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MWAA's \$700M Plus Highway Robbery

Much has been written in the press on the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority ("MWAA") Board of Directors' April 6 decision to select the Tunnel Alignment through Dulles International Airport as part of Phase 2 construction for Dulles Rail. Already significantly over budget, this decision will needlessly cost taxpayers and toll road users at least \$330 million.

What has been overlooked in much of the media coverage of the controversial tunnel decision is the April 6 resolution passed by the MWAA Board to mandate a union-favoring Project Labor Agreement ("PLA") onto contractors building Phase 2 of the project. Construction industry experts estimate this pro-PLA resolution could add between 10 percent and 30 percent in construction costs to the \$3.5 billion project with little benefit to the project or taxpayers.

Both of these fiscally irresponsible decisions will come at the expense of Fairfax County taxpayers and toll road users and were decided with total disregard of the very vocal desires of the projects financial "partners" - Fairfax County, Loudoun County and the Commonwealth of Virginia. At best this is taxation without representation. At worst it is highway robbery, as our citizens and the toll road users will pay for these reckless decisions made by the unelected MWAA board - the majority of which are not even Virginia residents. Four MWAA Board

Members voted against the tunnel - former Congressman Tom Davis, Michael O'Reilly, Frank Conner III, and William Cobey.

The Dulles Toll Road corridor and Tysons Corner are the economic engines of Fairfax County and the Commonwealth of Virginia. In order to finance Dulles Rail, tolls on the Dulles Toll Road are already projected to exceed \$10 one way, excluding the Greenway. These toll projections were prepared BEFORE the anticipated \$1.2B Phase 2 overrun and the recent outrageous decisions by the MWAA Board.

For quite some time I have been raising concerns about the impact of these tolls on our economic engine and our tax base. I am aware of companies that have left this corridor because of the projected tolls. At our next meeting I will be formally asking the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to look the economic impact of the tolls on this critical corridor.

In addition, Fairfax County taxpayers are on the hook for 16% of the project costs. The special tax district established for the Dulles Rail project includes a cap and will not cover the Fairfax portion of the original project estimate, much less the overrun and the impact of the poor financial decisions by the MWAA Board. If this project moves forward, additional funding will either have to come at the expense of other transportation projects in the county or will be a further burden on our taxpayers.

Typically, government-mandated PLAs increase the cost of construction by imposing inefficient union work rules and special-interest mandates on contractors and result in reduced competition. This is especially true in Virginia, a right to work state, where only four percent of our private construction workforce belongs to a construction trade union. This means the economic benefits and jobs created by the construction project are likely to go outside Virginia even though it is our citizens that are paying for the project.

The devastating impact PLA mandates have on cost and competition were very evident on the Wilson Bridge project. When Maryland initially imposed a PLA requirement on the bridge project only one bid was received and it was 78% over the state's cost estimate. Eventually the

PLA mandate was lifted by the federal government and the project was broken down into smaller contracts, resulting in multiple bidders and a final cost that came in significantly below the state's cost estimate.

The Fairfax Board of Supervisors along with Chairman Scott York from the Loudon County Board of Supervisors, and Secretary of Transportation Sean Connaughton are on record asking these costly decisions be reconsidered. I believe we must go further. In 2006, then Governor Timothy Kaine handed the Dulles Toll Road and the Dulles Rail project over to MWAA in an administrative decision. This decision was done without a vote of the General Assembly or local elected bodies. It is time for Virginia and the local partners to revisit this decision and return control of the Dulles Toll Road and the Dulles Rail project to elected bodies so that we can ensure greater transparency, responsiveness to taxpayers and put an end to this highway robbery by the MWAA Board.

Budget Includes Smaller Tax Increase Than Originally Proposed

On Tuesday, the Board approved what will be the budget for FY 2012. First the bad news - Chairman Bulova proposed a budget that included a tax increase on our homeowners and it passed by a vote of 7-3 with Supervisor Michael Frey, Supervisor John Cook and myself voting against it. Unfortunately the package again included a whole slew of fee increases. Now for the somewhat good news - the increase was significantly less than originally proposed by the County Executive and significantly less than the rate the Board majority voted to advertise in February.

On Friday, at our last budget committee meeting, I proposed a budget that showed we could actually provide a small tax decrease to our homeowners and protect the services many of our citizens have come to expect. Although I was not successful in having my budget pass, I am proud that I once again put a concrete budget proposal on the table that reduced homeowner taxes. These efforts helped hold the increase in taxes down even if we did not get to where I wanted.

Some in the majority argue that the Chairman's budget is acceptable because it includes only a modest increase on the average homeowner. But that point ignores the fact that it will be a much bigger tax increase on the 50% of our homeowners whose home values rose higher than the average.

It also ignores the fact that some of the neighborhoods that saw the largest increases in property values this year were the ones hit hardest by foreclosures. Many of those homeowners are still struggling and they cannot afford any type of tax increase in these tough times.

The Board always talks about helping those that are the least well off in our society and I certainly agree that we need to provide effective programs that give struggling families a hand up. But we also need to remember that many of our middle class families are still struggling to make ends meet. This budget and the ever increasing tax bills in Fairfax County make it harder for them to do that.

The time to provide tax relief to our citizens is long overdue. I'm disappointed and concerned that the Board couldn't do this year and because of that I did not support the Chairman's budget.

Last week I laid out a more detailed case for reducing homeowner taxes, to read that article please click here:

http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/springfield/pdf_files/herrity_report/april_2011_budget.pdf

Fighting Lyme Disease - Funding Identified for 4 Poster Deer Bait Station Pilot

Herrity Report readers will know that over the last few years I have been a strong advocate for fighting against Lyme disease which is reaching epidemic levels without much attention from the medical community. I passed several motions with the support of the Board to try and eradicate this terrible disease within our community. One such motion was to start a pilot program of the 4 Poster Deer Bait Station at selected parks around the county. The bait stations safely and cost effectively apply a tickicide to deer, killing the ticks that carry Lyme disease. Although the

motion was approved nearly two years ago, money for the project and the logistics of rolling out the program got in the way of actually getting the bait stations out and collecting data. Over the last several months I have been working with the Health Department, our Wildlife Biologist, and the County Executive to ensure that we would not let another year go by without starting the pilot program.

I am happy to report that during this budget process I was able to identify funding in the Pest Management reserve and because of that the pilot will begin shortly. The Health Department and our Wildlife Biologist will be working hand-in-hand to ensure that the program runs smoothly.

It is my hope that the data comes back showing that these bait stations help in the fight against Lyme disease, and if successful, it is my intent to work with local businesses and private citizens to put more of these bait stations out county-wide. I will keep you updated on my efforts in the months to come.

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