



NEWS RELEASE (REVISED)

Thursday May 19, 2005

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Northern Virginia motorists urged to boycott Dulles Toll Road one day a week to protest May 22 fare increase

Supervisor Delgaudio to seek Loudoun's withdrawal from Dulles Rail project

RESTON, VA -- Dulles Toll Road motorists today were urged to boycott the Toll Road on May 23 -- the first work day that they will have to pay 67% more in fares -- and to abstain from using the highway one day a week to protest Virginia's use of this money to build the boondoggle Metro extension to Wiehle Avenue.

Addressing a news conference here today, Loudoun County Supervisor Eugene Delgaudio (R-Sterling District) also announced that as chairman of the Board's Finance Committee, he will begin discussions on whether Loudoun County should withdraw from the Dulles Rail project due to the toll increase, which he called a "tax increase" that was approved by "an un-elected secret cabal, appointed by the Governor." Delgaudio also is the Loudoun representative on the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC), which funds Metro and VRE.

Speakers also criticized VDOT and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (VDRPT) for funding a slick broadcast and newspaper/Web campaign to lobby commuters into thinking the increase in tolls is going to help their commutes.

The campaign included placement of black-and-yellow banners along the Toll Road directing people to a web site that implies that Dulles Rail will have a meaningful impact on congestion. In addition, VDOT removed Notollincrease.com banners, but kept up one of theirs on the Dulles Greenway, despite promises to remove them all. VDOT also has promoted the fare increase at the toll plazas.

VDRPT's own data shows that despite spending \$1.8 billion to bring rail from West Falls Church station to Wiehle, it will not alleviate traffic congestion from area roads (including the Toll Road). Congestion Levels F (stop and go), as bad as the Beltway and I-66, are projected whether or not the Metro extension is built. Yet, 85 percent of Toll Road surplus will go into the Dulles Rail project, thus depriving the toll road of revenue for expansion and improvements.

"Gov. Warner, several congressmen and state delegates, and the Fairfax Board of Supervisors, are setting a bad precedent in supporting the diversion of toll money from highways to a rail line that won't take cars off the road in significant numbers," said Ken Reid, director of Notollincrease.com, whose wife commutes on the Toll Road each day from Leesburg.

"These officials serve as 'The Congestion Coalition' because they choose to use our taxes and tolls for rail boondoggles instead of real congestion mitigation," he said. "Commuters should not partake in the 'Great Train Robbery of 2005' and should boycott the Toll Road."

"It is not that difficult to drive to the airport on the inner lanes and take the loop road to Route 28, and avoid the much higher tolls and congestion that are forecast for the Toll Road."

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Jim Nagle, a Reston resident who commutes to Bethesda each day, urged his fellow commuters to use alternate routes to the extent that it is practical to do so. He also advised fellow commuters and voters to question their pro-rail representatives about the true motivations for supporting Dulles Rail by pointing out that none of them have satisfactorily explained why, if rail is the answer to congestion, the I-66 corridor isn't a model of congestion free driving.

"Additionally, none of these pro-rail representatives have explained how in any practical sense, the toll increase should be considered a Commonwealth contribution since it comes only from selected commuters who largely have no alternative to using the Toll Road," Nagle added.

Christopher Walker, president of Walker & Co., a leading commercial property firm in Reston, who hosted the briefing at one of his properties, called upon Gov. Warner to issue a Request for Proposals for express toll lanes on the Toll Road.

"Private companies are now proposing to put express toll lanes and variable pricing on I-95, the Beltway and on I-81 in the Shenandoah Valley," he added. "We see no reason why this cannot be done with the Toll Road. It makes no sense to charge a flat fee 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and put virtually all of that money into a rail project that will take \$4 billion and 20 years to complete that will only mitigate less than one year's worth of increase in traffic."

Walker has founded Virginia Mobility Associates, LLC, which will shortly submit a proposal under Virginia's Public Private Transportation Act to widen the Toll Road and I-66 inside the Beltway and put express toll lanes on them, and remove the full-time tolls from the Toll Road. The money will be raised privately.

Walker noted the D.C. area has the 3rd worst traffic congestion in the nation, according to the recent Texas Transportation Institute rankings. He added that the cities with the worst congestion are the ones -- like D.C. - that invested billions in rail transit, instead of multi-modal highways, which can carry cars, trucks, buses and carpools.

DC is only slightly less congested than Los Angeles and San Francisco, west coast cities which have elected to build ineffective rail projects instead of dealing with congestion.

"Congestion is not inevitable, and not a function of population growth," said Walker. "It's an issue of spending wisely and using best available technology."

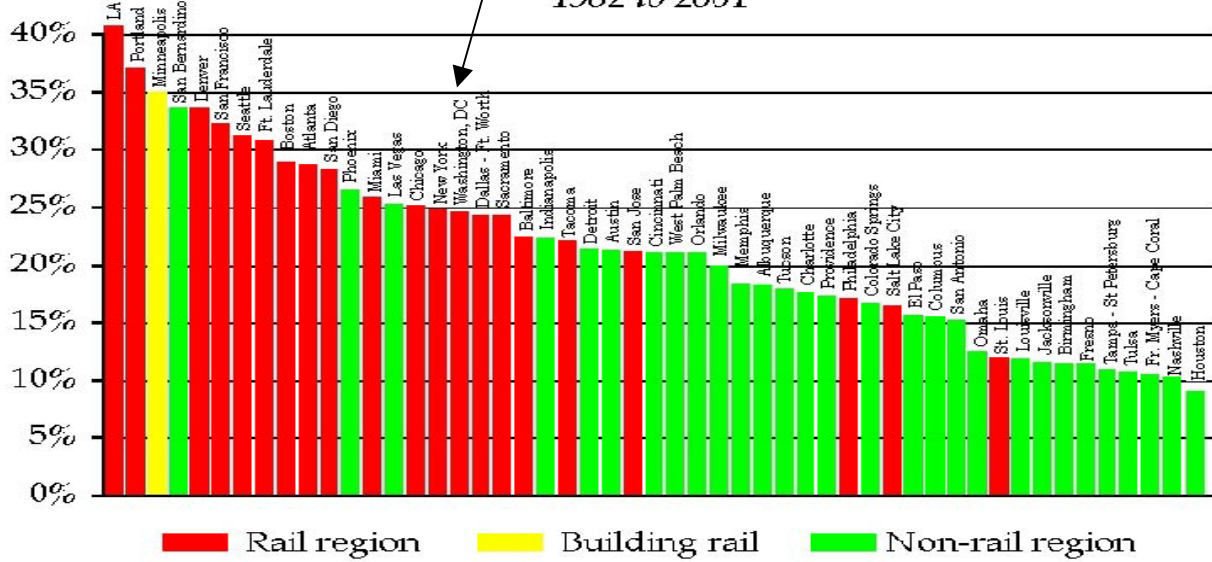
Also on hand was Donnie Ferguson, a Libertarian candidate opposing Del. Ken Plum, who chairs the Dulles Corridor Rail Assn., a group financed by Tysons Corner developers and Metro trade unions to promote Dulles Rail, and several Reston-area activists, including Mary Buff and Steve Hull. -

See congestion graphic below

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D.C. area rankings

Congestion Growth in Major U.S. Urban Areas 1982 to 2001



Source: Texas Transportation Institute