

Before the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) on the I66 Corridor Improvements Project, Tier 2 Draft Environmental Assessment (EA), May 28, 2015

My name is Stuart M Whitaker. I am the founder of Transiters.com, a transit users group.

We all know that driving and congestion is a problem. Transit is worse.

Based on my review of this Environmental Assessment, I don't consider this to be a multimodal project, as it has often been described. It is more accurate to simply call this a highway project.

As Fairfax and Loudoun counties urbanize, I think it is reasonable to expect to see transportation metrics that are similar to the transportation metrics of our neighbors in Arlington. Yet while Arlington boasts, for instance, that there is one transit trip for every two auto trips in the Ballston-Rosslyn corridor, this draft Environmental Assessment forecasts that there will be only one transit trip for every ten auto trips in the year 2040. Some have asked, why is it that Arlington gets to be a multimodal community? I don't think that is the right question. The right question is, why can't Fairfax and Loudoun be multimodal communities?

Why is public transit important? Let me mention two new findings about the role of transportation in our local and national economy.

First, we all know that housing costs have skyrocketed. Researchers at Chicago and Berkeley¹ have estimated that the resulting "housing crunch" represents more than a \$1 trillion annual drain on our economy and that high quality transit can play an important role in reducing that drain.

Second, a recent study at Harvard² found that commuting time is the "single strongest factor in the odds of escaping poverty ... The relationship between transportation and social mobility is stronger than that between [social] mobility and several other factors, like crime, elementary-school test scores or the percentage of two-parent families in a community."

¹ Chang-Tai Hsieh and Enrico Moretti. "Why Do Cities Matter? Local Growth and Aggregate Growth," No. w21154. National Bureau of Economic Research, 2015

<http://faculty.chicagobooth.edu/chang-tai.hsieh/research/growth.pdf>

² Mikayla Bouchard, "Transportation Emerges as Crucial to Escaping Poverty," *New York Times*, May 7, 2015

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/07/upshot/transportation-emerges-as-crucial-to-escaping-poverty.html>

While academic studies can feel abstract, nothing is more real than the prospect of losing one's home. I think the only thing worse than losing one's home to a transportation project would be knowing that the project wasn't really necessary.

I'm glad that Ms. Hamilton from VDOT showed the chart earlier that listed the five top performing alternatives. What she didn't mention is that none of those alternatives involved five lanes of traffic as is being proposed today. Each alternative did include robust transit which is not being proposed today.

Current and projected transportation requirements can be met, without adding fifty new miles of pavement, by including high quality high volume public transit. Such a project can be developed based on the Tier 1 Record of Decision that has already been completed. I ask that VDOT develop a true multimodal project.