Notes to Accompany Slides

Slide 2

The Transportation/Revenue Crisis.

N. VA has a big problem. Traffic congestion has reached crisis proportions, threatening to cut off and reverse economic growth. Revenues to solve this problem are falling sharply at every level of government – not just state but federal and local as well.

We believe the transportation crisis and the revenue crisis are closely related. This is in part because high gas prices are weakening the economy and therefore the tax base. The cost of driving to work is draining household budgets, which impedes the ability of homeowners to pay their mortgages and to buy the other essentials of life.

Worse yet, sprawling, auto-dependent growth will continue to make the situation worse, not better. Even if Virginia had more money, it is not practical to build enough new lanes to solve the problem. There isn't enough right-of-way and time to get them in place.

A new approach to moving people and vehicles is essential, no matter what else happens.
Today we are going to present a way to make much more efficient use of existing transportation resources.

We hope to demonstrate that:

- enhancing and expanding certain types of rapid transit service, especially in the underserved areas beyond the Metro service area, can bring near-term relief from high gas prices to the citizen and business community alike.
- new, relatively low-cost approaches to rapid transit can provide substantial increases in throughput in the near term by making more efficient use of existing resources.
- using TOD (Transit Oriented Development) land use techniques at new transit hubs in the middle and outer ring of counties can, strengthen their local tax base, and lead to more efficient balanced regional growth.
- not only can creating an integrated regional transit network help mitigate congestion and relieve stress on the commuter, but it can also help reduce air pollution, achieve energy self-sufficiency, increase access to jobs and services, create alternatives to driving in the event of a national emergency, as well as offer many other benefits.

Slide 3

The Urban Dynamic

It's helpful to note the reasons for the patterns of N. VA's explosive population growth. Actually, it is a relatively new phenomenon. From the Colonial period through the beginning of WW II, our population growth was slow. As late as 1940, the population of Fairfax County was around 50,000. Since then it has grown by over 1 million people.

The growth of the federal government, especially beginning with World War II , brought many new jobs to downtown Washington and close-in Arlington. People flocked here to fill those jobs, and subdivisions sprang up in Arlington and close-in Fairfax. The era of the Commuter had dawned.

Economic activity tends to draw more economic activity, and growth feeds on growth as long as there is infrastructure to support it. Eisenhower's Inter-State Highway program created a new transportation backbone for the Country and our region. First housing and then shopping, services and offices moved out the corridors.

The most intense job growth occurred close to the core and then spread out the transportation corridors from there. To work there, people filled the close-in suburbs. As the close-in areas filled up, residential growth was pushed further out – often in a leapfrog pattern.

Because this pattern continued, commuters chose to travel ever further to match the best jobs and residential opportunities. VDOT was constantly under pressure to build enough lane miles to accommodate the growing traffic. It got ever harder and more expensive to acquire potential right-of-way that had been devoured by development. Cheap gasoline enabled commuters to travel on ever-longer commutes in their Single Occupancy Vehicles [SOVS]. This pattern, combined with the explosive population and job growth, filled every highway lane, no matter how many were built.

Today, everything has changed. Gasoline is suddenly very expensive. Long commutes and gridlock make the daily commute expensive, painful, and uncertain as to duration.

Also, while there have been some revisions to the basic model set up in the 1930's for transportation planning and building in Virginia, the system now in effect appears in need of some further updating.

Three observations seem to emerge.
First, much can be gained if transportation planning and implementation recognize that these historic patterns of rapid growth occurring at the edge of the region will continue. New approaches can anticipate and accommodate this dynamic.

Second, the commuter needs alternatives to driving that are cheaper, faster, and less stressful than driving. And third, new ways of financing certain parts of the transportation network must be added to the traditional ones.

Transportation planning for Northern Virginia has not been sufficiently anticipating the impact of traffic from the fast-growing areas beyond the current planning area. The region today extends much further than is generally recognized. And just as traffic from fast-growing Fairfax County in the 1970's and '80's impacted Arlington, so too in the years ahead will the rapid growth of Prince William, Loudoun, Stafford, Spotsylvania, Fauquier, Winchester and the areas beyond continue to impact everything between them and the urban core.

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<u>Benefits to Individuals and Families</u>

The spike in gas prices has drained some household budgets to the point that people can't pay their mortgages and still buy groceries and other necessities. Many commuters are choosing to leave their cars at home and take rapid transit where it is available. It is faster, cheaper, and less stressful.

- For low and moderate income people especially, transit can give access to a broader range of job, shopping, services and other opportunities.
- Saving $5,000 per year in commuting expenses for a person whose after-tax income is $20-30,000 can make a huge difference in their standard of living.
- Commuting by transit makes it possible to use the travel time productively.

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Why is BRT inexpensive and quick to implement?

- Initially, can use existing roadway infrastructure such as lanes, bridges, and tunnels.
- Builds upon existing rolling stock and management structures
- Can be combined with existing roadway projects (e.g., HOT/HOV lanes)
- Does not require rail features such as electrification, tracks, and train control system.
- Off-the-shelf vehicles are available from multiple vendors who must compete on price, delivery times, and service
- Often requires minimal planning and engineering at the outset.
- Is growable and scalable– a "quick-start" BRT system can be expanded and enhanced as resources become available and ridership grows

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Examples of potential high impact, cost-effective improvements.

- Expand transit capacity by purchasing/leasing more buses, expanding park and ride lots, and expanding local circulator service to bring commuters to BRT stations.
- Improve passenger information systems, such as transit maps, "Trip-Planner" web sites, trip planning services, real time "next bus" displays, and programs designed to educate and encourage commuters to use transit.
- Adaptive use of existing infrastructure, such as new transit service on HOV, HOT, reversible lanes, medians on arterial streets, or by using roadway shoulders.
- Operational improvements to existing systems such as traffic signal priority, queue jump lanes, and improved fare collection systems.
- Partnerships with large employers to bring new service to employment centers.
- Increasing ridership by adding amenities, such as bus shelters and wi-fi or television service on buses.
- Improved maintenance techniques that enhance service reliability and frequency.

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There is a bewildering array of participants in planning and providing transportation and land use. For example, there are 328 jurisdictions statewide that can make independent land use decisions. In the Greater Northern Virginia Region, there is an alphabet soup of planning and implementing organizations. A partial list is included below.

Institutions / Agencies		Local Governments	Transit Providers	Processes / Plans
MWCOG	TPB	Fairfax County	WMATA - Metro	CLRP
WMATA	VDOT	Arlington County	PRTC - OmniRide	Six Year Plan
DRPT	MWAA	Alexandria	DASH	STIP
NVTA	NVTC	Falls Church	REX	SIP
NVRC		Prince William County	GEORGE	CLRP
MWAQC		Loudoun County	Loudoun Transit	CMAQ
PRTC	FAMPO	Fairfax City	VRE	TransAction 2030
CTB		Manassas	CUE	VTrans
WMPO		Manassas Park	ART	Local transportation plans
		Spotsylvania County	Fairfax Connector	Local land use / zoning plans
		Fredericksburg	FRED	etc.
		Stafford County	Virginia Regional Transit	
		Fauquier County	Winchester Transit System	
		Winchester		
		Culpeper		
		Etc.		