

Dear DCRA Board:

Congratulations to Dulles Corridor Rail Association (DCRA), its Chairman Ken Plum, officers, and board members!

Yesterday, August 3rd, 2004, marked the sixth anniversary of DCRA. Six years ago, on August 3, 1998, Delegate Ken Plum and a number of rail supporters held a Press Conference at the Sheraton Reston Hotel. Ken announced the formation of a new organization to champion the extension of rail out the Dulles corridor. A number of current board members were there including Vince Callahan, Leo Schefer, John Milliken, Joe Stowers, Patty Nicolson, and Dan Alcorn. (Please let me know if you, too, were at this press conference). Patty Nicolson was introduced as Executive Director.

Earlier in 1998, Ken had explored the viability of creating an organization to address the Dulles rail extension exclusively. There was general agreement among business and civic leaders that the project had languished too long and needed a champion.

DCRA's mission statement was and still is to bring rail to the Dulles Corridor, to advise officials on transit and transit-related issues, and to "speak in a unified, consistent, and persistent way to build community support for Dulles rail".

We were fortunate that the very next day, August 4, 1998, was the first meeting of the Dulles Corridor Steering Group appointed by Secretary of Transportation Shirley Ybarra and chaired by Kenneth J. Klinge. Its mission was to develop a plan to move from the existing system of express buses running in the Dulles Corridor to rail. That gave us a project that had an official process, staff support and heightened attention from the Gilmore administration.

The group came up with a four-phase plan originally that included enhancing the existing bus system, implementing Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), and then implementing rail as demand grew.

With further analysis, it became clear that BRT would not be able to handle the demand; that the bus area at West Falls Church could not be expanded to accommodate the number of buses that would be needed; that the transfer to rail would reduce transit ridership; that the federal government would not provide an 80/20 match to construct BRT stations to be converted later to rail; and finally, that it was not practical to implement BRT first because the system would have to be dismantled to provide space for the tracks needed for rail. There was no room for both rail and BRT facilities side by side. This would mean a gap in BRT and rail facilities of at least 18 to 24 months that would have to be filled by express buses!

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement made the case for rail as the superior alternative and the public comments during the hearings strongly supported the rail alternative, as did the local governments and the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority.

While it has taken longer than expected to reach the Preliminary Engineering (PE) phase of the Dulles rail project, DCRA has played a critical role in helping the project move forward. Your support has made our advocacy possible and effective.

Key accomplishments have included:

- Market research study of resident and employee attitudes towards transit, which indicated that rail was preferred two to one and a three to one, respectively. (2000-2001. Funded by the state, Fairfax and Loudoun counties, and the Washington Airports Task Force)
- Attending meetings of the Dulles Corridor Steering Group and other key agencies and reporting back to the board, developing policy positions and technical advice on various issues and testifying on behalf of DCRA.
- Lobbying at the state, local, and federal level for the rail alternative
- Serving on the Fairfax County Dulles Corridor Land Use Task Force, which made recommendations for land uses around the four transit stations in the Dulles corridor adopted by the County Board May 2001.
- Testifying at Loudoun and Fairfax County hearings in support of changes to their Comprehensive Plans (2001) to encourage transit -oriented development

- Sponsoring and cosponsoring seminars on rail project-related issues
- Holding two to three membership meeting was a year, which included project updates and recognition of individuals and organizations/agencies for their leadership in advancing rail. Two were held for the state administration and General Assembly in Richmond
- Providing information and meeting with candidates for state and local office in the 1999, 2001, and 2003 elections
- Developing a coalition of 20 organizations in support of the rail alternative during the public hearing process (summer 2002)
- Implementation of a communications campaign to inform the public and build support for rail (springs/summer 2002) including brochure, fact sheets, Web Site updates, email messages, newspaper articles, and a press conference for the Dulles Rail Now! coalition with smart growth, environmental, and business groups
- Reactivating the coalition of 20 to approve a resolution in support of federal funding for rail as part of the federal surface transportation reauthorization act (expired September 31, 2003 and not yet reauthorized) and to testify at the Supplemental DEIS hearings December 2003
- Participating in groups lobbying for transit funding in the reauthorization: APTA, STPP, NAPTA
- Support of the efforts of the Landowners Economic Alliance for the Dulles Extension of Rail (LEADER), including testifying at the Fairfax County and Herndon Town Council public hearings on the tax district
- Support of the efforts of the western property owners efforts to develop a phase 2 tax district. Western Alliance for Rail to Dulles (WARD). Schedule calls for petition to be submitted in September with hearings in November
- Participation on the Greater Washington Board of Trade, and the Fairfax County, Greater Reston, Herndon Dulles, and Loudoun County Chambers of Commerce policy committees
- Received grant from Prince Charitable Trust to study equity issues relating to the rail project including affordable housing, access to jobs and educational, health, and recreational facilities and participation in business opportunities. Attended first Policy Link conference on Equity issues, November 2002 in Los Angeles
- Board member and member of the policy committees of the Committee for Dulles and Dulles Area Transportation Association
- Providing information to and winning the support of citizen groups and homeowners associations including the Reston Association, the MacLean Citizens Association, and the Reston Citizens Association
- Numerous presentations to civic and business groups
- Numerous articles on the status of the project
- Presentations at the American Public Transit Association and American Planning Association national conferences
- Development and maintenance of a business/citizen database
- Administrative activities include membership and fundraising campaigns, bookkeeping, and report filing

This is the most important transportation project in the region and the Commonwealth and, I believe, in the country. With your support, DCRA has made a difference!

**Patty Nicoson**

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