

Opposition mounts to major Loudoun-Prince William parkway

By Tom Jackman, Updated: April 30, 2013

A cadre of six influential Republican legislators stood up Monday and said “No way” to the proposed 45-mile highway that is planned to run from I-95 in Prince William County, past Dulles Airport and all the way to Route 7 in Loudoun County.

The Post’s [Jeremy Borden reported today](#) that Dels. Bob Marshall (R-Prince William) and Tim Hugo (R-Fairfax) and Sen. Dick Black (R-Loudoun) held a news conference to denounce the Tri-County Parkway as a traffic disaster being built as a gift to local land developers.

The chambers of commerce of Loudoun and Prince William counties promptly responded this morning with [a joint statement](#) saying they were “gravely disappointed in the misinformation and apparent lack of concern for our region’s economic prosperity needs that was exhibited by our state elected representatives.” The news release also said a bypass planned for construction around the Manassas Civil War battlefield “is a project that is unlikely to occur,” which will be pretty stunning news to the National Park Service, which only supported the new highway because they thought they would get a bypass out of it, and then close Route 29 through the heart of the battlefield.

We’ve been following the progress of this highway for a couple of years now, and it seemed to be plowing steadily toward construction. One headline even declared it “[looking like a done deal](#).” (What [numbskull](#) wrote that?) The supporters said the highway was needed to improve cargo access from the Norfolk ports to Dulles, as well as to boost north-south movement between Loudoun and Prince William, and the idea of extending it from Ashburn into Maryland was gaining speed, too.

But last month, [Borden watched a crowd](#) of 300 residents voice their extreme displeasure at a town hall meeting on the highway, which is sometimes called the Bi-County Parkway, and sometimes called the Tri-County Parkway, though it only goes through two counties. The residents echoed [concerns long expressed](#) by groups such as the Coalition for Smarter Growth, the Piedmont Environmental Council and the Southern Environmental Law Center, who say the road will make traffic worse by encouraging sprawl and that there is no real need to create a costly cargo link between Norfolk and Dulles.

That those groups are joined by Bob Marshall and Dick Black is quite an alliance, and a major development. Marshall told Borden that the McDonnell administration was misrepresenting the road’s benefits and that the parkway would only benefit developers who have bought up land along the route. “There’s something else going on here,” he said.

Marshall, Black, Hugo and three other legislators from Fauquier and Westmoreland counties (Michael J. Webert, Richard H. Stuart and Jill H. Vogel) said they would fight the

highway in the General Assembly. Prince William Chairman Corey Stewart and former county chairman Sean Connaughton, now the state transportation secretary, both reiterated their full support of the highway. Marshall, Black and Hugo are all veteran legislators with vast experience in Richmond, and their opposition is a huge turn in this saga.

In addition, [Potomac Local reported today](#) that Prince William Supervisor Peter Candland (R-Gainesville) is now opposed as well. He [previously told me](#) he would support the road “if done properly,” but he also hosted last month’s citizen town hall with Hugo and heard the public opposition.

Stewart Schwartz from the Coalition for Smarter Growth was pleased by the legislators’ opposition. “The legislators are right about the highway,” he told me today, calling it “a wasteful boondoggle.” He said the coalition has offered an alternative that “focuses scarce funds on fixing I-66 and offers local road connections that will allow closure of the roads through the battlefield and will protect the Rural Crescent.”

Finally, Jim Bacon at Bacon’s Rebellion did a long and thoughtful analysis of the need for the North-South Highway, which [is here](#). He also reported on the formal presentation of the plan to the Commonwealth Transportation Board on April 17, and that is [here](#).

For even more background, perhaps more boneheaded headlines, and some amateurish highway diagrams, here is the State of NoVa archive:

[An Outer Beltway in Prince William and Loudoun?](#) (Sept. 8, 2011)

[Loudoun-Prince William Highway is not the ‘Outer Beltway,’ but it’s a big, controversial road](#) (June 15, 2012)

[The Tri-County Parkway is looking like a done deal for Loudoun, Prince William counties](#) (Sept. 4, 2012)

[Plans for Loudoun-Prince William parkway move forward; crossing to Md. under discussion](#) (Dec. 28, 2012)

[Va. transportation officials draw ire at town hall on Prince William’s bi-county parkway](#) (March 5, 2013)

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