

Background

The Dulles Corridor is located in Northern Virginia. The corridor has become one of the most recognized places in the country for technology and Internet-based companies to locate. The corridor runs approximately 30 miles from West Falls Church to Leesburg, with major activity centers along the way including Tysons Corner, Reston/Herndon, Dulles International Airport and eastern Loudoun County.

The importance of this corridor to the economic vitality to the region and the Commonwealth is significant. Growth along the corridor has increased beyond the pace of transportation improvements, and in all likelihood will continue. The communities of Tysons Corner, Reston/Herndon, and Dulles have long discussed rapid transit opportunities to serve their communities in light of this growth.

In 1997, the Dulles Corridor Transportation Study was completed and resulted in a Preferred Alternative adopted by the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) that called for:

"... A seamless rail extension from the East Falls Church Metro station to the vicinity of Route 772 in Loudoun County."

The CTB further called for developing a funding plan and near-term implementation of enhanced express bus services.

Following the completion of the study, an \$86 million earmark was secured by Congressman Frank Wolf and Senator John Warner in TEA-21 for BRT and preliminary engineering for rail. To date, \$42 million of the earmark has been appropriated.

On July 6, 1998, Virginia Secretary of Transportation Shirley J. Ybarra established the Dulles Corridor Task Force, chaired by J. Kenneth Klinge of the Commonwealth Transportation Board. The Task Force includes the chief executives of Fairfax and Loudoun counties, City of Falls Church, Town of Herndon, several advisors appointed by the Chairman, and the heads of six public agencies:

- Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT)
- Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)
- Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA)
- Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC)
- Northern Virginia Planning District Commission (NVPDC)
- Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Northern Virginia District

The mission of the Task Force is:

Undertake the phased implementation of rail service in the Dulles Corridor, as a single project, beginning with dedicated express bus service as a step to designing and implementing a bus rapid transit system. On a parallel basis, this

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task force will facilitate the engineering, environmental and financial actions necessary to begin rail operations.

In July 1999, the Task Force conducted a study of the potential application of a BRT system in the Dulles Corridor as a supplement to the 1996 Dulles Corridor Transportation study. The supplemental study analyzed the application of BRT in a phased approach to eventual rail service. Efforts are now underway to secure funding and move the project into the preliminary engineering and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. The project has four phases as follows:

- **Phase I: Express Bus** – Starting in 1999, provides express bus service and new bus routes within Fairfax County serving Herndon/Monroe and Wiehle Avenue to Tysons Corner and the West Falls Church Metro station.
- **Phase II: Enhanced Express Bus** – Starting in 2001, provides additional bus routes and buses serving eastern Loudoun County and the City of Fairfax to Tysons Corner and the West Falls Church Metro station.
- **Phase III: Bus Rapid Transit** – Starting in 2003, provides new BRT routes and buses serving eastern Loudoun County, Dulles Airport, Reston/Herndon, Tysons Corner, and the West Falls Church Metro station.
- **Phase IV: Rail** – Starting in 2006, provides rail from Metrorail's Orange line East Falls Church station through Tysons Corner. Starting in 2010, extends rail from Tysons Corner to Reston/Herndon, Dulles Airport, and Routes 606 and 772 in Loudoun County. Although Phase IV is proposed in two parts, it is the intention of the Task Force to complete rail all the way to the vicinity of Route 772 in Loudoun County without delay.

The Task Force oversees the identified four-phased implementation plan, and is developing a funding strategy and coordinating technical issues through a number of subcommittees. One of these subcommittees is the Dulles Corridor Technology Task Group, chaired by Richard Taube, Executive Director of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission. Their mission is to define and recommend a plan for the use of technology to enhance transportation systems along the Dulles Corridor. This group has adopted seven policy statements with regard to their mission as follows:

1. The overall goal is the creation of a new 21st Century transportation environment in the Dulles Corridor by the year 2010. A building-block approach should be adopted for the application of current and evolving technologies.
2. Technology should be applied where there is a pay-off for the customer or the operator.
3. Risk should be held commensurate with the time scale and potential pay-off.
4. Dulles Corridor systems should have a high degree of compatibility and integration with all modes of connecting systems.
5. The objective and time scale for each technological application should be clearly defined and linked to a system of "payment by results," with contractors.

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6. It should be recognized that even “proven” technologies would require some development to adapt them to specifics of the Dulles Corridor system.
7. The Dulles Corridor Task Force should not be deterred by long term evolution requirements if the potential gain to the traveler and taxpayer is substantial.

The operator of the new service is yet undefined. WMATA is the largest and most comprehensive transit provider in the region and may operate the service. In addition to WMATA, Fairfax County and Loudoun County currently operate transit service along the corridor. As part of Virginia’s Public Private Partnership Act, two private proposals to operate the Dulles service have been submitted and are currently under review.