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Details for toll road transfer firm up

By: Michelle Zimmermann

Officials are worried about misconceptions of an upcoming public hearing on Dulles Toll Road fares.

The hearings, scheduled for July 25 and 26 in Loudoun and Fairfax counties, are a legal requirement the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority must fulfill as part of the process to assume control of the toll road from the state. However, no changes will be made to the toll rate as a result of the hearings.

"We intend to adhere to Virginia law as it is today," said Ed Faggen, an attorney for the airports authority. "Drivers will experience no difference from today, except that the money will be flowing to the airports authority instead."

The transfer of the toll road is a key element of the funding plan for the extension of Metrorail to Washington Dulles International Airport. The authority will use the money to pay for their share of the rail line, as well as make upgrades to the toll road facility itself.

A full transfer cannot occur until the rail project receives the approval to proceed from the federal government, which is currently reviewing the project plan for risk.

Airports authority Chairman and CEO Jim Bennett said that process was proceeding smoothly, with Federal Transit Administration engineers at the table this past week with project engineers to go over the cost, the construction schedule and agreements between the various localities involved in the project.

Matt Tucker, director of Virginia Rail and Public Transportation, said that work done in advance of the risk workshops has eased the federal risk assessment process.

"We sat in on early sessions and raised tough questions ourselves," Tucker said. "All the areas they identified for risk we'd already addressed, so there were no surprises."

The meeting on July 10 was the first of the Dulles Corridor Advisory Group, created by Gov. Tim Kaine (D) to enable the various counties and government agencies to sit down at one table together to discuss problems and progress of the project.

Members include representatives from Fairfax and Loudoun counties, the state and the airports authority.

Toll road public hearings
Loudoun
Wednesday, July 25
7 - 10 p.m.
Embassy Suites
Dulles-North, 44610
Waxpool Road, Ashburn,
VA 20147
Fairfax
Thursday, July 26
7 - 10 p.m.
Sheraton Premiere at Tysons
Corner, 8661 Leesburg Pike,
Vienna, VA 22182

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