

## ***Smart Growth with Dulles Rail***

Kenneth R. "Ken" Plum

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Too bad the voters of Northern Virginia did not have the good sense of Reston voters who approved the sales tax for transportation referendum 8,811 to 8,189. We have been spared another tax for sure, but we are left with the same traffic mess that is getting progressively worse. Most disheartening for me is the mega-bucks we passed up for mass transit. As Dick White, general manager of Metro, described it, "It would take us 70 years under the current state formula to get the mass transit monies provided in the referendum."

Set aside for a moment the anti-tax people who opposed the referendum and who oppose any tax, any time, or members of the flat earth society as the Governor called them, and the opposition came from people who are part of smart growth and various environmental movements. These are people with whom I work regularly in the legislature and for whom I have the greatest respect. As I said in a debate with Stewart Schwartz, executive director of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, before the Hunter Mill District Council, I believe both sides were right on this issue. We should adopt smart growth strategies with transit oriented development in land use planning; at the same time we need to invest in mass transit in a big way and improve traffic management on existing roads.

Bring on the smart growth initiatives; I'll work for their enactment in Richmond and support them locally. But unfortunately, many cars will be idling in traffic backups until the impact of these strategies are finally felt. So we do need the investment in mass transit, but our options are limited by funding constraints made more difficult with the failure of the referendum.

One bright spot on the transportation agenda is rail in the Dulles Corridor. The draft environmental impact statement sent to the Federal Transit Administration included a funding plan for Dulles Rail that used federal, state and local funds. It did not include monies from the referendum. In other words, the Dulles rail project should proceed on schedule even though the referendum failed.

There are big hurdles to be sure for Dulles Rail: authorization of the fifty percent federal share, establishment of a local tax district and identification of additional local monies, and agreement on the use of toll revenues. But now for sure as our best hope for mass transit for the region, we must redouble our efforts to make Dulles Rail a reality by 2010.

For more information on the Dulles Corridor Rail Project, visit the Dulles Corridor Rail Association website at [www.dullescorridorrail.com](http://www.dullescorridorrail.com).