

# **Loudoun County Planning Commission Approved Draft Recommendations On the Loudoun Countywide Transportation Plan Overview and Talking Points**

## **Background**

- By law Loudoun County is required to update its Countywide Transportation Plan (CTP) every five years.
- The County adopted its first CTP in 1995 and updated it in 2001.
- The current update process started in 2006, but was not completed before the previous Board left office and was extended to the new Board and Planning Commission.

## **Current Status**

- The Loudoun County Planning Commission completed its work on April 7<sup>th</sup>
- The Loudoun Board of Supervisors Transportation and Land Use Committee reviewed and made its recommendations on June 8<sup>th</sup>.
- A June 14<sup>th</sup> (7:00 p.m.) public hearing is scheduled and the Board of Supervisors may vote as early as June 15<sup>th</sup>.

The link to the complete text is

[http://www.loudounctp.com/documents/March2010\\_CTP\\_Clean%20Version.pdf](http://www.loudounctp.com/documents/March2010_CTP_Clean%20Version.pdf)

## **OVERVIEW**

### CTP Strengths

Key projects in the draft CTP include:

- Limited Access Parkways: The upgrading of VA Routes 7, 28, and 606 and US Route 50 to limited access freeways.
- New Primary Routes: Designation/reclassification of VA 606, VA Route 659 and VA Route 659 Re-located as primary routes.
- Dulles Loop: Implementation of the Dulles Loop (Parts of Routes 50, 28 and 606.)
- Tri-County Parkway: Comprehensive Plan alignment remains on map.

### Projects – Weaknesses

- Fails to provide travel needs for residents, businesses and visitors in several key corridors.
- Route 9 – Remains two lanes east and west of Hillsborough –despite county data showing severely congested conditions.
- US 15 – Remains two lanes north and south of Leesburg despite county data showing severe congestion (particularly north)
- Gum Springs Road/West Spine Road – Transportation and Land Use Committee proposes reducing lanes from 6 to 4 between Braddock Road and Route 50 despite high projected traffic volumes.
- North Star Boulevard/Route 659 Relocated Transportation and Land Use Committee recommends reducing lanes from 6 to 2 in between Braddock Road and Prince William County line despite the fact that this is a key link to Dulles Airport, I-66 and points south.
- Western Transportation Corridor – Does not appear on Plan despite the fact that the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority's 2030 TransAction Plan shows it provides dramatic relief to US 15 and other north-south corridors west of Dulles Airport.

Bottom Line: Major CTP weakness is its failure to support county-approved land use plan, particularly with regards to north-south travel demand and connectivity to adjoining jurisdictions to the south, north and west.

## TALKING POINTS

### **1. The Draft CTP Threatens Loudoun's ability to Create New Jobs, Expand Its Commercial Tax Base to Provide Residential Tax Relief**

- The very recent and very painful budget process underscores the importance of a broader, more sustainable tax base.
- Absent better regional access and connectivity, Loudoun will be unable to attract and keep the businesses it needs to grow and sustain its tax base.
- There is no Loudoun Economy per se. Loudoun is part of and depends upon a regional economy. To compete and prosper, Loudoun must be well-connected to the region.
- Loudoun's property tax base and the burden placed on residential property owners also will be determined to a large extent by the County's ability to attract and retain new businesses and jobs.
- If Loudoun is to attract and retain new jobs and businesses and keep taxes low, it must remain accessible to the 2030 work force located beyond its borders. The CTP cuts off access to jurisdictions to the north, south and west.

**2. The Draft CTP Threatens to Choke the Potential of Dulles Airport -- Loudoun's Major Economic Engine.** If Dulles and Loudoun County are to achieve their economic potential, Dulles must be more accessible from the north, south and west. By reducing the capacity of North Star Blvd, Gum Springs Road, Route 606 and failing to provide alternatives to Route 9 and US 15, the draft CTP provides inferior Airport accessibility.

**3. The Draft CTP Ignores Projects with Greatest Benefit.** The CTP endorses the importance of identifying transportation projects that produce the greatest transportation benefit but fails to include several of those improvements in its plan.

- Examples include: Western Transportation Corridor, Route 9 and US 15 alternatives, 6-lanes on portions of North Star Blvd. /Route 659 relocated and other north-south routes.

### **4. The Draft CTP Provides Inadequate Connections to Adjacent Jurisdictions.**

- CTP states that "The County will work with adjoining jurisdictions to create seamless connections across borders wherever possible, "
- However, West Virginia is currently constructing a new 4-6 lane bridge across the Shenandoah River to Route 9 connecting with an upgraded Route 9 on its side of the River. The West Virginia panhandle is experiencing major growth. Many residents, including many working in Loudoun County and points further east, commute regularly through Loudoun County.
- A four-lane in West Virginia to a two-lane facility in Loudoun County is not seamless.
- Similarly, US 15 in MD, PA and NY is a four lane or greater facility. A two lane link in Loudoun County doesn't work. The solution is providing an alternative corridor to the east.
- The goal of promoting seamless connections with adjacent jurisdictions needs to apply to all areas of the county, not just some.
- Ignoring events that are happening at and beyond our borders is not prudent or responsible public policy.

### **5. CTP Fails To Preserve Key Rural Roads**

- By proposing to restrict Route 9 and US 15 to two lanes the CTP creates severe congestion and unsafe travel conditions on these corridors.
- If County is truly committed to maintaining US 15 as part of a Journey through Hallowed Ground it will endorse protection of an alternative corridor to divert traffic out of that corridor.

## **6. The Draft CTP Fails to Protect Loudoun County's Transportation Options**

- In just about all other areas of planning – education, public safety, parks etc. it common practice to reserve and protect sites/land for future options and use. If the need fails to materialize the property can be sold or used for something else.
- The immediate need is not to ensure that every option gets built to a particular standard, but to make certain as many options as possible are preserved so that the County retains the flexibility and ability to meet future needs.
- The single greatest mistake repeated over and over by Northern Virginia local governments has been the failure to protect important transportation options. Protecting such options does not guarantee that they are built; just that they are there if and when needed.

## **7. Recommended CTP Improvements Include:**

- Identify and protect all transportation options. Given past and current growth projections, Loudoun County needs to protect right-of-way for every viable transportation option.
- Make improved access to Dulles Airport a major priority. As Dulles goes, so goes Loudoun County. To compete and survive in a global economy, Dulles and Loudoun County must have good access from all compass points.
- Make seamless connections, including new Potomac River bridges to all neighboring jurisdictions, a major priority.
- Add Corridor studies for Route 9 and US 15 into the CTP to identify alternative corridors for some segments and widening needs in others.
- Restore all Route 659 Relocated and Gums Springs Road/West Spine Road segments to six-lanes and Restore Route 606 to eight-lanes.
- Recognize that seamless connections are critical to growing Loudoun's economy and diversifying its tax base. Loudoun's ability to attract and retain a quality work force will depend to a great extent on the degree to which Loudoun's employers have access to workers from neighboring jurisdictions.