



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

HOUSE OF DELEGATES
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THIRTY-THIRD DISTRICT

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:
EDUCATION
TRANSPORTATION
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

December 21, 2017

The Honorable Terence R. McAuliffe
Governor of Virginia
P. O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor McAuliffe,

Northern Virginia is an economic engine of the Commonwealth of Virginia and one of the fastest-growing regions in the nation. With that activity comes traffic congestion that challenges commuters, businesses, and policymakers. We are seeing improvement coming through innovative transportation policies, including Public-Private partnerships, Smart-Scale prioritization of scarce transportation resources, and commitment of local and regional funds to transportation improvements.

While the progress is significant, it is necessary to remain attentive to the cost of living and doing business in this community. The high costs of living, which for many includes tolls, is rising out of control as commuters are forced to pay exorbitant tolls each day. Improvements are in the works, however, for many commuters, serious levels of traffic congestion are still present.

As Governor, you demonstrated your willingness to act against intolerable tolls when one of your earliest actions as Governor was to respond to projected tolls of less than \$2.00 with a buy-down of tolls in Hampton Roads, stating the need to:

“...lessen the financial burden on commuters and businesses who use the tunnels every day.... execute it in a way that does not threaten business growth in the region or lessen the quality of life for Hampton Roads’ residents and our workforce.”

Your action in Hampton Roads stands in stark contrast to Northern Virginia, where your administration implemented dynamic tolls on I-66 Inside the Beltway (ITB), tolls which have reached a high of \$44.00 one-way. Please note that Northern Virginia is already one of the highest-tolled regions in America - commuters driving from Leesburg to Washington, DC, during peak times travel on three distinct toll roads: The (14-mile) Dulles Greenway toll at \$5.50, (14-mile) Dulles Toll Road at \$3.50, and (7+-mile) I-66 variable toll of \$40.00 Eastbound (\$26.75 Westbound), totaling \$49 to go the 36 miles from Leesburg to DC. That is one-way. My constituents call this “Highway Robbery.” Extrapolated out, these round-trip tolls add up to \$84.75/day, \$1,880/month, and \$22,000/yr. in after-tax income!

The undersigned members of the Virginia General Assembly ask for your support of this set of initiatives to remedy some of the damage these tolls inflict on families and businesses in our communities before your term as Governor ends next month. Below, we outline our plan.

I-66 Inside the Beltway

As you know, we have opposed the I-66 Inside the Beltway tolls since your administration first announced your plan in the summer of 2015. During the 2016 legislative session, we all advocated for Del. LeMunyon's HB1, to prohibit tolling of I-66 ITB. HB1 was favorably reported from the House Transportation Committee on a 15-7 party-line vote, with every Democrat opposed, and re-referred to the House Appropriations Committee where it was left at the request of your administration.

Your original I-66 ITB tolling proposal included tolling both eastbound and westbound directions a.m. and p.m., with toll revenues going toward transportation improvements through the corridor. As the plan evolved it was decided to give a.m. westbound I-66 commuters from Washington DC and the inner suburbs of Northern Virginia a toll-free ride on this section of I-66. Sound transportation public policy should not favor certain areas with a particular partisan voting history over other areas, but your I-66 ITB directive appears to show a marked preference for reverse commuters from the inner suburbs over the commuters from the outer suburbs.

The new I-66 Inside the Beltway tolling regime began this month; we would submit that it is a mistake to ignore the extreme burden these tolls impose on families' finances.

We strongly urge you to take the following actions on tolling of I-66 Inside the Beltway:

1. Make immediate adjustments to the toll-setting system to reduce tolls on I-66 ITB. These should include returning the tolling period to previous HOV hours (Eastbound 6:30–9:00 a.m., Westbound 4:00–6:30 p.m.) and adjusting the speed variable to a lower speed.
2. Instruct VDOT to immediately activate the tolling of reverse commuters on I-66 ITB, with revenues to go into the I-66 Commuter Choice program (the NVTC program currently managing I-66 ITB revenue).

Dulles Toll Road

The Dulles Toll Road (DTR) constructed by the Commonwealth, opened in 1984 and was presented to the public with the promise that tolls would cease once the road was paid for. Tolls have long since surpassed construction costs of the DTR, but, instead of keeping the promise of eliminating tolls, in 2006, Gov. Tim Kaine signed agreements turning the road over to The Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA). Under MWAA management, tolls have been rapidly increasing, with a large portion of the funds being directed to the construction of the Dulles Rail (aka "Silver Line") project.

As tolls on the DTR and the corresponding burden on commuters and businesses increased, the Virginia General Assembly intervened. The 2013 Va. Acts ch. 766, § 6 provided \$300 million in VDOT Highway Maintenance and Operating Funds to buy down tolls on the DTR. This buy-down is temporary; when it concludes in 2019, DTR tolls will increase roughly 35% or \$1.25, (from \$3.50 to \$4.75 one-way).

The agreement controlling the transfer and operation of the Dulles Toll Road was and still is the Dulles Toll Road Permit and Operating Agreement (DTRPOA). Section 11.05 mandates the formation of Congestion Management and Pricing, stating that: *“The Airports Authority shall cooperate with the Department in managing the Toll Road as part of the overall transportation network in Northern Virginia. In Connection therewith, at the request of the Department, and at the Airports Authority's sole cost and expense, the Airports Authority shall implement a congestion pricing methodology on the Toll Road that is not inconsistent with the Department's then current plans and programs for highway system management of the overall transportation network in Northern Virginia...”*

By 2022, a 95-mile seamless network of express lanes on I-66, I-95, I-395, and I-495 will provide faster and more reliable trips for drivers, carpoolers, and transit users in Northern Virginia (and into Stafford County). The time has clearly come for VDOT to require MWAA to fulfil this obligation as set forth in Section 11.05 of the DTRPOA, with a slight change.

We strongly urge you to take the following actions regarding the Dulles Toll Road:

1. Instruct VDOT to form and execute a plan with MWAA and, if necessary, the United States Congress to utilize the four under-used lanes of the Dulles Access Road (DIAAH). This can be achieved by converting the Dulles Access Road into tolled HOT lanes, with revenue going to buy down tolls on the Dulles Toll Road, and mandating that the DTR shall become toll-free by 2030. VDOT and MWAA shall certify that this satisfies the requirements of DTRPOA Section 11.05.

Sincerely,



Senator Jill Holtzman Vogel



Delegate Dave LaRock



Senator Richard Black



Delegate Rich Anderson



Delegate Tim Hugo



Delegate Tag Greason



Delegate J. Randall Minchew



Delegate Scott Lingamfelter



Delegate Michael Webert