

OWC NEWSLETTER

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Issue Nr 8, Sep. 1997

We're
Still
Here !!



You may wonder whether or not the OWC still exists. Well, it does and has been very active in many matters that affect you and our area. Like most of you, we have also been busy in our private lives. We hope in this issue to bring you up to date with the more significant happenings in the area. As we have mentioned before, we will call you to meetings when they are absolutely necessary but not schedule them when they are not. Your OWC is alert, at work, and clearly understands the threat to each member of our 61 Associations. We pledge to keep you informed and to work hard to do what is right. Read on to see what has been happening.

Bill Cole

The Threat Remains But We Understand It Better

By Al Akers

In mid-1994 it became apparent to many in Fairfax County that construction of a Prince William Parkway-to-Fairfax County Parkway connector was seriously being considered. Accordingly, in December 1994 the Occoquan Watershed Coalition (OWC) was formed to counter this challenge to the sanctity of the Region's drinking water and public health. Any major crossing over the geographically, well-defined Occoquan Reservoir and its



contiguous Watershed and Parkland would be environmentally unsafe. This was not a new idea. In 1982 the Fairfax County (FFC) Board of Supervisors (BOS) downzoned the Watershed to five acres for

environmental concerns which they have continued to validate over the years. Such a connector would bring at least 60,000 commuters daily from Prince William County (PWC) and other southern counties through Fairfax Station and Clifton, resulting in gridlock on our new FFC Parkway. This new connector, linking the two parkways, would bring ever increasing traffic through south central FFC to the FFC Parkway and then on to other destinations in Fairfax and

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SOV Access from Franconia Springfield Parkway to I-95

By Susan Borinsky, Springfield District Representative to Fairfax County Transportation Advisory Commission.

The Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) has significantly advanced the possibility of single occupancy vehicle (SOV) access between the Franconia-Springfield Parkway (F-S) and I-95. The original Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) plans for the redesign of the I-95/395/495 Interchange (Mixing Bowl) would have permitted only vehicles with three or more occupants and motorcycles to travel directly between these two highways and only during established

HOV hours

In November, 1996, the CTB reexamined the Mixing Bowl plans and considered the possibility of creating conventional access between the F-S Parkway and I-95. The CTB voted \$21 million (1) to purchase the necessary land, and (2) to redesign the Mixing Bowl "so as not to preclude" conventional travel ramps connecting the two highways. In August, 1997, the CTB formally approved VDOT's revised Mixing Bowl plans, which leave room for possible addition of SOV ramps.

Although the CTB's actions substantively advanced the possibility of SOV access, approximately \$41 million in additional funding is necessary to make SOV access a reality. Consequently, implementation of the SOV ramps is on a separate track and timetable than the \$300+ million Mixing Bowl project which is scheduled to begin late in 1998 or early 1999, and which may take up to 12 years to complete. To keep SOV access moving forward, the CTB will have to include funding for preliminary engineering and design for the

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Loudon counties and on into D.C. and Maryland. Thus, this new, central route intended to meet local inter-county commuter needs, would also provide the linkage which would create a defacto "Western Bypass" bisecting FFC. The proposal was wrong in 1994 and it is wrong today. Remember that our FFC Parkway was designed for cross county traffic, not as a major artery for regional commuters and intra-regional traffic. Further, secondary and tertiary roads would be subject to ever increasing cut-through traffic, as gridlock spawns imaginative, alternative routes for frustrated commuters who believe any movement is progress. Significantly, the FFC job sites, which attract commuters, are not in our area or in the center of Fairfax or the Springfield District. The Springfield District has balanced growth against preservation of the environmental quality of its diverse topography. This concept for growth has been successful. It is important to note that the Springfield District is doing its part to alleviate the commuter traffic challenge. A total of 81.7 new lane miles (Road capacity = 1 lane @ 1000 cars/hr; 4 lanes = 4000 cars/hr) are currently in place or in the works over the next few years without the expansion of Route 123 to its full 6 lane capacity.

The widening and straightening of existing rural roads on the watershed, like the connector, is unacceptable. Making the existing watershed roads thoroughfares with forever increasing commuter traffic would endanger school buses, adversely impact the environment and substantially undercut safety for all that travel these rural roads.

One final point - The future will not be a carbon of the past. Telecommuting in both the Public and Private sectors, along with local and regional offices close to home, is a coming reality. The changing face of how companies and corporations conduct their internal and external business, today and tomorrow, as a result of major breakthroughs in communication technology, must and will be exploited. Projecting road requirements for the next century must be made factoring in the changing world of technology and its impact on evolving

management practices and techniques. Today, more and more companies of all sizes are permitting their workers to work at home or in close-in regional work centers or offices, either part or full time. This change in the workplace will grow dramatically as technology breakthroughs accelerate. Importantly, commuter traffic in the 21st Century must decrease, not increase. Road technology to increase capacity and telecommuting in all its various forms must be explored. With public money in short supply and pressing needs in all areas of government high, we must not build roads, which are not truly needed.

So, What Should Be Done?

1. Protect the Occoquan Reservoir and its Watershed.

This is consistent with the number of affirming actions and decisions since 1982 by the FFC BOS. Increased use of the Occoquan Reservoir and its Watershed for transportation purposes is contrary to the County's history of past and recent actions, comprehensive land use plans, and policies on human health and the environment regarding the reservoir and its watershed. Protection of our drinking water and attention to public health is paramount.

2. Return the Occoquan Watershed to its Normal Rural and Residential Setting.

Improve safety, reduce speed, and return congested roads to normalcy by imposing traffic calming measures. Like a magnet, any widening or improvement of the roads in the central area will draw increased and faster moving cut-through traffic from the south and west which will degrade safety, the environment, and ultimately impact the viability of the Occoquan Reservoir's drinking water and the Occoquan Watershed. This can not happen.

3. Improve Major Transportation Corridors in the East and West.

Fairfax County must be in charge of its own destiny to determine the best routes to take commuters to their job centers. Fairfax County has designated I-95, I-66, Rte 1, Rte 123, and Rte 28 as major commuter corridors. The fact that Prince William County unilaterally

built a four-lane road from their parkway towards the Yates Ford Bridge should not alter this decision.

4. Emphasize a Mix of Mass Transit Alternatives.

We must decrease the amount of vehicular traffic throughout the region. Greater emphasis must be placed upon improved rapid transit opportunities, telecommuting, metro, Virginia Rail Express (VRE), and "people movers", etc. Telecommuting can make the biggest difference in reducing commuter traffic and the need for more roads if its use is encouraged and promoted by both governmental and business communities. Like New York, there is a limit to the number of commuter lanes and cars that FFC can safely accommodate. There are currently more lanes over the Occoquan than from New Jersey to New York!

5. Integrate Transportation and Land Use Planning.

Any transportation plans affecting the reservoir or roads in the downzoned portions of the watershed must be consistent with land use restrictions established in these areas. FFC has established protections in these environmentally sensitive areas after careful planning and foresight, and has resisted and defeated numerous challenges to these policies. PWC's land use policies have been dissimilar.

6. Expedite Transportation Improvements Presented at the VDOT Annual Pre-Allocation Hearing.

A number of FFC organizations (Springfield District Council, Town of Clifton, South Run Coalition, Federation of Lorton Communities, and the OWC) have worked closely with FFC to identify and prioritize transportation projects that affect our area, particularly inter-county traffic.

Board of Directors Meeting Oct. 16, 1997

The OWC Board will meet at the home of Bill Cole at 7:30PM. Mark your calendars and attend. Members, please call us with your concerns and suggestions.

Bill Cole - 764-1300

SOV project in Virginia's Transportation Six-Year Plan, which the CTB will revise next year.

Supervisor Elaine McConnell, Delegate David Albo and Congressman Tom Davis aggressively pursued SOV access for their constituents. Fairfax County's Office of Transportation prepared extensive technical materials in support of SOV access and offered VDOT conceptual designs to minimize impacts to homes and businesses. Robert T. Lee, the Northern Virginia District representative on the CTB, and James Rich, the At-Large representative, convinced their fellow CTB members to support the SOV access option. Mr. Lee said he and other proponents will lobby the CTB to build SOV access when money becomes available for the project. The inclusion of the SOV ramps in the Mixing Bowl design must also receive final approval by the Federal Highway Administration. If constructed, SOV access between the F-S Parkway and I-95 is expected to handle more than 40,000 trips daily.

Maple Branch Neighbors Join Together

By Taya Abbott

After years of debate, the residents of Maple Branch Road and surrounding community have developed a compromise approach to "cut-through" traffic.

Maple Branch is a residential road and qualifies for VDOT traffic calming measures. Concern has been expressed, however, that putting speed humps or other measures on Maple Branch would divert traffic to Henderson and other neighboring roads.

The compromise reached at the March 20th meeting would attempt to provide traffic calming measures on Maple Branch without diverting traffic to Henderson.

Three speed humps will be placed on Maple Branch on a trial basis. Traffic counts will be taken before and after to determine if commuters were diverting to other neighboring roads. If not, 3 more speed humps will be added to Maple

Branch. Again, traffic counts will be taken before and after. If it is evident that commuters are avoiding Maple Branch in favor of Henderson, the humps will be removed.

It appeared to almost everyone in attendance that no one could predict the effects of speed humps, so the humps should be placed on a trial basis until the effects are realized. The debate as to how neighboring roads are or are not affected will finally be put to an end.

This compromise proposal was approved on a trial basis by the Board of Supervisors on Sep. 9, 1997.

There are currently no speed humps or traffic calming measures anywhere in the Clifton/Fairfax Station Community. If the Maple Branch experiment works, it is hopeful that VDOT and Fairfax County will be open to the need for similar measures on other roads.

Origin-Destination Study

By Al Akers

On October 29, 1996 at the last meeting of the Fairfax/Prince William County Joint Subcommittee, composed of three members each of the respective Boards of Supervisors, it was agreed to pursue an Origin-Destination Study. The purpose of this study is to document where people crossing the Occoquan live and where they work, so the need for a new crossing to handle the traffic demand can be assessed. The Study is expected to be completed in the spring of 1998.

Better Coverage for Fairfax Station in Connection Newspaper

By Bill Cole

At times, articles of interest to the Fairfax Station Community included in the Centreview newspaper are not printed in the Burke-Fairfax Station Connection. We have discussed this matter with Frank Kalisiak, the new editor of the Burke-Fairfax Station Connection and he has agreed to remedy this situation.

Paving Yates Ford Rd

By Bill Cole

As stated by Bonnie Hobbs in the Connection in September 1996, "the issue along Yates Ford Road in Clifton/Fairfax Station is no longer whether to pave the road, but how to do it with the least possible impact on the surroundings."

Thanks to the efforts of Raul Tuset and the Yates Ford Road Community Association, along with other supporters, the road will not be developed with a 70-foot right of way as proposed by VDOT but will be reduced to 40 feet of total impact. Though original VDOT plans called for straightening the road and eliminating most elevation changes, the road will now maintain the current road alignment over most of the road and elevation changes will be made only to eliminate drastic changes in elevation. The speed limit on the road has been reduced from 35 to 25 mph and the finished paved road is expected to include speed humps as a traffic calming measure.

Thanks are also due to Senator Warren Barry, Delegate Jay O'Brien, Supervisor Elaine McConnell, Mayor Jim Chesley - Town of Clifton, George Barker - member of TAC and a Director of OWC - Springfield District Council, the OWC, and others for their support, endorsement, and passage of two important Commonwealth bills directly related to the proposed paving effort. First, YFR has been designated a Virginia Byway and secondly, VA House Bill No. 2403 and VA Senate Bill No. 1077 were passed to amend and reenact the Code of VA pertaining to the paving of certain secondary roads within existing rights-of-way. These two legislative actions provided additional support for YFR proponents who wanted to maintain the rural nature of their neighborhood and additional latitude for the road design standards proposed by VDOT.

Raul Tuset, President of the YFRCA cautions that though they have made great strides from what was first proposed more than a year ago, there are some very important issues that need to be finalized. These include:

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Yates Ford Bridge Moved - Repairs Underway

By Bill Cole

If you did not travel over the Yates Ford Bridge on Saturday or Sunday, August 23rd/24th, you were probably surprised on Monday, August 25th to see the bridge moved 40+ feet west and open to traffic. The 225 ft long, 650 ton, 3 span bridge was basically jacked up and pushed by hydraulic pistons from its position in alignment with Yates Ford Road to a new temporary super-structure site just to the west of the existing bridge location. This temporary bridge effort was accomplished by Corman Construction of Annapolis under a VDOT contract to rebuild the existing bridge while providing a temporary bypass for normal bridge traffic. The rehabilitation of the permanent bridge is expected to extend the service life of the bridge 40 to 50 years. When completed, the \$1.4 million bridge will have two 12-foot lanes and five foot shoulders. Overall, the bridge width will be increased from 28 feet to 34 feet. An earlier proposal calling for 10 foot shoulders was defeated by collective efforts of neighboring residents, the Town of Clifton, the OWC, and other interested homeowner associations. Their concern was that a wider bridge might eventually lead to the expansion of Yates Ford Road and increased traffic. Once again, homeowners and interested constituents spoke, were heard, and made a difference!

When the bridge is rebuilt and ready for traffic, the temporary bridge will be dismantled and hauled away for disposal. The permanent replacement bridge is scheduled to

open Dec 15, 1997, but Corman and crew are aiming at an opening late in November. The temporary steel pilings and superstructure will then be removed from Bull Run; returning the river, at the temporary bridge site, to its original state.

CLIFTON CHAR-

By Mayor Jim Chesley

A unique and exciting opportunity for planning and discussing issues that will have a significant impact on the Town and its environs will take place at the Clifton Town Meeting Hall on September 18, 19, and 20. This Charrette will be centered on proposed community direction for the next 20-year period. What is a charrette? It is an intense study and planning session, often used for consensus building, project design, and community planning. It allows key players to come together to discuss all the related concerns and issues in an open yet focused way, and to propose solutions that include strategies for bringing the vision of the citizens and the community leaders to fruition. This methodology employs a team of experts in the fields of land use planning, economic development and revitalization, and transportation. This workshop is being coordinated jointly by the Town and the Northern Virginia Planning District Commission (NVPDC). Previous charrettes were successfully held and recommendations implemented in the Town of Herndon, the Town of Dumfries and for the Dulles Corridor Land Use Plan. NVPDC provides professional planning, coordination and information services to Northern Virginia's local jurisdictions. NVPDC also provides a forum for local governments to come together to address

issues of common interest. For our Charrette, it is anticipated that members of the Town Council, Planning Commission, Architectural Review Board, officials of Fairfax County, town business owners and citizens of the Town and the surrounding area will participate and learn what the Town's visions are for itself and the surrounding area - the problems and constraints. Some of the potential issues to be examined: - Transportation: VRE station in/near the Town, Bypass of the Town, Protection of Clifton Road, Maintain two lane Bicycle path along Clifton Road; Overhead Cabling: Underground on Main Street and Chapel Road; Taxes: Real Estate, Meals, Room; Revitalization of the Town Business Base - Annexation of a Buffer Zone around the Town, Acquire more "green space" in/around the Town, Teen Center; "Clifton" Recognition.

This Charrette will be an important forum on the future direction of our Town and of the Clifton area. We hope that each of you can participate in some way. Approximately \$15,000 is needed to successfully run this affair (consultants, meals and supplies are the big-ticket items) and donations are needed. To date, we have received contributions from the Town, CBA, Clifton Lions Club, Occoquan Watershed Coalition, VDOT, Clifton Creek Bed and Breakfast, Heart in Hand Restaurant, Hermitage Inn and several individuals. We expect to receive funds from NOVEC, VA POWER and Media General. We are just over half way to our goal. No donation is too small and all are tax deductible. This workshop will pave Clifton's future. Please send contributions to the Town of Clifton, P.O. Box 309, Clifton, VA 20124.

Where Is The Traffic Trying To Go

By William Menth

Editor's Note: " Bill Menth has done extensive graduate study in economics and statistics at George Washington University. He worked for 16 years at the Census Bureau managing numerous statistical programs. As a member of the OWC Transportation Committee, Bill has undertaken a rather extensive transportation analysis of the region. Joining him in this endeavor is Eric Thiel, Chairman of the OWC Transportation Committee, who has Bachelor and Masters' degrees in aeronautical and astronautical engineering."

Where is the traffic trying to go? a citizen asked at a recent meeting on transportation planning. His question was answered with a chart and a rough sketch that showed broad traffic flows from three large sections of Prince William to four large sections of Fairfax County. These charts, he learned, came from an I-95 Corridor Study completed in 1993. The data revealed nothing about routes taken, river crossing preferred, or mode of travel and, they were out of date.

How do these compare to more recent data? our citizen asked. The subsequent discussion concluded that (a) no more recent data were available and (b) such data might be useful. Then, the discussion moved on to other topics.

Curious, our citizen mentions to some OWC members after the meeting, that were working out alternatives for a river crossing without up-to-date data on the origins and destinations of traffic. A few eyebrows rose and fell and our citizen found himself invited to explore the matter further and report back.

A little digging produced results very quickly. The 1990 Population Census had a short form that most people received. It was sent to most houses and asked as few questions as possible. The Census also had a long form that was sent to about 20 percent

of the households. Among other topics, it asked where each household member went to work and the mode of transportation used. The Census Bureau makes these data available to county, state, and regional planners. The Council of Governments, a DC metropolitan area planning group, obtained a copy of the results of these questions. They translated the geographical designations into useful terms for the metropolitan area and made the results available to the Virginia Department of Transportation. VDOT, in turn, made the data available to our citizen.

It turns out the data have never been fully analyzed. They had only recently become available and the analysis is difficult. After hours of torturing the data, it confessed nothing to our citizen. In many instances the extensive detail on origins and destinations of the commuter travel was not sufficient to distinguish among several routes that a commuter might take. In particular, depending on how the uncertainties were resolved; competing proposals could be supported or opposed with similar ease.

While poring over the uncertainties of interpretation, our citizen was asked to comment on a proposal to conduct an origin destination study using car license tags. The proposal would have been expensive and would have produced less detailed data than the 1990 Census data already available. Several recommendations for the effort were prepared and forwarded to the county.

As this article goes to press, our citizen, now joined by another volunteer continues to review existing data and develop useful presentation. In a future newsletter, we will present some of our findings.

Editor's Note - "To be continued."

- Keeping the shoulders at two feet (one paved, one gravel) over the full extent of the road. This is an issue for areas where the roadbed is higher than the surrounding land.
- Including ditches only where necessary rather than part of the constant profile of the road.
- Assuring that speed humps are part of the final construction contract.
- Resolving specific trouble spots along the road to the satisfaction of the landowners.

Raul urged his neighbors and the YFRCA to volunteer for the Citizen's Construction Committee to assure that their section of the road is cleared and properly constructed.

The YFRCA and their coordinated, collective effort has been a great example of the accomplishments that are possible when citizens unite for a common cause. The Association has come a long way since it first organized. Because of the professional and thorough manner in which it has represented its members and their concerns, they have been heard and have truly made a difference.

Fairfax County's First Annual Transportation Summit

With 400 key people in attendance, the FFC Board of Supervisors sponsored the First Annual Fairfax County Transportation Summit on September 12th. Proposed and hosted by Supervisor Elaine McConnell, the daylong Summit's theme was "Moving Forward". The summit was well attended by members of private, public, and commercial sectors, elected and appointed officials and the press.

Many thoughtful proposals to solve our transportation problems were presented. Senator Warren Barry's concept to first study the Commonwealth's finances - "How Virginia spends our money" - and then establish spending priorities, prior to leveling new taxes seemed to be the most intriguing and logical proposal.

OWC NEWSLETTER

Occoquan Watershed Coalition
10600 Sandy Run Trail
Fairfax Station, VA 22039-2430

OWC NEWSLETTER

Good News - No Membership Dues For 1997

Though 1997 has been a fairly busy year for the Occoquan Watershed Coalition and the Fairfax Station and Clifton areas, we have not found it necessary to spend large sums of money on printing or mailing costs. Jerry Little, our OWC Treasurer, reports we have enough money to make it through 1997. Our OWC policy is to keep dues to a minimum and accumulate funds only for that which is absolutely necessary. Therefore, we decided to forgo dues for 1997. As it happens, many associations and individuals have already paid their 1997 dues. We will, therefore, apply all payments of 1997 dues to your membership fees for 1998. We will further credit any additional dues received for 1997 subsequent to this notice, to 1998 memberships. As a reminder, our membership runs on a calendar year basis. Invoice reminders for 1998 dues will be mailed in November.