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DCRA Declares Rail-readiness in the Dulles Corridor

Tysons Corner, Virginia. Dulles Corridor Rail Association (DCRA) Chairman Delegate Kenneth R. Plum told a gathering of more than 125 members and friends “The Dulles rail project continues to make progress. Last year, the Draft Environmental Impact Statement was issued, public hearings were held, and the rail alternative has emerged as the Locally Preferred Alternative. We are here today to receive a project update from Karen Rae, Director of the Department of Rail and Public Transportation, and to celebrate the remarkable increase in transit ridership and bus rapid transit (BRT) improvements that are leading the corridor to rail-readiness.”

The occasion was the DCRA’s Spring Reception hosted by Capital One at its new headquarters in Tysons Corner. Capital One is a Fortune 500 company with 900 employees in Fairfax County and 10,000 in Virginia.

“We are pleased to recognize Fairfax and Loudoun counties for the significant improvements both counties have made to their express bus systems,” Plum said. “Since 1998, average daily transit trips in Fairfax County have grown from 4,800 in 1998 to more than 14,000 today. Loudoun’s transit trips have doubled since 1998 to 1,200 per day. When the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority’s Route 5A trips are included, there are nearly 16,000 daily transit trips being made. New parking facilities have been added and now total more than 4,100 spaces. A new transit center is being designed for Reston Town Center. Major improvements are planned at the West Falls Church transfer facility to increase bus capacity, improve safety, provide prepayment facilities using SmarTrip cards, and make it easier for timed transfers between bus and rail. Fairfax and Loudoun are to be congratulated and we are pleased to present Chairmen Hanley and York and their fellow board members a certificate in recognition.”

DCRA Vice Chairman Vince Callahan said that “Taken together, past and proposed bus transit improvements have built and will continue to build transit ridership making the Dulles corridor rail-ready! Rail is essential for our economic prosperity and that of the state. Implementation needs to be accelerated.”

Karen Rae said that the project staff were finalizing the Environmental Impact Statement, working with the Federal Transit Administration to identify the project scope and phasing for inclusion in the upcoming reauthorization of the surface transportation act, seeking agreement to move forward with preliminary engineering for rail and negotiating with a Dulles Transit Partners to undertake design and construction. Rae said, “The improvements that have been made to transit service produce a quality of rapid transit service in the Dulles Corridor that easily fits the definition of Bus Rapid Transit as the term currently is used in most parts of the country.” Rae noted that she looks forward to working with the community and business leaders to implement the rail and related bus improvements as quickly as possible.