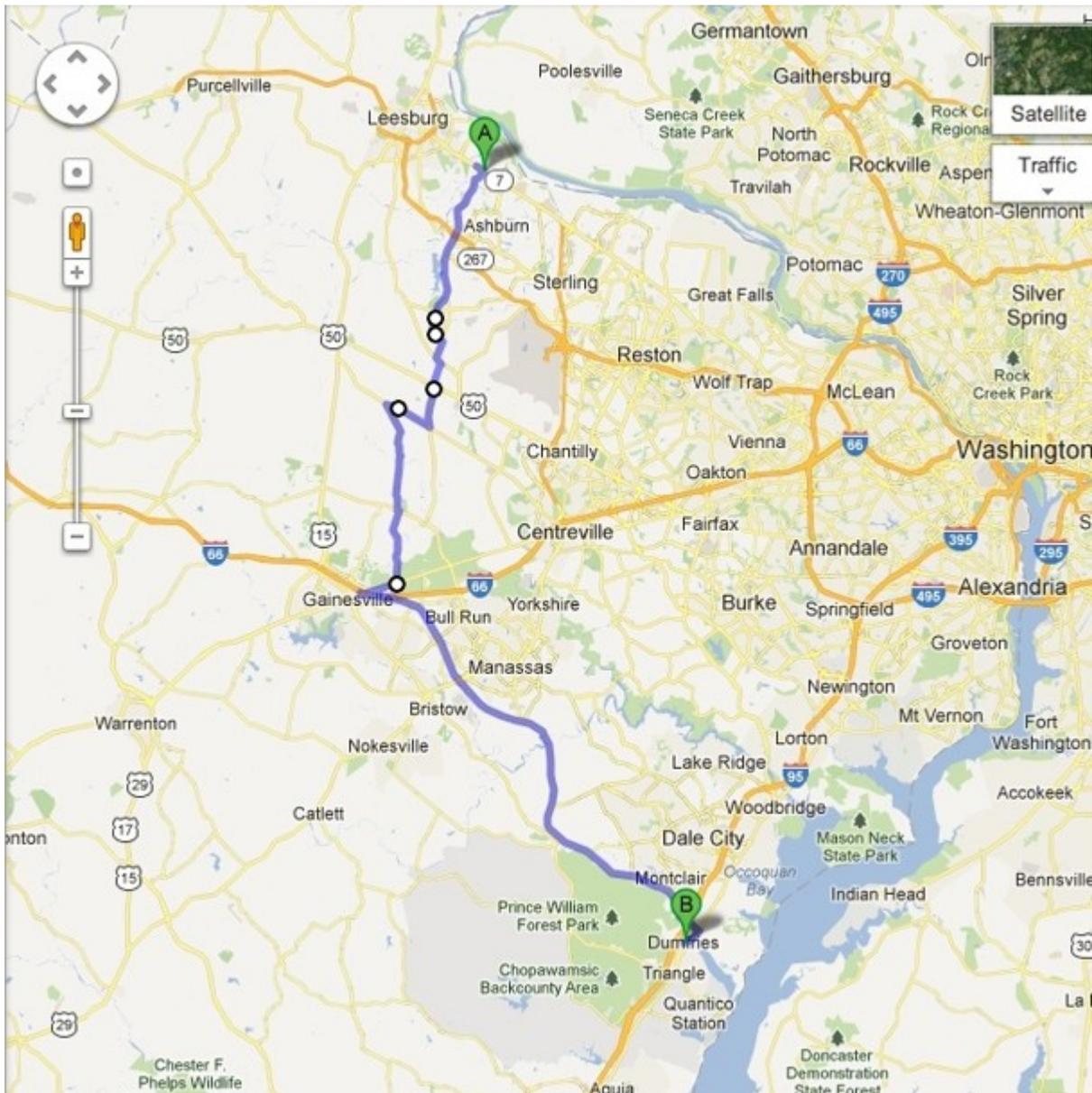


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Loudoun-Prince William Highway is not the ‘Outer Beltway,’ but it’s a big, controversial road

By [Tom Jackman](#)



The rough route of the Loudoun-Prince William Highway, starting at Route 7 and Belmont Ridge Road, turning onto Northstar Boulevard, and then connecting in Prince William with the Route 234 bypass and continuing all the way to I-95. (Google Maps) Our elected representatives keep saying it’s true, so we’ll believe them: This is not [an](#)

[Outer Beltway](#). But the momentum is clearly ramping up to build a major north-south thoroughfare from Route 7 in [Loudoun County](#) down to I-95 in [Prince William County](#), which officials say will better connect Dulles International

Scott York, chairman of the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors, supports both the north-south highway and the Silver Line Metro extension to Loudoun. (Loudoun County



Airport with I-66 and I-95 to increase its role as a cargo hub.

Smart growth groups say spending billions on a north-south road is a bad idea when the vast majority of traffic goes east-west. A north-south) Loudoun-Prince William Highway would simply enrich the developers who've been waiting for that corridor to unfold, some longtime observers say, adding more sprawl and more cars which would mostly be heading to [D.C.](#) or [Fairfax County](#), not to Manassas or Ashburn.

And Loudoun County's not wasting any time. Nine days after approving the route for the highway, the county filed [eminent domain proceedings](#) against two properties in its path.

It has all the makings of Stage 1 of an Outer Beltway, say officials with the Piedmont Environmental Council and the Coalition for Smarter Growth, with the possibility of connecting to Maryland and spreading traffic far and wide. No way, say Loudoun officials, who note that the current alignment of the road can't plow through existing and planned development in Lansdowne to reach the river and then Maryland. Last year, the Commonwealth Transportation Board designated the Loudoun-Prince William route a "[Corridor of Significance](#)."

So last month, the Loudoun Board of Supervisors approved the potential widening of Belmont Ridge Road to four lanes, and the construction of six lanes for Northstar Boulevard near Braddock Road. And then last week Gov. Robert F. McDonnell included the "NOVA North-South Corridor" on a list of "public-private partnership" projects now in the development pipeline. And Prince William County is already well along in planning its connection to the corridor at the Loudoun line.

After the jump are the details of the route, why some people do or don't want it, and an interactive map to examine the route more closely, based on roads that currently exist.

The proposed road would start at the intersection of Route 7 and Belmont Ridge Road, and head south to Northstar Boulevard, which breaks off from Belmont Ridge in Brambleton. Northstar ends soon after, and would have to be extended south to where it begins again near Arcola Elementary School and the new John Champe High School just north of Braddock Road.

South of Braddock Road, Northstar Boulevard would head to the county line and hook up with Prince William's planned northward extension of the Route 234 bypass, perhaps deftly sliding along the edge of the Manassas battlefield. That road would connect with I-66 and the rest of the Route 234 bypass, which becomes the Prince William County Parkway and then Dumfries Road as it heads all the way to I-95.

Since Prince William's chunk of the corridor is already built from I-95 to I-66, it need only connect from I-66 to the Loudoun line. An alignment that would do just that has been approved by the state Department of Transportation, Prince William officials said. Other studies and approvals still await, including approval of the route near the battlefield.

For a closer look, click on this map. Much of Northstar Boulevard isn't built yet, so the route in southern Loudoun veers back on to Belmont Ridge.

"The purpose of this is to have a good connection for the airport headed southward," said Scott York, chairman of the Loudoun Board of Supervisors. "We are working with the airport to expand their cargo capacity. They are underutilized, and they've got to have a route for freight to easily come in and out."