

Republicans, Democrats still disagree on roads

By R. Lee Ware (R – 65th)

VIRGINIA HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Certainly there are challenges for the General Assembly in improving – and in sustaining – the state’s public transportation system, but we do not face a “transportation crisis.” Further, despite the mantra that the House of Delegates has not addressed transportation needs, the House has in fact advanced a responsible approach to every core need in state government including transportation.

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No doubt transportation issues will once again dominate debate – and press coverage – when the General Assembly reconvenes next month. I intend again to support the House proposals outlined at the Special Session in September but ignored by the Senate and opposed by the Governor.

When anyone suggests that all we need do to “fix” our transportation system is increase taxes and pour more concrete, I point them to the notorious “mixing bowl” at Springfield where Interstates 95 and 495 converge. Despite the expenditure of hundreds of millions of dollars, indeed, because of the expenditure, traffic volumes only increase and gridlock worsens.

In other words, we won’t adequately address our transportation needs until we embrace precisely the combination of reforms advocated by the House majority.

For example, transportation needs have to be viewed within the state’s overall budget, which was increased by 19 percent this year. State spending over the past decade has increased by more than 10 percent a year – far more than the corresponding rises in taxpayers’ income, gross state product, and population. Spending for transportation has not only doubled in the past decade but has risen by 45 percent over the past four years alone.

In other words, the House majority has rightly recognized the need to rein in the growth in state spending – and the growth in taxes – as the prerequisite for any meaningful resolution of the rising demands on all state

expenditures.

When the House reconvenes in January, the Republican majority will again propose \$2.4 billion in additional spending for transportation over the next six years. This figure represents the largest financial commitment to transportation since 1986.



Ware

Importantly, the House plan proposes not only to spend more money on roads but to require significant reforms in the Virginia Department of Transportation.

Additionally, the House wants to ensure that we don’t just build more roads for more developments that only lead to more traffic, and hence, more congestion. Real reforms would include requirements that new projects not exacerbate urban sprawl, especially in northern Virginia and Hampton Roads.

And, the House wants any new spending for transportation to address rail and other modes of public transit.

The importance of real reform of state transportation planning is self-evident to residents of Chesterfield and Powhatan. For while we are well served by existing roads including the Powhite Parkway and Route 288, Route 288 has spawned just the kind of housing and commercial developments that put additional pressures on secondary roads and on a wide range of taxpayer-dependent programs at the county level.

In other words, any element of “crisis” in our transportation programs arises not only from congestion but from poor use of land, the loss of open space and the consequent effects, often unforeseen, on the counties, from secondary roads to schools, to the whole panoply of considerations that come under the rubric of “quality of life.”

My own commitment is to emphasize this comprehensive approach to all issues, including headline-grabbing transportation issues, which come before the General Assembly next month.

By Frank P. Hall (D – 69th)

VIRGINIA HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Virginia is on the right track because we’ve had forward thinking leaders like Governor Mark Warner and Tim Kaine. We worked together with these leaders in the General Assembly making record

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investments in education, bringing more jobs to Virginia, supporting our public safety officials who protect Virginia families, and providing access to health care for Virginia’s uninsured children. However, there is one area where we haven’t made the necessary progress: transportation. Instead, Republican leaders have stood in the way of our progress; they have let partisan gridlock prevent a long-term solution to our transportation crisis.

Virginians deserve better than petty partisanship that can’t deliver results. They deserve better than short-term gimmicks and band-aids. They deserve a long-term solution to our transportation crisis that will grow our economy and continue to attract new business and industry to Virginia.

We will not continue to prosper as a Commonwealth, nor will we be able to maximize Virginia’s potential in the global marketplace, without a long-term solution that will position Virginia’s transportation system to meet the needs of 21st century businesses and families.

Reform and efficiencies are important, and we have taken major steps. Five years ago, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) simply couldn’t finish a construction project on time or on budget. Its on-time rate for projects was 20 percent, and its on-budget statistic was 51 percent. Five years ago, the Commonwealth Transportation Board was incapable of developing a reliable Six Year Plan. With the reform of VDOT, it is now more than 1,000 employees leaner, and it is a national leader when it comes to its on-time and on-budget statistics. We can always do better, but even with these reforms, we still do not have the significant, reliable, long-term funding that is needed to build and maintain a 21st century transportation system.

Anyone who says we can make progress and move Virginia forward by forcing transportation to compete with schools, colleges, police officers, nursing homes and natural resources is simply paving our roads with our children’s future.

In the last session, Governor Kaine and the Senate put forth plans that dealt with long-term sustainable sources of revenue for transportation – revenues that come from user-based sources, drawing revenue to support transportation network maintenance and improvement from the people who use the system. These revenues will not drain monies away from our schools, our universities, police officers or protecting our environment, but will provide the long-term revenue to build a 21st century transportation system for Virginia’s future.

Unfortunately, the refusal of the House Republican leadership to engage in a bipartisan debate to address the state’s transportation crisis will have far-reaching consequences.

In a six-month special session, the House Republican leadership stood in the way of any meaningful progress, letting partisan gridlock prevent a long-term solution to our transportation crisis.

There is no reason that a bipartisan solution could not have hammered out on an acceptable transportation plan. The missing element was the will to do so. I find that unacceptable, as you should too.

Democrats in the House of Delegates stand ready to work together with our Republican members to find a dedicated source of revenue that will keep our Commonwealth on the right track as the best-managed state in the nation.

During the 2007 General Assembly session, we must move beyond partisanship to be partners with Governor Kaine in solving our transportation crisis to keep Virginia moving forward. Virginia’s transportation needs are too urgent to wait.



Hall

Would Powhite extension be bad for business?

Dear Editor,

As one who has been stuck in the bumper-to-bumper traffic on Hull Street [Road] during peak commuting times, I can understand the county’s interest in making traffic flow more smoothly. But I’m

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also a business owner who relies on those potential customers driving by to purchase my merchandise.

And when—not if—the Powhite Parkway is extended [Dec. 6 issue] so those vehicles can bypass my store and hundreds of others, I’m predicting a lot of businesses will close. The county reaps a lot of sales taxes from the 4-5 million square feet of retail between Route

288 and Woodlake. I expect 30-50 percent of the traffic would jump over to the Powhite, avoiding Hull Street [Road], even if it means paying a modest toll. And when that happens, the impact will cause businesses to close or relocate.

Changing traffic patterns has unintended consequences.

Name withheld by request

Letters to the editor can be e-mailed to letters@chesterfieldobserver.com, mailed to P.O. Box 1616, Midlothian, VA 23113, or faxed to 744-3269. Letters should include the writer’s phone number and home address, but neither will be printed. All letters may be edited for clarity or space. For complete guidelines, visit www.chesterfieldobserver.com and click on “letters policy.”

Recent selected real estate sales in Chesterfield County

Subdivision Name	Property Address	BRM	BATH	1/2BATH	SQ FT	SOLD	ASSESSED
AFTON	6000 SARA KAY DR	4	2	0	1,326	\$183,000	\$120,000
AMBER FOREST	1002 AMBER MEADOWS CT	3	2	1	2,047	\$267,500	\$199,600
AMBERGATE	2831 AMBERGATE TR	5	2	1	2,524	\$385,000	\$279,700
AMPTHILL GARDENS	5616 CANASTA DR	4	2	0	2,124	\$93,600	\$110,500
ANDERSONS FORGE	1746 BELLOWS DR	4	2	1	1,864	\$212,500	\$168,300
ANTLER RIDGE	7737 WHIRLAWAY DR	3	2	1	1,776	\$219,950	\$166,900
ARBOR LANDING	6308 ARBOR BANKS TR	5	3	0	3,192	\$350,000	\$249,600

Subdivision Name	Property Address	BRM	BATH	1/2BATH	SQ FT	SOLD	ASSESSED
	6305 ARBOR LANDING DR	4	2	1	2,096	\$250,000	\$197,500
	6507 ARBOR LANDING DR	3	2	0	1,616	\$232,000	\$187,600
	11403 MISTY ARBOR PL	4	2	1	2,655	\$277,000	\$232,900
ARBOR MEADOWS	6731 ARBOR MEADOWS DR	4	2	1	2,807	\$338,444	\$253,000
ARCHBROOKE	1403 ARCHANGLE CT	4	3	0	2,237	\$175,000	\$140,600
ARCHWAY	301 S ARCH RD	4	2	1	2,727	\$216,600	\$156,400
	121 CARBE CT						

Subdivision Name	Property Address	BRM	BATH	1/2BATH	SQ FT	SOLD	ASSESSED
	9300 RADBORNE RD	3	2	1	1,808	\$184,000	\$126,200
ARCHWOOD	118 CHESSINGTON RD	4	3	1	2,000	\$207,000	\$159,700
	11806 TWISTED CEDAR DR	3	1	0	1,000	\$141,000	\$101,800
ARROWHEAD	1905 WARRIOR TL	3	1	1	1,200	\$168,000	\$133,400
ASHBROOK	7742 BROADREACH DR	4	2	0	1,522	\$196,000	\$143,800
	15355 FEATHERCHASE DR	3	2	1	1,884	\$240,000	\$181,000
	7600 FERN HOLLOW DR	5	2	1	2,276	\$250,000	\$201,600
	7800 HALYARD CT						

Subdivision Name	Property Address	BRM	BATH	1/2BATH	SQ FT	SOLD	ASSESSED
	7926 HALYARD TR	3	2	0	1,030	\$162,500	\$113,600
	15706 TWISTED CEDAR DR	3	2	0	1,434	\$185,000	\$132,200
	15706 TWISTED CEDAR DR	3	2	1	1,683	\$220,000	\$167,900

This is a sample of residential properties sold in the county in recent weeks. For a complete listing of recent real estate transactions, visit www.chesterfieldobserver.com and click on “real estate.”

Key: * lot only. ** home/lot without additional information.