

No Silver Line: great news for Dulles Airport

By Chris Walker

Not Building a heavy rail extension to is one of the best things that could happen to Dulles Airport. Here's why.

International arrivals have endured long flights and are typically tired and jet lagged. The last thing they want to do is to struggle with luggage on a fifth mile walk to a heavy rail terminus and then learn the geography of a strange city. Time to hotel room is the key variable and that is why major international airports have so many hotel vans, far surpassing general transit vehicles.

As for departures, stand in a check-in line sometime and see how much luggage people are taking on modern jets.

It's much better to give people options via hotel vans, coach expresses, convenient parking, and efficient taxi service. These alternatives are much faster point to point than heavy rail. Making the Dulles Corridor a congestion managed facility would permit operation of all these modes at 60 mph any hour of the day or night.

A look around the world confirms this fact. Two of the most unpopular airports in the world, London's Heathrow and Tokyo's Narita, have dual rail options. Yet, smart travelers go via National Express coach buses in SE England, and use hotel buses in Tokyo. The price is less and direct service is faster.

Singapore's Changi airport is usually the top rated international airport and lacks a rail link. In the US, the top rated airport is Dallas Fort Worth with no rail link.

The most convenient downtown access to any American city is via Boston's Silver Line bus, which has pretty much replaced heavy rail

Rail links recently built to JFK, Newark, and San Francisco have been unsuccessful with typically only a handful of passengers actually making the link (as opposed to accessing parking lots).

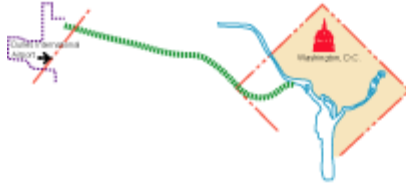
Dulles Rail would have operated at 25 mph and cost \$100 per new ride. The cost for the subsidies would have fallen largely on Toll Road drivers, who would pay \$5 for the privilege of driving at 25 mph much of the day (Dulles Rail environmental impact report fact). Ticket prices at Dulles would also have been raised.

The Airport is much better off operating 3 HOT lanes in the center and making the outer 4 free, to parallel the situation on the Beltway. That configuration would help, not hinder, economic development in the Dulles Corridor.

The airport needs to focus on access from the south and west, rather than from the east, which is not a problem. During rush hour, it can take ½ hour to travel from Route 50 to the airport entrance. Who is fixing this?

Access to the core is a function of making inner I-66 function, which has been broken for 25 years. Who is fixing this?

The rail project is the largest porkfest in the history of Virginia, and we have the FTA to thank for adult supervision of one of the stupidest transit plans in the U.S. Let's put a stake through the heart of this zombie and move on to real solutions.



Dulles Corridor Users Group

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