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## Little detail public on rail contract

By: Michelle Zimmermann  
05/29/2007

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### To those seeking juicy new details of the contract to build Dulles rail - don't hold your breath.

References to the contract are succinct in the documents that outline the general briefing the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors will present to the public on June 4.

The presentation will, however, outline the project's history and current status.

If the supervisors received information in closed session regarding the project's contract, the listening public won't have any better idea about the closed-door discussions after the June 4 presentation. Only a skeleton overview of the contract structure is outlined, most of which has already been extensively reported.

Advocates for a tunnel alignment through Tysons Corner were hopeful that the briefing would bring out those details, but regardless of the outcome, they plan to have a big showing of tunnel supporters present.

"We requested a hearing and we didn't get one, but at least this is an opportunity to hear the airport authority's contract and some of the terms," said Scott Monett, president of Tysons Tunnel.org. "I don't know what they're going to say, maybe just, 'Rah, rah, the contract's great!' If that's the case, we'll say, 'well then, disclose it.'"

Negotiations were "substantially completed for the purpose of project pricing, utilizing commercially acceptable terms and conditions" on March 27, according to one briefing slide.

Additionally, approximately 55 percent of project work will be performed directly by Dulles Transit Partners, the private group of contractors working with the state on the rail line.

The other 45 percent of the work will be done by "competitively procured subcontractors" and "competitively procured materials and equipment."

The overview also details ridership numbers. Phase 1, from West Falls Church to Wiehle Avenue in Reston, is estimated to generate 63,000 daily trips, and once Phase 2 into Loudoun County is completed, the rail cars will carry 95,000 riders.

A timeline also projects the project will receive the nod for funding from the federal government in February of next year, with construction beginning shortly thereafter.

Embedded in those presentation slides is a reminder to the public: it was in October 2002 that the "locally preferred alternative" - or rail through Tysons - was selected.

"I had forgotten about that," said Mason District Supervisor Penny Gross (D).

Many other details along the convoluted recent history of the project have grown hazy with the passage of time.

For instance, 2004 was a big year for the project. The first-phase special tax district started up, but only after much controversy, and the federal and state governments approved the project to move into the early engineering stages. That work ultimately determined station location and detailed track alignment along the extension.

In 2005, project officials stated firmly that under no circumstances would the first phase exceed the \$2 billion threshold, since it would then not meet federal cost-effectiveness standards.

Now, though, the project's first phase is projected to reach \$2.65 billion and the total cost is anticipated to exceed \$5 billion.

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Will Fairfax be ready to vote on rail?

The last action for the county to take before officially signing on with the Dulles rail project is a vote to enter into a final agreement with the other project partners.

That vote is currently scheduled for June 18.

Even though the Board of Supervisors' June 4 information session is intended to bring the public up to speed on the project's status, the board itself will not be fully aware of all the details until after discussions of federal reviews take place.

That date has been pushed back to June 12 or 14, and board members say they hope to have as much information as possible before voting on the 18th.

"It doesn't give us much time to look at it," said Providence District Supervisor Linda Smyth (D). "I'm not sure what all the factors are in terms of timing on this. Are they going to hand us a 500-page document or two-page executive summary? Our staff has got to pull together some sort of review of it."

Braddock Supervisor Sharon Bulova (D) said delaying the vote wasn't out of the question if the federal review process doesn't wrap up with enough time for the county to have a good look.

Constituents of the Dranesville District, where Joan DuBois (R) is the supervisor, follow the rail project closely. If the federal review process only turns up housekeeping items to resolve, she isn't too concerned.

"But if we get a real negative comment, or there are big holes poked in it, then we have a problem," DuBois said. "We'll just have to wait and see."

--Michelle Zimmermann

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