

Davis: Rail project won't come cheap

Localities expected to cover much of Dulles extension cost

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The Dulles Rail Project could be in jeopardy if local governments can't pay for 25 percent or more of the project's estimated \$3.8 billion cost, federal and county officials indicated Friday.

The transportation project would create a rail extension from Falls Church to Dulles International Airport and beyond into Loudoun County.

But, according to U.S. Rep. Thomas M. Davis III, R-11th District, building the project would require "a powwow" between all parties involved — the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, Fairfax and Loudoun counties

and federal officials.

"There's no federal project that's getting more than 50 percent funded," Davis said Friday. Some localities, he said, are paying 80 percent of the cost of their projects.

"The state [also] doesn't have the money," Davis said.

Initially, the federal government had been expected to pay 50 percent of the Dulles Rail Project. The rest of the cost was to be divided up among the commonwealth, which was to pay an estimated 25 percent, and with the airports authority and Fairfax and Loudoun counties financing the remaining quarter.

But nothing has been placed in

Localities desire rail funding help

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writing and won't be until the federal government gives the go-ahead for the design in one or two years. Before then, the counties will gather public comment and choose alternate plans.

The commonwealth's current budget woes, said officials, likely will affect how it will pay for its \$800 million share.

"It's going to be very difficult if the federal government is not putting money in the system," Loudoun County Board of Supervisors Chairman Scott York, R-at large, said Friday. "The state is not putting a lot of money in Northern Virginia. The question boils down to the feds and the state — [they've] got to help us."

If the brunt of project costs is placed on localities, he said, it's going to be hard.

"It's more of a question of time," Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairwoman Katherine K. Hanley, D-at large, said Friday. In order to keep the project going, she said, it will need long-term support from the federal government as it al-

locates money each year.

Other ways to finance the project include a special tax district in Tysons Corner, Hanley said.

She also referred to Gov. Mark R. Warner's announcement Friday that he would amend the Hampton Roads sales-tax referendum to include Northern Virginia. If such a referendum is approved by the General Assembly at its mid-April veto session and then passed by voters, the region could bring in \$350 million in revenue, money that could be used for Dulles rail, Hanley said.

Fairfax County Supervisor Gerald E. Connolly, D-Providence District, said a more favorable climate has developed to promote the rail project, especially with the security issues that arose after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

"Certainly it's true [that] it's more a competitive market out there," he said.

But after the federal government shut down Reagan National Airport and kept it closed while other major airports reopened, Connolly said, it doesn't

seem right that it won't help fully with rail plans.

"The federal government can't have it both ways," he said.

Hanley said the federal government is the region's major employer and should support any such change which would benefit those workers.

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation released a draft of an environmental impact statement on the Dulles project last week, which was approved Thursday by Metro's Board of Directors.

To be completed by 2010, the Dulles Corridor Rapid Transit Project includes alternative transit system improvements, such as rail and rapid bus, extending along the 24-mile Dulles Corridor between the Metrorail Orange Line near the West Falls Church-VT/UVA station in Fairfax to Route 772 in Loudoun.

The corridor encompasses several activity centers with high traffic volumes, including Tysons Corner, Reston, Herndon and eastern Loudoun, a rapidly growing spot.