

September 2009

“A Month in Review”

- **Virginia Ranked Dead Last in Spending Transportation Stimulus Dollars** – Even where we have the money, transportation solutions are way too slow to come. Virginia ranked behind all other states – even behind the District of Columbia.
- **Pushing for a Discount Prescription Drug Program for County Residents** – This program, completely run by a private company, would be a great benefit to our citizens and seniors in these tough economic times.
- **Rallying Support for the 95/395 HOT Lane Project** – I have been a vocal critic of Arlington County’s lawsuit to stop this much needed project.
- **Encouraging Mass Transit in the I-66 Corridor** – I brought two low-cost short term ideas to improve congestion in this corridor and make it easier to take Metro before the Board of Supervisors.
- **Bringing Common Sense to the Tree Ordinance** – County staff preparing amendments to reduce the time and expense of our citizens and businesses while still achieving our tree canopy goals.
- **Leading the Development of a Shop Fairfax Initiative** – A campaign to remind the citizens of Fairfax County that when they shop in Fairfax County part of their money stays here to fund things they value like policemen, firemen and teachers and to remind our residents that when they spend here they are also helping to save local jobs.
- **Upcoming Events**
 - **Relay for Life is Coming to Springfield!**
 - **Seminar on Land Use Planning & Zoning**

Virginia Ranked Dead Last in Spending Transportation Stimulus Dollars

Far too often, we blame our transportation crisis only on lack of money. Unfortunately, even when we have the funds, we do not seem to be able to get projects completed in a timely fashion. My recent efforts to get the Multimodal Environmental Impact Study (EIS) for I-66 underway is one example: although it has been funded since 2003, it took over a year and significant effort on my part and the part of this Board to get a schedule and restart of this study.

Earlier this year the NY Times reported that Virginia was slow in applying for stimulus funds. Last week, a letter was sent from James Oberstar, Chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure to Governor Kaine stating that Virginia is 51 out of 51 in spending stimulus money and “has fallen far behind” other States. The letter said that as of August 31, Virginia had begun construction of projects totaling only 17% of the State’s funding. Given the plethora of “on the shelf” projects that we have in Northern Virginia and throughout the state, I believe this is unacceptable.

Also last week, I learned that the schedule for the interchange project for the Fairfax County Parkway at Fair Lakes Parkway and Monument Drive, which is partially funded with stimulus dollars, has been pushed back approximately two months. This is especially frustrating after my efforts to move the power lines had helped to accelerate the project’s schedule.

At our last Board Meeting I requested that a letter be sent to Governor Kaine and the Secretary of Transportation on behalf of the Board requesting that the Fair Lakes Parkway Interchange Project and other stimulus projects be moved forward as expeditiously as possible and to express Fairfax County’s support of and willingness to assist in efforts to keep funded transportation projects underway. My motion was approved unanimously.

Pushing for a Discount Prescription Drug Program for County Residents

Recently I have received several inquiries from citizens as well as those representing companies and non-profits on the status of a prescription discount card program for Fairfax County citizens. Such a program would help Fairfax County residents purchase prescription drugs at a discounted price. As Chairman of our Aging Committee I also hear from many of our senior citizens on this issue. As we continue to experience a slumping economy many of our residents are being financially stretched in every direction and discounted prescription drugs can help make ends meet.

There are several companies that provide these services and hundreds of localities throughout the country are taking advantage of these cost saving programs for their residents. At least one of these programs offers qualifying residents a 38% discount, handles all of the administration and provides a residual royalty to the County at \$0.75 per prescription. Back in June of 2008 this issue was brought before the Board and a working group was formed to study this issue with the ultimate goal of coming back to the Board with their recommendations.

I believe we should be moving this forward so at our last Board Meeting I asked County staff to re-examine this issue and to come back with a status report at our next Board Meeting. Bringing this type of program to Fairfax County would be a great help to our senior citizens.

Rallying Support for the 95/395 HOT Lane Project

As a regular user of the 395 HOV lanes, I know firsthand that we are quickly running out of capacity on the HOV lanes as traffic regularly slows to a crawl over several miles after the Duke street merge. I would like nothing more than to have Virginia step in and widen the HOV lanes and expand them south to encourage even more commuters to carpool, slug or take mass transit. Unfortunately there is no good funding source on the horizon and even if there were more construction funds available the project does not rank high on the project list. I share some of the concerns about safety which the state is addressing and as a regular user of slugging I will insure this practice remains attractive and viable.

Currently, the HOT Lanes Project for I-95/I-395 has been indefinitely delayed due to the current economic situation and also pending the outcome of a lawsuit filed by Arlington County. I have read the 74-page Arlington lawsuit that claims that the project has a “disparate and harmful impact on minority and low-income families in Arlington County” and that it deliberately supports, encourages and enables “a financially-able, privileged class of suburban and rural, primarily Caucasian residents from Stafford and Spotsylvania counties.” The latter statement is particularly questionable, considering the US Census Bureau shows that Arlington has the highest percentage of white residents of the counties mentioned and the second-highest median income after Fairfax County. I find the lawsuit to be nothing more than another attempt by Arlington County to stop a regional transportation project.

At the September 14th Board of Supervisors meeting, I jointly-sponsored a Board Matter with Supervisors McKay, Cook, Gross, and Chairman Bulova directing staff to prepare a letter to Governor Kaine on behalf of the Board outlining the Board’s strong support for the implementation of the project and encouraging him to keep this critical regional and local project moving on an expedited basis. With nearly non-existent funding for transportation projects in our area, a tolling option like the one proposed really is the only viable way to obtain the transportation infrastructure needed in the corridor at this time. The delay also holds up funding for bus service enhancements and commuter parking improvements, including the County’s purchase of the former Circuit City site in Springfield which are critical to expanding mass transit in this corridor.

Encouraging Mass Transit in the I-66 Corridor

At the September 14 Board of Supervisors meeting, I recommended that we consider two additional low-cost short term ideas to improve congestion in this corridor and make it easier to take Metro.

The first proposal is the use of the electronic messaging signs on I-66 to alert motorists of the status of the Metro parking lots. Many drivers exit for this station only to find out that no parking is available, wasting time and fuel, congesting the local roads and adding to an already frustrating commute. These signs have been installed at Dulles Airport to help those searching for parking at the airport. Use of these signs would allow drivers to continue on to a station with parking still available.

This brings me to the next suggestion: to study allowing non-HOV traffic to travel approximately 1.5 miles inside the Beltway to the exit for parking near the West Falls Church Metro stop. Allowing non-HOV commuters this access may help take drivers off the road as those who would otherwise have driven to work on alternate roads after finding no parking available at the Vienna station would now have the option to continue on to the West Falls Church-VT/UVA station, which typically has more parking available and later in the day. I believe this could increase the number of people taking Metro.

The Board supported my request for staff to work with VDOT and WMATA to perform a preliminary review of the feasibility and the costs and benefits of pursuing or implementing both of these initiatives to make it easier for those trying to take Metro. Staff is expected to provide the Board with a presentation on its findings at a future meeting.

Bringing Common Sense to the Tree Ordinance

In October of 2008, the Board of Supervisors adopted the “Tree Conservation Ordinance.” This Ordinance added 125 pages to the Code. It established canopy, preservation and planting requirements, preservation and planting fund, a monitoring and inspections program and an appeals process for violations of these various regulations.

As past *Herrity Report* readers know, I have argued we need to ask fundamental questions about our regulatory program, especially when we are considering additional burdens on our citizens and businesses. We need to do a better job of analyzing whether the regulations produce a benefit equal to the cost to the county, the cost to the regulated community and the cost to our citizens. Preserving trees, preventing clear cutting and increasing the tree canopy are worthy goals, however, adding 125 pages of regulation and significant cost and time to the process of building or improving homes and offices should not be done without a review of the cost and impact. The original Tree Ordinance was approved with a fiscal impact of “NONE” – hardly realistic for 125 pages of Code.

Since I began questioning the cost of the Tree Ordinance, County staff has indeed found the regulations to be expensive, confusing and time consuming relative to the benefits. They are working to prepare amendments that are expected to lessen the cost and time needed to prepare tree inventories for proposed site and grading plans. The draft amendments, which were circulated to the Board’s Environmental Committee on September 21, are a good start to reducing the ultimate cost to our citizens.

The number and complexity of regulations our County has produced has grown at an alarming rate. These new amendments are a good start in addressing the burden of our regulations on our citizens and businesses while still accomplishing our goals. I will continue to push for more common sense in our regulatory decisions to bring relief to our businesses and our citizens without sacrificing needed health, safety and environmental protections our regulations need to provide.

Leading the Development of a Shop Fairfax Initiative

Local governments all over the country are facing massive budget challenges, but in these troubling economic times we cannot forget that our large and small businesses are also facing daunting economic challenges. Although there is certainly no magic bullet to fix this problem, as an elected leader of the County I feel the need to be proactive not only in dealing with the problems we face with the County's budget but also in making sure we are doing everything we can to assist the businesses that help to fund our services and employ so many of our citizens.

One of the strategic advantages we have in Fairfax County is our robust and eclectic retail community. No matter what kind of shopping experience you are looking for – a mom and pop shop, a town center or a regional mall – Fairfax County has it all.

Retail sales are an important part of Fairfax County's budget as 1% of the sales tax from each purchase stays in Fairfax County. Last budget cycle Fairfax County received \$152.25 million in sales tax revenue. This important revenue stream has helped us provide the high quality schools and services our residents expect and deserve. Another important benefit provided by our retail establishments are the thousands of jobs they create for our citizens. In these troubling economic times we cannot take even a single job for granted.

The tax revenue and jobs created by local retail establishments may not always be on the minds of our citizens as they go out and shop for that new car, television or clothing item. According to the 3/50 Project, a nationwide initiative aimed at encouraging the patronage of local, independently owned businesses, for every \$100 spent in a local store, \$68 returns to the community through taxes, payroll and expenditures. If the money is spent online, none of it stays in the community.

That is why I have begun the development of an initiative called "Shop Fairfax" which is a campaign to remind the citizens of Fairfax County that when they shop in Fairfax County part of their money stays here to fund things they value like policemen, firemen and teachers. Another aim of the initiative is to remind our residents that when they spend here they are also helping to save local jobs. Over the past couple of weeks I have brought this idea to the Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce, several of our local Chambers of Commerce, Visit Fairfax, and the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority. They all enthusiastically supported the idea and we have formed a coalition that is getting this initiative off the ground.. I also brought my idea to the rest of the Board of Supervisors at our September meeting and the Board unanimously and enthusiastically endorsed my idea.

I will keep you updated through the Herrity Report as we move forward on this initiative.

Upcoming Events

- **Relay for Life is Coming to Springfield!**

Over the summer, a group of local residents created the Springfield-Burke Relay for Life Committee and teamed up with West Springfield High School to launch the community's first Relay for Life event. I am proud to be a small part of the team bringing this event to our community.

On May 14-15, 2010, West Springfield High School will host the Relay for Life of Springfield-Burke. Relay is the American Cancer Society's signature activity. It offers everyone in a community an opportunity to participate in the fight against cancer. Teams of people camp out at the high school and take turns walking around the track. Teams of people from all walks of life have fun while raising much-needed funds to fight cancer and raise awareness of cancer prevention and treatment.

One in three people will be diagnosed with cancer within their lifetime. The money raised at events like Relay saves lives by funding cutting-edge cancer research, early detection and prevention education, advocacy efforts, and patient services. Relay offers us a chance to celebrate those who have fought cancer and won, remember those lost to the disease, and fight back against this disease by raising resources and awareness.

No matter who you are, there's a place for you at the Springfield-Burke Relay for life. To participate, form a team, dedicate a luminary, or obtain more information about the Springfield event, please visit www.SpringfieldBurkeRelay.org, or email the organizers at SpringfieldBurkeRFL@gmail.com.

- **Seminar on Land Use Planning & Zoning**

Attention Springfield residents: The Fairfax County Planning Commission will sponsor a free 2-hour *Land Use Planning & Zoning Seminar* on Tuesday evening, November 10, 2009 from 7 to 9 pm. The seminar will be held in rooms 4 and 5 of the lobby level Conference Center at the Government Center located at 12000 Government Center Parkway in Fairfax.

There will be presentations by County staff on the following topics:

- Overview of the Land Use Process in Fairfax County
- The Comprehensive Planning Process
- The Land Use Application Process
- The Role of the Public in the Land Use Planning & Zoning Process
- Navigating the County's website

Planning Commission Chairman Peter Murphy and County Staff will be available to respond to questions during the last segment of the session.

To reserve your space at the seminar, call 703-324-2865 or send an email to plancom@fairfaxcounty.gov.

The *Herrity Report* is a monthly publication from the Office of Supervisor Pat Herrity to keep citizens informed on the issues facing Fairfax County. Communication is important to Supervisor Herrity and he encourages your feedback on the items in the *Report* or other issues that concern you. Past issues of the *Herrity Report* can be found at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/springfield/herrity-report-newsletter.htm>. To sign up for the Herrity Report please go to <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/springfield>. If you no longer wish to receive the *Herrity Report*, please send an e-mail to springfield@fairfaxcounty.gov with “Unsubscribe” in the subject line.