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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

December 7, 2010

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Mr. Charles D. Snelling
Chairman
MWAA Board of Directors
1280 Church St
Fogelsville PA 18051

Dear Mr. Snelling:

As you know, I have worked since my first years in Congress to extend mass transit out the Dulles corridor to Washington Dulles International Airport. While I believed the first step to building ridership in the corridor should have been to develop a Bus Rapid Transit system, a decision was made in 2002 by Fairfax County, Loudoun County and by the Commonwealth of Virginia to build heavy rail. I subsequently continued to work to secure federal funding for the Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project. Also in 2002, the Federal Transit Administration, citing federal funding limitations, recommended that the project be constructed in two operable phases. The full funding grant agreement for Phase 1 was signed on March 10, 2009 and as I travel daily through Fairfax County, I have been pleased to see the progress being made on the first phase of the project.

Over the years, I have had great respect for and confidence in MWAA's chief executive officers. Jim Wilding, Jim Bennett and Lynn Hampton have provided strong leadership. However, with Lynn's impending retirement, I am deeply concerned that there could be a vacuum in leadership as bids for Phase 2 of the project are scheduled to be let in early 2011. As I stated in my April 26, 2010, letter to the MWAA board, I believe the new MWAA chief executive officer must be an experienced airport executive who enjoys the trust of the financial and aviation industries. That person also will need to have the skill to execute Phase 2 of the rail project. Every effort must be made to ensure checks and balances are in place to prevent cost overruns. Each additional dollar spent on cost overruns would be an extra burden on every user of the Dulles Toll Road and the Metro system, through higher tolls, taxes and fares.

I know firsthand about cost overruns on major transportation projects. As the chairman of the House Transportation Appropriations subcommittee in the 1990s, I led the effort to cap federal spending on Boston's "Big Dig" to ensure that taxpayers were not forced to continue to foot the bill for a project that was allowed to spiral to nearly nine times its initial estimated cost. Projected at \$2.6 billion in 1985, the final cost was over \$22 billion, including debt service, after being completed in 2008.

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More recently, New Jersey Governor Christie cancelled the planned tunnel connecting New Jersey to New York City after seeing projected cost overruns in the billions of dollars that New Jersey taxpayers would have to cover. While initial projections put the cost at \$5 billion, news reports indicate that a recent analysis from the Federal Transit Administration indicated the final cost could reach \$14 billion.

I do not want the Dulles rail project to become Virginia's version of the "Big Dig." That is why I am requesting that MWAA bring on an outside auditing group with the necessary expertise in large mass transit construction projects to provide an independent set of eyes to ensure the project is built at the lowest cost possible, which would go a long way in keeping tolls down. This auditing group would serve the same function as an "inspector general" in a federal agency who conducts independent inspections, audits and investigations that identify and prevent waste, fraud, abuse and mismanagement. Inspectors general also offer expert advice in improving operations and provide timely, useful information to decision-makers. This auditing group would provide quarterly reports to the MWAA board, the Dulles Corridor Advisory Committee, which was established by the Master Transfer Agreement between MWAA and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation in 2006, and the Fairfax and Loudoun boards of supervisors. The reports also would be available for public review.

In the Transportation Appropriations subcommittee's oversight of the "Big Dig," the assistance from what was then called the General Accounting Office, as well as an outside transit consultant brought in later, was invaluable in shining a bright light on cost controls. An auditing team for MWAA also would give area residents who have a financial stake in Dulles rail the confidence that MWAA is making wise decisions to protect the interests of commuters now using the toll road and ensure that they are not forced to bear the burden of undue cost overruns.

I believe an outside auditing group would immediately prove beneficial in dealing with the preliminary design of Phase 2. I understand that two options for a station at Dulles airport have been proposed – either an aerial station or an underground station at an additional estimated cost of \$640 million. I have strong concerns about saddling toll road users well into the future with such an extra expense. Last year's toll road revenue was \$64 million. The proposal for a Dulles underground station would take 10 years to repay in today's dollars.

I have lived in Fairfax County for nearly 40 years and in that time the Dulles corridor has become an extremely powerful economic force for the region with the airport as the primary source of this growth and success. The number of aerospace firms, defense contractors, logistics and high tech companies that call Tysons, Reston, Herndon, Loudoun County and other locations in our region home are a testament to the importance of the airport. These companies create jobs for area residents and generate revenue for the region and the Commonwealth. Because the success of Dulles rail is important to the success of the Dulles corridor and northern Virginia, I believe an independent auditing group such as I have described is necessary to provide both MWAA and the public important information on the most significant and largest mass transit project being undertaken by the region's economic engine. I hope you agree.

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Because of my deep concern about protecting the public's investment in this project, you should know that I will ask the U.S. Department of Transportation's inspector general to monitor the project if MWAA does not act to appoint an outside auditing group prior to letting the contract for Phase 2.

The success of this project is critical to this region and we need to do everything to make that happen, particularly in these tough economic times.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

Frank R. Wolf
Member of Congress

THANK YOU