

## **Rail in the Dulles Corridor**

Kenneth R. "Ken" Plum

(Appeared in the *Connection* and as *The many benefits of rail in Dulles corridor* in the *Reston Times* on July 10, 2002.)

In a significant action for the quality of life and continued economic viability of our region, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) recently approved the Environmental Impact Statement for providing rapid transit in the Dulles Corridor. In practical terms that means a significant step has been taken to provide rail service to commuters and residents in the Dulles Corridor. If the remaining timeline is met, it will be possible beginning in 2010 to board a train at Reston Parkway or Wiehle Avenue and go the entire length of the Metro Orange Line or with transfers to any place Metro serves.

But this action of FTA is not a new idea. The concept of rail transit in the corridor goes back 40 years. As recently as 1997 a Major Investment Study (MIS) called for a seamless rail extension of the Orange Line out the Dulles Corridor. A supplement to the MIS prepared in 1999 called for a phasing of the project that began with the bus rapid transit now operating in the corridor.

The benefits of the project to the community are numerous. Rail will enhance the capacity in the corridor to move people among major activity centers and facilities and will significantly improve the accessibility of the corridor. Metrorail is projected to carry 9600 passengers per hour, a 60 percent increase over the Dulles Toll Road. The maximum capacity of rail would be 60,000 passengers per hour. The EIS indicates that Metrorail can deliver more than four times as many transit trips as buses.

The project is estimated to cost around three billion dollars, a lot of cash but a reasonable investment when considered against its return. Approximately half of the project costs would be paid by the federal government with the remaining costs met from revenue in the corridor through a special tax on commercial interest and surplus toll road revenues. There will be a significant return on investment to the state and local jurisdictions from increased economic activity and property values.

An innovative public-private partnership has been proposed to complete the project. The partnership will speed the construction and reduce the costs. Rail is projected to be to Tysons Corner by 2006 and to Dulles Airport and Loudoun County by 2010.

Public hearings on the project include one at Langston Hughes Middle School in Reston on July 30, 2002, at 6:00 p.m. The Dulles Corridor Rail Association (DCRA), of which I chair the Board of Directors, will hold an information seminar on the project on July 11 at 3:00 p.m. at the Virginia Center for Innovative Technology (CIT), 2214 Rock Hill Road, Herndon.

For more information on the project, the public hearings, or the seminar, contact Patty Nicoson, President of DCRA, at 703-716-5750 or email [dcra@dullescorridorrail.com](mailto:dcra@dullescorridorrail.com).