can see, we don't turn down television interviews or radio interviews. We look for every megaphone that we can get.

[00:15:16] We need our message amplified to as many people as possible. So we are very active on social media. Some of you, I believe all of you, follow us on social media, which is great. What this does not account for is our presence on Nextdoor as well as our presence on Reddit.

[00:15:33] Every single platform is a different audience. It's a different style. And it is more and more people that we can reach with our message of what to expect from us and what you can do in return to help us keep you safe. So one of the things in my previous life as a young PIO, my mentor was Mernie Fitzgerald.

[00:15:57] And I'm sure a lot of you know her. I think Brian was sitting back behind you. And her philosophy was common message, many voices. I continue to bring that philosophy into my team. So this storm, we did some additional messaging, which was creating custom messages for our land use director, which is Steve Welsh in Fairfax, directly to the elected officials because you guys are a megaphone for us.

[00:16:27] You have closer contact with your constituents than we do. We need you to help us pass that message on. So we create that in a synthesized way for it to be plain language. We can talk all we want to in a technical term, and that's going to go over everybody's head.

[00:16:43] It's not going to resonate. A big thing that happened was that Bill and our transportation land use directors met with the school superintendents to really determine their needs, give them the expectations of what we're going to do and what we need them to do to, again, help keep everybody safe.

[00:17:03] Safety is the number one key for us. We also held a virtual elected official status briefing that Saturday. that everybody was invited to. We invited general assembly members and county board

members. We had one for each of the counties. We coupled Arlington in.

[00:17:20] And then this is a copy. I'm sure you guys are familiar with seeing this. This is our, we don't do traditional news releases, but this is what we do in terms of getting our messaging out. And that goes to thousands of elected officials, media, residents, homeowner's associations, anybody that will listen to us.

[00:17:40] This is one of the products that we will put out there. Monica? Thank you, Ellen. So on this slide, we are talking about January 6th progress timeline and the very important fact that the first pass was achieved within two hours on interstates, one hours on high-volume roads, including primaries and high-volume secondaries.

[00:18:02] And they were completely done within 12 hours after the first flake fell. And this was a very unusual situation, as Alan was explaining, that we had frigid temperatures, but we had things pre-staged, we had pre-treated, and we did everything.

[00:18:19] So we have a very sophisticated snow operation plan that we were executing here. And I'm actually very proud of all my staff as well as our contractors that did that work. So the key to that is when we are talking about interstates that we didn't have any stranded vehicles on interstates or primaries and secondaries high volume.

[00:18:41] We did not have any trapped queue that we have heard in some past situations. So we were able to accomplish everything that we were hoping for in this scenario. And 12 hours is a pretty good number here that we were able to accomplish that in.

[00:18:58] Then comes our subdivisions. The first pass in subdivisions in Loudoun was made within 24 hours, Prince William within 30 hours, and Fairfax 36 hours. Although, and why 36 hours in Fairfax? Because 51% of our subdivisions are in Fairfax.

[00:19:14] Fairfax is our largest area. And also, I just want to emphasize here is, although we are saying this was done as a first pass, and we know that for a fact, because we had monitors out there, we had our AVL system that kind of says that we have looked at it. But people were thinking that they haven't seen anybody because after the packed ice that was sticking to 15 degrees Celsius and Fahrenheit temperatures, it was below freezing. It was packed so hard, it was ice, and then people drove over it.

[00:19:48] I'm sorry, I got to stop you there. That's just not accurate. I mean, it's simply not accurate that there was a first pass everywhere within 36 hours. My neighborhood, I walked down the street to my neighbor's house past 36 hours and not a truck had gone on their cul-de-sac. I have eyes and we know what it looks like when there's been a truck going through there and when there hasn't.

[00:20:16] So it is simply not accurate. And if your contractors and your information that was being relayed back to you was that there was a first pass everywhere within 36 hours, and you come here and say that's a fact, then the fact is you need to figure out a better system of monitoring your contractors and monitoring the information coming back to you. Do not come in here and say it's a fact that within 36 hours there was a first pass. I'm looking at Supervisor Jimenez who is nodding his head not shaking his head. I'm looking at Supervisor Stork who is

[00:20:55] nodding his head not shaking his head because our constituents came to us and said that no truck has hit this. So I'm sorry to interrupt you but that's actually why we're having this meeting because to be very clear about something you all did a wonderful job in February. It was awesome in February. Also,

your communications and the information that you are putting out in trying to give people consistent communication, I actually think is pretty good. The communications

[00:21:33] that you put out about what is or isn't passable and what you're trying to do, I also think is actually pretty good. But the problem is that there were holes. There were demonstrated holes that we know about because our constituents called us. And so really the purpose of this discussion was to hopefully figure out how there aren't holes in the in the next time but to be very clear you cannot sit here you cannot come into this room and sit here and say that there were no holes there were holes thank you go ahead with the rest of your okay i mean i don't have much to say after this but i do want to point out one thing that when whenever you see snow-packed roads and this

[00:22:13] was an event where we actually got snow in two phases we got snow in the morning we got four to six inches and then we got another four uh two to four inches again in the night time and there were trucks out there and they might have been covered again with snow after the past and when it got packed so hard people thought it's still snow packed and there has nothing been on there people it's not people it's me it's who is literally in my neighborhood i walked down the street i saw it so sorry um county executive hill go ahead yes thank you supervisor beerman um you You know, Bill Cutler and I had a good conversation after the first snowstorm.

[00:22:53] We were looking and monitoring for upcoming snowstorms. Bill and I and the chairman were out in the hallway talking for probably about 40 to 45 minutes on said topic. As Supervisor Berman said and as other supervisors have stated to myself, the 36-hour rule that you put out there did not happen.

[00:23:15] I'm not going to say Bill agreed with what we were talking about out in the hallway on that day. But the simple fact is we did better. We all did better the next snowfall. The question today is how do we monitor better? We can't get back in the past.

[00:23:32] We all know that there were several streets, majority of streets, that were not hit within 36 hours. So I think we need to shift our conversation today to what are we doing moving forward to ensure that we can have the dialogue necessary.

[00:23:49] And I'm going to leave it to Bill because I think he needs to, I hate to say that, I think he needs to have a conversation or at least articulate what we spoke about in the back hall as well as how we were moving forward. And I hate to put Bill on the spot. Yeah, well, I would like us to continue on with the presentation.

[00:24:06] There is some more information that's relevant to what's being talked about. If we could do that, and then I think we'll continue the conversation when we're done. Can I make just one point? I'm sorry. Very quickly. Yeah, very quickly I'm going to make one point that we are talking about February 11th from where the temperatures were much higher.

[00:24:25] So, I mean, we will go through the presentation, and if we will have things that we have to consider, we will definitely do that. All right. Ellen? So, being a government organization that has emergency response capabilities, just like the police department, fire department, when you have major incidents like this, you always reflect on it.

[00:24:48] We will do after actions, internal things. My team in particular, we looked at something as simple as, when did we start messaging? Well, the storm was January 6th. We started messaging on

January 2nd. We have the conversation on the team. Is this early enough? Do we need to start talking sooner?

[00:25:05] It's difficult with forecasts that change and whatnot. So one of the things that we looked at was, and Monica had alluded to it before, was the concept of passable and any obstruction to emergency vehicle access.

[00:25:20] So we reached out to DPSC to get the number of calls through the 6th or 11th. They got in through the call takers and then the dispatches, which either came through the call takers, the uniformed fire officer, police liaison, commander, or anything field initiated, that was around 6,000 as well.

[00:25:37] We then went internal to ourselves to see how many through our transportation operations center at P-Stock, as well as our customer service center, our social media accounts, our direct contact with residents, how many requests we received from emergency services, police, fire, sheriff's office for an impassable subdivision road that they could not access.

[00:26:04] and there were zero. So we go back to our definition of passable, which is the emergency vehicle access. The secondary point for that is drivable with extreme caution, but it will be snowpacked. What was key for us was seeing something very unique in this storm, which was, and no surprise that we monitor social media, was that there was an influx of individuals out driving on our roads, filming at the same time, driving on the road, talking about how

[00:26:42] dangerous the road was, how difficult it was to drive on the road while driving, while filming at the same time and uploading that. That is not only wildly unsafe, it is illegal. So seeing something like that and watching these vehicles continue to go back and forth, packing it down, packing it down, packing it down, it was drivable. It was drivable with caution, which means you drive at a reduced speed and let's all be honest we know what people drive like on a 70 degree day when there's nothing on the ground you add ice into that it becomes dangerous and we are

[00:27:21] concerned for the safety of people this is why we clear these roads so we're going to get into public expectation here so uh the national weather service um the first report of snow for them was at 12, 13 in the morning. It was relatively light. It started picking up at 1 a.m. So we queried our customer service center to see the first reports of a missed or an unplowed road. And that came from Scott and Flint in Newington Forest. And that was at 1.48 in the morning.

[00:27:56] So it's beyond a reasonable expectation that within an hour and 35 minutes. Thank you. It's beyond a reasonable expectation that within one hour and 35 minutes of the first snowflake that we would be out there on a subdivision street. So just to give you a scope, for our January 6th through 11th, we had almost 5,000 calls to the NOVA Customer Service Center. We have an offshoot.

[00:28:26] There's a statewide one, and then we have, based on our population, we have our own Customer Service Center. So that's calls, web submissions, and emails. That doesn't include social media. It doesn't include our direct contact, which I'll mention in the future. And then in comparison, there was less than 600 for the February 10th storm. And so why is that? Here's the weather comparison. This is a typical storm for us. This is no deep freeze before, no deep freeze after, multiple hours above freezing. You see, we had very similar snow totals that happened. It was

[00:29:02] a single storm that went through. It wasn't two passes. And so a picture tells a thousand words. This is the same street, the same house, the same minivan, the same angle, the same amount of passes,

and this is the difference for us. The deep freeze versus the traditional storm. So one of the good things about being a civil servant is being able to have direct contact with residents that we serve, either directly through social media, it's a community that we build and we maintain.

[00:29:40] So I, being a media relations person, it is easy to find me, it is easy to get a hold of me, and I get a lot of emails during storms. So this is from a gentleman in Linconia who sent us a relatively scathing review with words like incompetence and anger.

[00:29:59] To remind you, we deployed 3,000 pieces of equipment for this we've pretreated. So, in comparison, the February storm, we did a great job, according to this gentleman. We deployed 300 less trucks. We did the same pre-treatment.

[00:30:15] There was nothing else different for us other than Mother Nature. Oh, I'm sorry. So, future VDOT actions, we did achieve many of our goals, and we're going to continue to focus on our regional economy.

[00:30:36] We kept the economy open through this very big storm for us with severe weather. We're also going to continue our coordination with our school systems. I want to thank Dr. Reed and Fairfax, Dr. McDade, and Prince William County for their communication and partnership.

[00:30:54] We will continue ongoing messaging with elected officials and other stakeholders, and we ask that our message as we write it is shared with others. And then we'll look to enhance our statewide Plow Tracker app, which was part of the conversation I had with the county executive a few weeks ago.

[00:31:16] That's a central office function, but that is something that Northern Virginia District is very interested in, having improved. So moving forward, we have some things that we will ask of you to help us. One is we do an annual snow briefing every year.

[00:31:34] It used to be November. We moved it up to October. And it's for elected officials and media. And this is really our opportunity to reconnect with this body as well as the media, share what is new, the messaging that we're putting out, what our focus is going to be, really hear from you as to what your needs are for your constituents as well.

[00:31:55] We ask that you share accurate information via our social media posts, our winter weather update, our materials. We put together, we have this Bitly account or this short code that we've had for years, and this goes to a Google Drive that is off of our network, so anybody off of our network can access it. We have already prepackaged all of our social media shareables that are customized to the size that you guys would need for social media or for your newsletters. We have the briefings in there. We have the fact sheet. That is a resource for you that we ask that you employ to help us

[00:32:32] find these additional megaphones. And then we would ask for a partnership communications audit of the VDOT information on the Fairfax County website. There is inaccurate information on the website that we have reached out multiple times to have corrected that has not been corrected.

[00:32:51] And we ask that our communication staff can work with county staff to freshen that so that the message that we're sharing is, again, the common message, many voices. So thank you. That's our presentation. We're happy to answer any questions, and I'll sort of query them. So let me know your questions. Thank you. Director Steverson, are you open to doing a communication audit of VDOT info on the Fairfax website? Sure, let's do it. Sounds good. Going to questions over here. I'm

[00:33:28] going to start with Kathy, then go to Andres, then Walter, and then James. Go ahead, Kathy. Okay, okay, okay. So on slide 17, you talk about 4,973 customer calls, web submissions, and emails. Do you kind of categorize what you're hearing from the public so that you know what that is? And I can usually project my voice, but I know that that's probably good to use the microphone. Yeah, it's categorized. We actually get reports every month from our customer

[00:34:05] service center on downed trees, dead animals. Right, but I'm talking about. Yeah, so it would be a mist street, a mist cul-de-sac, unplowed road, and there's multiples that would fall in. And did that information that you got from those phone calls lead to you making any conclusions if there was something you needed to look into or correct?

[00:34:30] So it will, that information gets funneled to our maintenance groups in multiple ways. So that will go through, we have an internal system. When we activate to a certain level, we have sort of customized triage rooms, for lack of a better term, we call them snow rooms, for each county to be able to mitigate, hey, this is what's going on with this, send it to the appropriate area headquarters to address specifically.

[00:34:56] we do the same thing with social media. We have a policy. People, hey, can you take a look at this? The first thing we always do is check to make sure it's our road, because a lot of times it could be an HOA. It could be, you know, anything like that. Once we have that, we have an internal database where we can pinpoint exactly which area headquarters that that responds to, and we send it directly to them to say, hey, we've heard this. Can you go and take a look at this? So we have an internal mechanism in which we are filtering this information through. Does that answer that?

[00:35:25] Not really. My question is more a big picture question. I'm not going to push you for an answer right now, but I would hope from what you heard, you would get a big picture path forward of what to do. So on slide seven, and I did notice when I went through the slides before this, you did put this slide out, I think three times in the slide packet, and it says passable definition. What does passable mean? And right up at the top, it says crews will sand hills, curves, and intersections

[00:35:59] to help with traction. No, you didn't. And so when we who are close to our constituents have them talk to us and they didn't feel heard by VDOT, when you hear from somebody that they saw the truck, the contractor come into their neighborhood and turn around and leave because they couldn't make it up the hill in the neighborhood, you didn't put the sand down. You didn't do something and people couldn't get out of their neighborhoods.

[00:36:31] Now, did people expect it to be done right away? No. I think you're hearing frustration from our board because I think it would have been a better presentation if you had said, listen, we know we heard issues. We know from some of these phone calls we got from people, they didn't feel like their contractors came or showed up.

[00:36:52] Yes, we know it was bad, but it doesn't help us to hear a presentation that says, well, it was really bad weather. We really want to hear, are you talking to your contractors? Do you have the right contractors? Are you listening to what the public's telling you?

[00:37:10] And so you've got a very frustrated community, and we are the voice for that community. And so I don't feel like this presentation got to the concerns the community had. And so I'm hoping when you

look at those phone calls and that information you got, you can kind of figure out, was it a contractor issue?

[00:37:31] What was going on? Are you hearing from your contractors that they're doing stuff, but the constituents are saying the truck turned around and left and didn't do anything to that hill in my neighborhood? You need to know that information to do better. Thank you. Thank you. Supervisor Jimenez.

[00:37:49] Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to start off by asking a question. Would you like our staff to send you a map of where Mason District is? Because it's in Fairfax County. You did not treat Mason District.

[00:38:04] So maybe you didn't know that. I don't know. And you're laughing. Great. That picture you showed, great, great picture for a presser. I am happy to send you a picture next time that you can use. Okay. You're saying that you're using this passable language. Passable in my neighborhood was laughable. Understand that?

[00:38:33] People were stuck for a week, one week. You all had one week to put together a plan. You failed miserably miserably that email that you got you should have gotten a lot more it doesn't seem to me like you have a plan to move forward you're going to end up doing the same thing the next time it's discouraging mr chair i'm still speaking i'm sorry you asked at the end what our needs are and

[00:39:07] our needs are and i think i can speak for most of us our needs are do better and i have not gotten a sense today that you're going to do better and that's very disappointing it's disappointing for me, it's disappointing for our residents. Disappointing. Fairfax County, you talked about public safety being a top priority. Public safety was one of the worst things that happened.

[00:39:33] People were on the side of the road. People couldn't leave their house. And all you have is excuses. And I don't want to hear excuses. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Director Cutler. Mr. Chair, I recognize the frustration and displeasure. I will say we We have area headquarters, we have 18 area headquarters in Nova District.

[00:39:55] They provide response to all of Northern Virginia District, including Mason District. We were successful in keeping the economy open throughout this storm.

[00:40:11] And by Friday of the same week, we were able to get, we were able to support the Fairfax County public school systems, which are, of course, countywide. And so that school system made a decision that the roads were passable enough for their buses, their bus system, and other decisions they have to make.

[00:40:35] But we helped support that. So we do have a plan. We recognize that it is not always attractive to everyone in what we see out on those roadways, but we were able to provide passable roads for our community.

[00:40:52] Thank you, Walter. Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So I just want to zero in on a couple things. So I think what you've heard from some of us, or maybe all of us, is a concern about quality control, particularly as it relates to the contractors, external contractors that were hired. And there's one other quality control issue I want to zero in on, which is the plow maps. So I heard, you know, it's one thing

[00:41:27] to not have the plow come through it's a whole nother level when somebody sees on that map that the plows come through and it hasn't come through so my my and and i think some of the anger we've

heard is along those lines because you know they didn't you know basically the contractor for whatever reason didn't do it uh and maybe it's only you know a small width of the street or small length, but boy, that really gets people's goat whenever that happens. So my question is

[00:42:01] for quality control, both of the information on the plow map and the reality of whether or not there has been a run through within the 36 hours, what quality control procedures are in place?

[00:42:18] How do you check that? So I can speak to the plow map. I'm sure you saw my face light up when you mentioned it. The plow map has been something that has been near and dear to my heart for many years. For me, it is a level of passive information that we can share easily with residents. So this is something that we have voiced and that we feel like has been heard from a statewide level in developing an update for it that would include breadcrumbs. So you can see

[00:42:52] not just where the plow truck is that moment, where it's been, what it's part of, the time it passed, all of these kinds of things, because I think that would greatly help everybody, especially our customer service center, when they say, hey, did somebody come through or when did somebody come through? What that does is that then can tie into this is what we're seeing. How do we rectify that with what we're hearing versus what we're seeing on the plow map? That kind of information is clutch to us. And we've seen a lot of movement on that front and we are very excited about that and the development

[00:43:30] hopefully. I've been a part of meetings from a statewide perspective on it and so I once that is online you will be the first person that I call because it is we wholeheartedly agree with you on that one. Anything on other QC? Yeah so we work with our Mr. Chair process.

[00:43:51] So we work with our contractors. We do have staff that goes out and monitors. As I mentioned earlier, there's a lot of office staff that are not maintenance-oriented, but they are called to duty to go out and monitor the activities that are happening out in the field to see if the contractor did.

[00:44:14] One of the challenges, as was mentioned earlier, sometimes we have two waves. So sometimes we're out there, we see it's done, but then another wave of snow comes and covers that up, so then it can appear that we were not there.

[00:44:32] I will say, and I recognize different people, saw different things, I did go out to 50 different streets, probably more than that, throughout northern Virginia. And for me, and it was not the first day, so I probably went out on Wednesday and Thursday of that week, I got multiple calls of, this street has not touched.

[00:44:52] You've never touched this street. And I went out to certain ones. Remember, I've got 15,000 subdivision streets, so I'm not going to all of them. But every one that I went to, we had touched them. It was apparent to me that we had.

[00:45:08] Now, I understand there may be some missed with that many thousands of streets, but we do quality control. We are monitoring our contractors in that regard. And then later in the storm event, later calls were able to review and take action.

[00:45:25] When we're in the middle of the battle, it's very difficult to go out to a certain street unless, for example, we get a call from PSTOC, who we were co-located with intention. And as Ellen reported, we didn't get any of those kind of calls with this event, which meant that, at least for those types of emergencies, there weren't any streets that were problematic that reached our level.

[00:45:53] Because had there been, then we immediately-- 911 call center contacts us. We go, we direct that area headquarter, get somebody out there now to support emergency services. OK, well, I would just ask-- I look forward to the new and improved roadmap, plow map.

[00:46:14] But I would also ask, and I think you're probably hearing this from a lot of us, you probably need to review your QC procedures. And maybe there's a way that the county, other than PSTOC, could be useful in that process.

[00:46:34] And even if it's individual supervisors walking their own streets, And I think something along those lines could be really helpful. So I would encourage that. Thank you. Thank you.

[00:46:49] I have Supervisor Walkinshaw, Supervisor Lusk, Supervisor Palchuk, and Supervisor Stork. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm glad we're on this slide because I just want to kind of dig in on this, on the passable definition. And it seems to me there's a little bit of an inconsistency in your messaging.

[00:47:09] And I think you did a great job in communicating that ice is not nice and we don't want people driving when there's ice. One of the frustrations that I experienced and my constituents experienced is their subdivision street, as you pointed out, given the extreme cold temperatures, became ice packed, right?

[00:47:37] So I will accept in most cases, vast majority of cases, they were treated once, plowed once, maybe even twice. And you all declared them as passable. They were ice-packed.

[00:47:54] Your definition up here says snow-packed. And as you pointed out, a snow-packed street and an ice-packed street is a very different driving experience. So one of the things that I would ask is that you review that definition of passable to address this kind of event, rare, hopefully doesn't happen again in the rest of any of our careers here, but it probably will.

[00:48:20] an ice-packed subdivision street is not passable, even if it's been treated once or plowed once. And it was very frustrating for my constituents to call, say, it's six to eight inches of ice, as you pointed out, and we can't get out of our street. And me having to tell them, well, VDOT has said it's passable because it has been plowed. It's not bare pavement. So I would just urge you to take a look at that definition during this kind of event. The question, and Bill, you

[00:49:00] mentioned the meeting with FCPS, which sounded to me like it was before the event, preparing for the event. Is that accurate? It was actually midweek as we were, the storm had already, the main part of the storm had already occurred. We were providing support as to how we could support the school systems and their decision to reopen. Okay. And that was going to be my question. I'm glad those conversations happened. You know, I wonder, and maybe this is a question we can ask of FCPS

[00:49:36] also, is there anything more that can be done by way of coordination so you all better understand what their needs are to be able to reopen schools, in this case, maybe a day earlier than they could. It may be that the answer is unless you had the money to clear your sidewalks There isn't anything that could be done, but nobody has told me that go ahead bill. Mr. Chair Thank you. So and you mentioned sidewalks and trails and of course we we do not do sidewalks and trails

[00:50:13] But we were able to have a good conversation that led us to wanting wanting to explore with the school systems an understanding of the school bus routes So that we could that would inform us. That's not necessarily a decision that we will We we may not saying that we're going to prioritize that

because whatever street you're on is the most important street to you But it is it would be very good for our area headquarters teams to be informed as to which streets

[00:50:50] do have school bus routes so that we can be thinking about it. So that's something new that we are moving forward that we are looking to do with the local school system. Okay, good. So please, if you can, review the definition of passable with respect to ice-packed streets, I think to be consistent with what you've laid out here and I think did a good job of communicating in advance of the event, And I'm glad to hear that work is being done with the schools.

[00:51:23] Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you. Supervisor Lussin. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm actually happy to be following Supervisor Walkinshaw because a couple of my points are connected to his. The first is on my own street, we had that ice packing. So it is very treacherous.

[00:51:40] I know you might have treated it, you might have done something before, but the point that we do have is that the ice makes it very, very dangerous. So whatever can be done definitionally and how we promote that is so, so important.

[00:51:58] And then second, there's kind of two examples I want to give. One, we got called by a constituent in my district who's blind and who uses public transit. So he is trying to get to the bus stop, and he can't get into the bus stop because the snow is pushed all up in front of the bus stop.

[00:52:20] He also doesn't know where to get onto the bus when he's waiting for the bus as well. So I think I would ask if there's something that could be done maybe to work with the Department of Transportation for some maybe high-volume stops.

[00:52:40] if there's some way to have a path from the road to the bus shelter in the VDOT right-of-way so that people who are trying to get on the bus and get off the bus safely can do that. So that's number one. Number two is we have neighborhoods where you have the public street that then connects to a private street.

[00:53:03] And I had a couple of constituents calling in basically explaining to me that they had gone ahead and had their contractor come in and plow their street. But when VDOT came in to do their public portion of it, they put like a big snowbank in the front of the entrance to their community so they couldn't get in or out.

[00:53:27] So I guess the question here is how do we work with HOAs and communities? Maybe there's a communication plan here, too, in terms of how we can maybe avoid those types of situations. Maybe we are coordinating so they're bringing their contractor maybe after VDOT's done their work.

[00:53:46] So that was issue number two. And then the last point I wanted to make is just thinking about the use of technology and if there are any new innovative ways in which we can deal with snow.

[00:54:02] And maybe there are other communities across the U.S. that are deploying these technologies. Could we look at that and see how we might be able to use them to help us in critical situations like this, and specifically with the ice is what I'm very, very concerned about.

[00:54:20] And with that, Mr. Chairman, I'll conclude my remarks. Thank you. Thank you. Supervisor Palachuk. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you so much to VDOT for being here. Well, I'm happy to follow my colleague, Supervisor Lusk. I do. I think it's a tricky, uncomfortable conversation we're having. So I appreciate that we're all, you know, being frank and wanting to find a better solution. I have one

comment I want to read that I received after the February snow. And then I think follow up as I'm sitting here thinking about just process improvement for all of us, right, both operations and

[00:54:56] communication. So the message was in February from a nurse manager at Fairfax Sinova. VDOT did not plow or treat the main gallows road, the ramps, or other entrances that surrounded our hospital before the snowfall or after it had accumulated. The oversight led to hazardous driving conditions for both our team members and patients. We've experienced two incidents. One team member spun out on a ramp and another was rear-ended. During the last snowfall, the roads were similarly untreated, creating significant risk for everyone traveling to and from the hospital.

[00:55:34] However, within the hospital, they appreciate that they know the team did a wonderful job, as we heard about many of our schools and other facilities. So as we're going through this, and as many of us were at this table in your seats during the pandemic, I'm trying to think about, right, what are the improvements we can make to our operations.

[00:55:54] So I do very much appreciate the briefings. I'm wondering what we can add to that, right? So, definitely, I would recommend debriefings. And to your point, right, what are the things that all of us and all of our departments can do, as we do on any incidents, to better improve that?

[00:56:15] So, again, some thoughts. You mentioned Department of Emergency Management Services. So, DEMS, FCDOT, FCPD, FCPS, and I'm sure there are other departments within our excellent agencies that are here and our department's willing to help, right?

[00:56:34] Let's understand we're huge, right? 400 square miles. There are many, many people. You and I could never go and walk every single neighborhood and we shouldn't because we'll create new hazards, right? So whether it's with technology that's out there, whether there's new technology, MIMA is the queen of crowdsourcing and quite popular.

[00:56:55] And so I do think that this frustration, I hope, leads to all of us doing a better job of representing our constituents. There's always room for improvement, right? And I don't think finger pointing is going to get anywhere, but figuring out, okay, what has worked and how do we not dig our heels, you know, whether it's on your side of the table of ours, and how do we continue to do a better job? Because clearly there's a lot of that's being done well, but there's also room for improvement and especially thinking about the safety, right, of our constituents, of our most vulnerable constituents and of all of our constituents and of our staff that are out there

[00:57:34] as well, right? So I hope and my expectation and request is that as we move through this, that it does become that partnership and that VDOT is able to come in and have these meetings with our emergency teams and our staff and help all of us do a better job, both on the communications piece and on the operations piece. So that's my request, and thank you all for being here today.

[00:58:01] Thank you. Supervisor Stork. May I comment on that? I apologize. No, it's okay. No, I very much appreciate that. I appreciate Supervisor Walkinshaw's suggestion. I'm sure you probably saw my eyes kind of glazing over, because as you say it, my wheels are turning, and I'm thinking, every single one of the communication staff, we should have a meeting, and then we should hook up, and it's just the PIO kind of mindset. So that was very helpful, the concept of pointing out the ice.

[00:58:31] And the perspective of it being a partnership is, at least I know I can speak from the communication standpoint, welcome that. PIOs do nothing more than want to talk to other PIOs and

leverage those kinds of things. So I would, if your staff would be interested in something like that, that is absolutely something that we would organize from my team, get to know them. I have The seven-member team, we all do different things on it.

[00:58:59] But things like that, that's just very productive for us and very encouraging, I think. Thank you. Supervisor Stork. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I thank you all very much for being here. And I think we're all kind of focused on what we heard from our constituents, which is a credibility issue.

[00:59:19] We spent a lot of tax dollars, and what are we getting in return? This is the most visible thing, frankly, for most of us. And for many of them, they don't see it in other ways. in their street, being able to travel on is evidence of that in one way or the other of competence or incompetence in government. So we're all living that. It isn't just VDOT. We have the same challenges. My question is, you'd mentioned the quality control process that you use and what was the outcome of your quality control review? How many issues did you identify and what actions have you taken with those issues that you raised, whether they're contractors or

[00:59:56] other parts of the system? And I didn't said that. No, there is a process for that that's built in.

[01:00:14] I don't have that information. Unfortunately, I don't have that data with me, but that is part of the process for us is throughout the year with something like that and then a wrap-up. I know that's a vague answer, but I understand what you're asking. I don't have that immediate data to be able to give you those numbers that you were just asking for. I mean, what you heard from us, we believe that at a minimum there's contractors that potentially failed to do their job. I would assume that the quality control process you have has some way of assessing that

[01:00:45] and it could be a one-off or it could be a pattern and what have you found? So at this point we haven't found anything regarding our contractors but we do have an ability to look back at the AVL reports, the automated vehicle locator reports that can indicate if they were there that is a secondary way beyond what the monitors have reported. So if there have been holes in that, we're able to review those. At this point, we have not found any, but we can certainly continue

[01:01:23] to look. Again, I think some of the discrepancies, again, recognizing that people are not satisfied, I recognize that. Sometimes it's they're not satisfied with what passable means, And I recognize that we have plenty of storms where we get bare pavement.

[01:01:40] We get black pavement in our subdivisions, which is fantastic. But it's not something that we're able to guarantee. But we will continue to look at things like that. We're also, internally, we look at our processes from beginning to end. Do we have the supplies that we need when we need them?

[01:01:58] Do we have the right staff? We have been working to change the culture within our organization to ensure that all able-bodied staff, our VDOT employees, are there and participating and engaged.

[01:02:13] And I want them to show me that they're engaged. So there are different things like that. Then our interaction with the school systems, which we have always had, but we have taken that to a new level. And we were, again, very successful.

[01:02:30] There were school systems in other parts of the Commonwealth of Virginia that were behind Northern Virginia in terms of reopening. And we're proud of what our NOVA team was able to accomplish.

But we'll continue to look at things like this and taking the notes from today's meeting on different things that we can look at to continue to improve.

[01:02:52] January 6th stressed the system. I think we all recognize that, but that also tells us where the points are that need to be addressed more fully, effectively, and you've heard some of that today, I know. I am very interested in what was the quality control result from your after-action report, and were there any consequences in the system, either changes or other impacts to folks to try to ensure that a system is stressed as it was on January 6th, and we all know that.

[01:03:26] we all were part of that, right? But I think we want to understand what the outcome of that was and how we can be more confident that at least in this similar kind of situation, the outcome would be better. Not that it'll ever be perfect. We recognize that, but it'll be better.

[01:03:43] And then last question or point, and maybe both, is what is the role of the supervisor? And we've heard a number of supervisors here. I know I go out to a number of streets. Maybe I don't go as many as I should or would. If VDOT tells me that if Dan Stork calls in and says, I was at that street and it wasn't plowed or whoever met that criteria, does that add, does that improve the likelihood of that being addressed more immediately or we're just gumming up the works because we're one more person out on the road and making it harder for the plows to get to where they need

[01:04:18] to go? Well, you're never gumming up the works. That kind of feedback is very important to us. And we do have that set up with our snow rooms. So that is something that we can incorporate again this coming year. And that's something that we can talk about a little bit more in detail in the elected official briefing of how that process works specifically for your teams.

[01:04:41] But I think just staying engaged with us is important and continuing to give the feedback. I remember from the virtual briefing, I remember what your comments were. You said, I know the hotspots. Can my staff work with your staff? So we are listening and we are working to incorporate those things. I think it's just, as Supervisor Palchuk says, this ongoing dialogue is extremely positive. So I thank you for that. Thank you. I look forward to the report.

[01:05:11] Thank you. So I think you've heard a lot from this side of the table, but I'll try to synthesize some of it. 4,973 calls, according to your data. That's not including all the calls that we got.

[01:05:28] That's not including everything that we heard. And what everyone is telling you is that, unfortunately, the response to this storm was consistently inconsistent. There were areas of the county that were fine. I didn't get a single call from Great Falls. Great Falls, with all its windy roads, didn't get a single call. Whoever your contractors were out in Great Falls, they did a great job. But the contractors in McLean didn't do a great job. We know they didn't do a great job. Whether it's the definition of passable or not, they did not do a great job. And the

[01:06:05] answer after this cannot simply be a report that basically says, well, it was a deep freeze and that was really the problem here. That wasn't the only problem here. And next time there's a deep freeze, we got to do better. So I think you've heard some things that we want to see, whether it's relooking at that definition of passable so that when you have packed ice, it's a little bit different, whether it's quality control for your contractors, whether it's figuring out which contractors did a good job and which contractors really didn't, whether it's how you train your

[01:06:43] contractors, whether it's, oh, our app shows that the truck drove into there. So we say that something happened, but they didn't drop any sand. Whatever it is, something's got to change and we got to be better for next year. So admittedly, I don't know why you're ever going to come back and visit the Board of Transportation Committee, but we will be inviting you back probably later this year before the snow next time to hear some of the results of whatever additional work you're

[01:07:16] doing? How can we coordinate with board offices like Supervisor Palchuk was talking on communications? How can we do a better job next year for the next freeze? Because yes, this was a really bad storm.

[01:07:32] And yes, I can remember, you know, I had tickets to the 930 club during Snowzilla and they canceled the concert. I can remember in 1996, it was the best two weeks of sledding I ever had. And we can all remember the really big storms but guess what there's going to be another really big storm and what i don't want people to remember is that vdot and the fairfax county board of supervisors left them in a lurch so with that um my meetings always go long that being said we've got we've got two other really important items on the agenda don't go anywhere bill because i think you're still up

[01:08:10] here for the next one, which is rectangular rapid flashing beacons, another VDOT issue that is near and dear to lots of constituents' hearts. Again, constituents of McLean love rectangular rapid flashing beacons, and we would like to hear about the opportunities that we have to put RRFs, FBs, in more locations across the county.

[01:08:38] So with that, I think I will turn it over to Jessica Paris. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the board for having us here today to better understand the VDOT Nova District approval process for the Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons, or RRFBs for short.

[01:08:56] My name is Jessica Paris, and I'm the District Traffic Operations Engineer responsible for all traffic operations sections under my purview, which includes operations maintenance, ITS, express lanes coordination, our traffic operations budget, our 24-7 traffic operations, which includes our traffic operations center over at P-Stock, where we're located, our safety service patrol, signal and freeway engineering, traffic operations project delivery, and our traffic engineering sections. So it's a lot, which I'm very thankful to have a deputy, Amir Shapar, help me out. We kind of divide the kingdom. He takes a good half of the work. I take the other half, and we support the best that we can. So we'll use this opportunity to share some

[01:09:35] background info of the RRFBs and highlight our ongoing partnership with Fairfax County, and then I'll turn it over to Amir to go into more of the technical detail as it relates to the VDOT study requirements, which are based on state and national best practices, and he'll also provide some additional insight into the VDOT Nova district preferences for these devices.

[01:09:54] So let me first start by providing some history and background of the RRFB. It's still a relatively new countermeasure that was first approved for interim use by FHWA in 2008 under interim approval number 11. VDOT actually had to apply to FHWA to use these experimental devices on VDOT-maintained roadways. Later on in 2016, VDOT released the first version of INIMTE 384, which provided guidance on the selection of pedestrian countermeasures at unsignalized locations. This initial guidance provided the framework for consistent requirements in establishing

[01:10:29] marked crosswalks, but it did require a minimum of 20 pedestrians per hour at the crossing location. The RRFB was an optional countermeasure in that guidance, but the memo also stated not to overuse the RRFBs as it could decrease the effectiveness both at the RRFB locations as well as locations that do not include RRFBs. As I mentioned, these are still relatively new devices and our guidance is continuing to evolve as we move forward and we continue to change that as we receive feedback on them. In 2022 is an example where the INIM was updated to incorporate more recent FHWA guidance.

[01:11:06] And we still continue to notice that RFBs are frequently requested, but the memo does include several other countermeasures related to pedestrian safety countermeasures, and Amir is going to cover those later on. And I do want to also note that while the 2023 FHWA 11th edition formally includes the RFB for the first time as not an experimental device, VDOT is still legally operating under the previous MUTCD and interim approval 21 because we have not yet adopted the new MUTCD. So there is an increasing number of RFBs deployed throughout our system, and most folks around the table today

[01:11:42] are probably already familiar with them. But for the benefit of those who may not be, I did want to highlight that a marked crosswalk is where it delineates pedestrian paths and alerts drivers to potential pedestrian crossings. Marked crosswalks help to improve pedestrian safety by indicating to the pedestrians where they should be crossing the road. RFB's role is to supplement those crosswalks and draw even more attention and alert drivers that PEDS might be crossing the road. So therefore, the RFB is a warning device that when activated, it'll flash yellow rapidly and intensely, almost like EMS with that vibrant flashing pattern, with the LED

[01:12:20] lights long enough to allow the pedestrian to cross the road. Traffic is not required to stop for yellow flashing lights. However, drivers in Virginia must stop for pedestrians located within the crosswalk, and pedestrians also have duties and roles, and they need to wait for a gap in traffic before they cross the road. So across Virginia, the RFB deployment inventory has been increasing steadily. There's about 90 locations statewide that currently have RFBs or are planned in the near future. And as you can clearly see here, Northern Virginia is leading the way with the installation of those devices, with over 30 sites installed now.

[01:13:00] And in particular, Fairfax County has the largest inventory of RFBs, but all but a couple of those in Northern Virginia located within Fairfax County. And I do also want to highlight the partnership that has been ongoing and continues to grow with Fairfax County and VDOT to provide these pedestrian bicycle safety improvements across the county using a suite of countermeasures available in TE I-9 and 384.

[01:13:25] Not shown in the slide, actually, though, is the construction of the very first pedestrian hybrid beacon in northern Virginia, which was at Lindbrook Elementary School and Backlick Road. This was a partnership between FCDOT and VDOT, and construction was complete in 2016, with both parties providing funding and having a role in either the design right-of-way or construction of that location.

[01:13:47] And in 2019, we continued that partnership closely together to install these locations shown on this slide. FCDOT was the ones who applied for highway safety improvement funds for these locations, and VDOT delivered the design and construction of those locations as a result of the FCDOT funding application.

[01:14:08] And you'll notice there's a mixture of unsignalized crossing improvements, both at each of these example sites, as well as a combination of countermeasures within each location itself. Starting on

the lower left is advanced warning flashers at Route 7 eastbound and the I-495 southbound ramp in Tyson's Corner.

[01:14:26] Through that project, we also realigned the crosswalk across the ramp. We added signage, visibility enhancements, and we added one streetlight pole near the crosswalk. Next, nearing the Dunloring Metro, we installed a median refuge island with signage and visibility enhancements. And finally on the right, everyone's favorite, we get our RFBs installed both at Prosperity Avenue and the Cross County Trail and in front of Southlakes High School near Tan Bank Drive.

[01:14:51] The Southlakes location also included narrowing of some travel lanes there, and we were really able to widen that median and provide a very wide refuge there for pedestrians. And by leveraging our partnership between Fairfax County and FEDAT, we were able to deliver these safety projects here under budget, and that allowed us to add more locations to this project, and we really were able to leverage the full funding amount on that project.

[01:15:13] And together we were able to achieve a higher return on investment because we were able to reduce the cost of each location by bundling them together. So since we were delivering so many of those efforts together between Fairfax County and VDOT, both as part of that HSIP project I just described, as well as other planned improvements throughout 2019 and 2020, FCDOT agreed to be responsible for county-wide maintenance of the RFBs.

[01:15:40] Under the formal agreement, Fairfax County has the responsibility for annual preventative maintenance as well as minor routine maintenance, such as the initial troubleshooting in the case of a stuck pedestrian push button. VDOT's responsibilities under the agreement include emergency response in the case of crashes or knockdowns, so we make sure we're out there, we're securing the scene, we're getting all the electrical in loose wires secure, and we also take care of major replacements by assigning those to our contractor under a task order, and any VDOT costs incurred under our agreement are reimbursed by Fairfax County. This partnership has really grown over

[01:16:16] the years as new devices are added or proposed for the system. We continue to learn from one another about the maintenance of these devices, and through the county taking the lead on the RFB maintenance, we're able to achieve a higher level of service and a higher reliability of these devices. And lastly, that leads me to our other maintenance considerations. We strive to make sure that there's early engagement with FCDOT staff during the initial design as well as close coordination during construction and inspection. We want to make sure that the engineer considers a

[01:16:52] variety of factors when they're designing these locations, including the reliability and the lifecycle costs. For example, solar-powered batteries have to be maintained each and every year because there's different water levels and you have to make sure they're going to work throughout winter and the sunlight, and they do require maintenance every three to five years.

[01:17:11] So that's a trade-off between the solar power versus hardwire power where you have monthly recurring electric charges. And over the last two years, we totaled up our costs and we spent about \$60,000 to repair and replace RFBs at four locations within Perplex County. So as our maintenance dollars are all limited, we're striving to make sure we right-size our infrastructure structure and prioritize the locations of RFBs where they provide the most benefits.

[01:17:39] And I'll turn it over to Amir to go into more discussion on those items. Thank you, Jessica, and thank you Fairfax County for the opportunity to talk about VDOT process for reviewing RRFB requests. So current guidance in Virginia follows IIM 384.1 to determine installation of marked crosswalks at uncontrolled approach of intersection and or mid-block locations.

[01:18:05] This document also provides guidance on selection of additional countermeasures based on traffic volume, speed, and roadway configuration. The IIM includes two distinctive tables, one of which is shown here, identifying four tiered categories for undivided and divided roadways.

[01:18:24] Each color box shown in this table is used to determine appropriate safety countermeasures for each tier. Tier 3 and 4 generally represent higher traffic volumes, speed, and more complex configuration, while Tier 1 and 2 cover lower speed, lower volume, and less complex situations.

[01:18:45] RFP is one of five additional countermeasures categorized listed in the IIM, along with visibility enhancement, refuge island, roadway configuration, and pedestrian hybrid beacons. Research shows these additional countermeasures can also significantly improve pedestrian safety as well.

[01:19:07] To determine appropriate countermeasures at uncontrolled intersections or mid-block location, an engineering study must be conducted that considers site context and pedestrian needs. The study includes collecting existing site conditions, such as pedestrian and traffic volumes, and analyzing the collected data using the IIM that was discussed in the prior slides.

[01:19:30] Following submittal of the study, VDOT will review and provide comments or provide final determination. As a project is progressing from inception to implementation, it's important to conduct an engineering study to determine the most appropriate site-specific solution.

[01:19:52] Before that the study is conducted, all funding and communication should remain generalized to pedestrian improvement, as until the study is approved by VEDA, there are multiple potential alternatives that can be considered for a given site.

[01:20:08] The site condition and context of the surrounding areas drive the ultimate solution. Site conditions have a major impact on making RFPs an effective countermeasures for pedestrian safety. Shown here are some of the factors influencing drivers' yielding for pedestrian at RFP location.

[01:20:31] When vehicular volumes or speed are higher, a driver may be more concerned about being rear-ended or may not be as likely to yield for pedestrian. However, when there is a shorter crossing distance and the presence of a median or a refuge island, drivers are more likely to yield.

[01:20:50] These are important to think about when considering effectiveness of the RFP at different sites. As an example of the importance of site-specific consideration, I'll share with you two case studies of very similar roadway types but different outcomes in terms of the approval of a marked crosswalk and additional countermeasures.

[01:21:12] In case study one, the one shown here, the first location has existing mid-block crosswalks on a four-lane divided collector with a 35-mile-per-hour posted speed. It has pedestrian use on both sides of the road with trails on both sides in the proposed condition.

[01:21:33] The site had adequate sight distance for both the vehicles to see the pedestrian and vice versa. The proposed improvement included improvement to the median refuge and cab ramps, as well as the installation of an RRFB on each site and in the median.

[01:21:50] We did not approve the recommended solution. However, in the second case study, the second study shown here, we had some challenges, underscoring the importance of site-specific consideration in RRFB implementation. We reviewed the crossing at an intersection with left and right turn lanes and a longer crossing distance. The main road had higher traffic volume and posted the speed of 40 mile per hour. Additionally, in the location of the proposed crosswalk, the horizontal and vertical curve did not allow pedestrians to see vehicles for far enough away to decide

[01:22:28] about crossing. There were already signalized crossing on each side of the proposed crossing, although in a greater distance of 300 feet away proposed by the IIM, but providing more direct access to pedestrian generators on either side.

[01:22:43] For this reason, an uncontrolled mark crosswalk and an associated countermeasure was not approved for this particular location. Future guidance is on the way. As mentioned earlier in the presentation, the RRFB is a relatively new countermeasures and guidance is continuing to develop and evolve.

[01:23:04] There are a few of the upcoming updates that involve updates to federal and state documents that provides guidance on RRFB. First one is the 11th edition of the federal MUTCD and the Virginia MUTCD, which will be adopted by January 2026.

[01:23:21] Currently, experts as well as the localities are commenting on it. An update to the current IIM is also expected to release soon by our central office. And additionally, V.SNOVA district has initiated development of a document to clarify current IIM and assisting designers in selecting countermeasures, including RFPs. We are optimistic that the NOVA district clarification document will be helpful. We work closely with localities to develop it and receive valuable feedback. Fairfax County staff participated in our October 29th of last

[01:23:59] year workshop and shared current challenges and suggestions and we are incorporating their feedback into the final document. And with that I thank you again for the partnership and I look forward to continuing working together get there to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety across the county. Thank you. Just a few questions. I believe Ms. Parris started out by pointing out that with lots of pedestrian measures, crosswalks, countermeasures, et cetera, you don't want to overuse them. So I just want to go back

[01:24:36] to slide four, please, if possible. And I just want to make sure I have this right. There are roughly 30 plus RRFBs in Northern Virginia, correct? Yes, that's correct based on our current inventory. And what's amazing is we just had a presentation where we learned that there were 14,297 miles of road in Northern Virginia. So it seems to me like we aren't anywhere close

[01:25:10] to overuse. Am I correct on that? Not necessarily because the total lane miles includes interstates and higher-volume roadways where RFPs would not be eligible.

[01:25:28] Yeah, of course. It's not an apples-to-apples comparison, but come on. I mean, folks are asking for these all the time, and every now and then we hear overuse. And they're asking for them because they've seen them somewhere, but they're often asking for them in places where they aren't or they aren't in the area.

[01:25:46] So I just think we need to retire the overuse claim about RFPs. I will note that we are different than other parts of Virginia. Northern Virginia is a little different. And you can see Hampton Roads,

Fredericksburg, Richmond, they got 10 to 15 each.

[01:26:02] Lynchburg, Culpeper, Salem. But we up here, again, utilizing a presentation we just had, have what, 2.5 million people here in Northern Virginia, about, I think it was 30, 35% of the state. I just think that we need to understand that our needs up here in Northern Virginia are quite different, and we're not at overuse yet. I'd like to turn to slide nine. On slide nine, we have five additional countermeasure groups. We've got visibility enhancements, Refuge Island, RRFBs, Roadway Reconfiguration, Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon.

[01:26:38] Is an RRFB typically cheaper than Roadway Reconfiguration? It's an easy question, folks. I can take that one. It really depends on the context and where we are putting that one. So Sometimes you need a right-of-way and additional measures, but I stopped there.

[01:27:00] Generally, it's cheaper. Is it generally, are RFBs generally cheaper or more expensive than refuge islands? I think it depends on the location.

[01:27:18] Again, every site has their own story to tell, certainly. So it really depends. And we've found in some of our cost estimates, though, projects that we have delivered already, that the refuge islands are less expensive. There are certainly opportunities where we can leverage other projects in that to provide a better, cheaper project through some of these additional countermeasures. Okay. I'm just pointing out that of the expense, a lot of these countermeasures, they all have costs, and the RRFBs are not completely out of step with those costs. The last question I have, because I've got,

[01:27:55] for instance, you know, I'm not going to hide the ball. The reason why we're having this discussion is because I know that there have been times when FCDOT has read the charts in the, what's it called, the 11th edition of the MUTCD, and seen things like here in tier two, recommended Refuge Island and slash or recommended rectangular rapid flashing beacon. And FCDOT's come to us and said, see, it says and or, and we've gone to VDOT and they've said, oh, we think you're fine with the

[01:28:30] Refuge Island, even though it says and or. So my question is, what do we expect to see in the 11th edition of the MUTCD referenced on slide 15? And what's the updated timeline for that referenced on slide 15? So the MUTCD, as Amir mentioned, is out for public comment right now. So you can see the draft version yourself. But in case you don't have time to do that, generally what the RFB guidance will include in the MUTCD is what's in the interim approval now. And that's kind of,

[01:29:09] you know, along the lines of how big should the flash bar be? What is the flashing rate for that? So it's general what is the traffic control device itself and not more specifically how do we study these, how do we apply those. That is what we're working closely with FCDOT staff is to come to a common understanding with that and which of these locations where we can continue to expand.

[01:29:31] We know the number in our inventory is going to continue to increase. We understand that. But we want to work closely with Mr. Stevenson's staff at FCDOT and make sure that we continue that partnership. So the chart that you had on slide 9, you just mentioned public comment.

[01:29:51] Would it help if there were a public letter from the Board of Supervisors saying that we believe that you should be utilizing RRFBs more often? I think it doesn't hurt, but we are also developing the Virginia version of the MUTCD, which might be a better position for considering such letter, as well as the guidance that we are putting out.

[01:30:18] We have noticed as well, when we have that and or condition in the table, that causes confusion. So hopefully in our guidance, we can address some of that confusion as well. Okay, terrific. You let me know where to send the letter and we'll do it. Supervisor Jimenez.

[01:30:33] Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to be really brief. Jessica Amir, thank you guys so much for your presentation. I found it really useful, so thank you. My only question is, and you can get back to me on this for the sake of time. On slide 7, you say that there were four locations for knockdowns of RRBs.

[01:30:52] Could you let me know where those were? Yes. Thank you. That's it. Supervisor Palchuk. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the presentation. As you know, you are the Virginia Department of Transportation, not of roads.

[01:31:08] So we appreciate the focus on all of our transportation, including all the various users of our roads. So I appreciate and I realize that the MUTCD will be finalized in January. I know we've all been awaiting that.

[01:31:26] And I guess as you're looking through that, and I apologize if I missed this, in addition to the specific recommendations, are there any considerations you're looking into, knowing that it's a partnership, like you said, right, VDOT and FCDOT in the county. Are there any specific recommendations or looks at process, right, process of, because right now we have our own processes of when we get requests from our constituents and then how those are looked at, how those are evaluated, how those are finalized, and then there's a little bit more confusion as to what that means for ones that are more of a VDOT process.

[01:32:00] Sure. Thank you for the question. Processes, they're difficult in a sense because it sounds like a lot of folks might want to have even more details in, like, every single example there. And certainly there's FHWA studies, other studies where a whole lot of different folks, you know, they're in the same boat as us and the same challenge trying to figure out where these work, where they don't work.

[01:32:20] We don't, you know, so we can certainly make it more clear, more defined with this. That might mean it's even more stringent, tougher to have locations qualify for RFPs. But we don't want to add process just to add process. So if we can work closely, so with the FCDOT staff, and no matter kind of what that looks like, we can talk to them offline and see kind of what avenue, what forum that looks like to enhance that partnership moving forward, we would look to do so.

[01:32:47] Systemic safety countermeasures is something that the Virginia CTB adopted in 2019. That's kind of a holistic look at our network. We're in the middle of our round two of systemic safety countermeasures right now. so in future rounds that might be an opportunity where county staff can actually help shape what those countermeasures should look like across the state right now in round two there's a lot of focus on two-lane rural roads there's not many two-lane rural roads in fairfax county so that's not it so you know that h-step opportunity isn't there but if we can help shape the other ones we would look forward to doing so and in that way we could leverage those h-step dollars in the future to with the upfront construction costs.

[01:33:27] And in some ways, right, as you noted, in a lot of ways, we are much more urbanized. I probably have the most urban district within this district, right? And one with probably the least number of sidewalks because of the times it was built and all this retrofitting. So I think as you do this, right, there's the manual.

[01:33:44] And then as we continue to work with Bill Cutler's team to thinking about other ways, again, we can improve how we look at what is the best measure for each area, especially ones with the highest safety risks and incidents we've had. Thank you. Thank you. Any further questions? Well, hearing none, we are going to have to save the Highway Beautification Project discussion for another meeting because I've gone over yet again. My apologies. I just want to thank

[01:34:19] VDOT for coming today. I want to thank everybody up here for answering our questions, for facing our questions. We will keep the conversation going in the future, and I really appreciate it. Thank you.



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