ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

IN PREPARATION OF THE FAIRFAX COUNTY LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

2026 VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

October 7, 2025

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TITLE OF PROPOSAL: Cross Jurisdictional Commuter Rail Service

SOURCE: Fairfax County Department of Transportation

PROPOSAL: Include language in the legislative program noting the importance of the National Capital Region working collaboratively to deliver improved regional transit service, including the expansion of cross-jurisdictional commuter rail connections.

BACKGROUND: Regional transit is critical to the continued economic development and success of Northern Virginia and the Commonwealth. According to a 2023 study by the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC), the transit network in Northern Virginia generates $1.5 billion in annual personal income and sales tax revenue and supports 311,000 jobs. One example is the Virginia Railway Express (VRE), a joint project of NVTC and the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission. VRE operates 32 trains from 19 stations and carried an average of 20,000 passengers daily prior to the pandemic. It contributes to the economic development of its member jurisdictions as an integral part of a balanced, intermodal regional transportation system.

The Commonwealth is currently constructing the Long Bridge Project, which will add a new two-track railroad bridge next to the existing Long Bridge across the Potomac River. The project will also create a bicycle and pedestrian bridge over the river, connecting Arlington's Long Bridge Park and the Mount Vernon Trail to the District's East and West Potomac Parks. This project includes several benefits to the region, including:

- Unclogging a major transportation bottleneck between the northern and southern regions of the Eastern U.S. by doubling the size of the rail corridor within the next decade, positively impacting freight and passenger movement within the region and beyond.
- Supporting increased capacity and efficiency for VRE, Amtrak, and freight operators.
- Making it possible for future collaboration with Maryland and the District of Columbia.

Transit service enhancements, such as those projected by the Long Bridge effort, can help mitigate the congestion affecting the region, as well as help respond to passenger demand for more frequent and expanded service options. Continuing coordination on and investment in service enhancements is necessary to ensure a modern, efficient, multimodal transportation system. It will improve congestion, reduce energy consumption, and increase economic opportunity for all. This is essential to the Commonwealth and is intrinsically tied to the region's economic success and ability to compete in a global economy.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends adding the following language to the legislative program:

> *The County urges the Commonwealth, the District of Columbia, and Maryland to work more collaboratively to deliver first-in-class regional transit service. Expanding cross-jurisdictional commuter rail connections – such as linking VRE and Maryland Area Rail Commuter (MARC) service through the new Long Bridge – would create a seamless system that strengthens the economy, reduces congestion, and enhances quality of life across the Capital Region.*

TITLE OF PROPOSAL: Municipal Solid Waste

SOURCE: Department of Public Works and Environmental Services

PROPOSAL: Support efforts to improve solid waste management and local authority.

BACKGROUND: Empowering local governments in Virginia with the ability to set local standards for source separation and recycling of food waste and other recyclable materials would be a transformative step toward reducing landfill dependency, meeting sustainability goals, and addressing region-specific waste challenges. As Virginia confronts increasing waste volumes, mounting landfill pressures, and the need to align with broader climate and environmental priorities, granting municipalities the authority to implement targeted waste reduction initiatives could provide the flexibility needed to address these critical issues effectively.

- Local governments could use this authority to implement initiatives such as mandatory food waste separation, composting programs, and ordinances requiring the recycling of specific materials like glass, electronic waste, or industrial packaging.
- These programs would help divert significant quantities of valuable materials away from landfills, extending landfill lifespans.
- A large portion of Virginia's municipal solid waste consists of organic materials such as food scraps and yard waste, which could be composted or processed into nutrient-rich soil amendments rather than contributing to greenhouse gas emissions.
- Reducing organic waste in landfills could lower methane emissions and contribute to the state's broader climate goals.

Virginia currently lacks the enabling legislation to provide its municipalities with the necessary autonomy to manage waste locally. For example, while Arlington and Alexandria have launched food waste collection and composting initiatives, participation is limited because they are voluntary. Legislation providing authority to make decisions about source separation and recycling would allow localities to implement waste management strategies that align with both local needs and broader state goals without burdening other municipalities in the state with different waste management needs.

Beyond waste diversion, this policy shift would have economic and social benefits. By attracting investments in recycling and composting infrastructure, Virginia could create jobs in these growing industries and drive innovation in waste processing technologies. Additionally, residents would benefit from cleaner communities and increased access to recycling and composting programs, fostering a culture of sustainability and environmental stewardship. Additionally, redefining waste management as a local responsibility grants communities a higher degree of control over environmental outcomes.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends adding the following language to the legislative program:

> *Support local authority to require source-separation and recycling of food waste as well as the collection of additional recyclable and reusable waste streams.*

TITLE OF PROPOSAL: Municipal Solid Waste

SOURCE: Department of Public Works and Environmental Services

PROPOSAL: Support efforts to improve solid waste management and local authority.

BACKGROUND: As Virginia works to balance its environmental goals with the practical realities of transitioning to a clean economy, providing waste-to-energy facilities with additional time to plan for and implement carbon capture technologies is a pragmatic approach that ensures continuity in essential waste processing operations without jeopardizing progress toward sustainability. Excluding or delaying carbon capture requirements for these facilities in Virginia would allow them to continue playing a critical role in managing the state's waste processing needs and diverting significant materials from landfills.

Adopting a phased strategy can ensure continuity in waste processing, support landfill diversion goals, and provide these facilities the time needed to align with broader decarbonization efforts. Reasons for this include the following:

- These waste-to-energy facilities reduce landfill dependency and generate usable energy. Diverting waste from landfills reduces the environmental impacts of methane emissions created by decomposing organic matter while preserving landfill capacity.
- Energy recovery from waste supports the state's energy diversification goals by contributing to local energy grids and reducing reliance on other energy production methods.
- Delaying the implementation of carbon capture allows for a phased approach, enabling facilities to explore best practices, benefit from technological advancements, and gradually implement carbon reduction initiatives without compromising their primary function.
- States and regions pursuing gradual approaches have seen better integration of carbon capture technologies, lower implementation costs, and broader acceptance among industry stakeholders.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends adding the following language to the legislative program:

> *Exclude or delay carbon capture requirements under the Clean Economy Act for resource recovery facilities, including waste-to-energy facilities that use municipal solid waste as fuel and generate electricity or natural gas, as their primary purpose is waste processing.*

TITLE OF PROPOSAL: Talent Retention Initiative for Dislocated Workers

SOURCE: Fairfax County Department of Economic Initiatives

PROPOSAL: Support programs that help employers hire local talent by providing initial funding for paid work-based learning as well as on-the-job training, career counseling, and placement services tailored to the needs of former federal workers and federally-connected private contractors in career transitions.

BACKGROUND: This position reflects the County's commitment to support new and effective workforce development strategies that build upon Fairfax County's proven Talent Up model. It aims to address labor market disruptions caused by changes in federal employment and spending.

- The federal workforce is a highly educated and skilled workforce, with a significant concentration in Virginia. In Northern Virginia, one out of eight residents have a federal civilian job. Reductions in the federal workforce and federal spending are a threat to Virginia's economy.
- Fairfax County proposed a Comprehensive Northern Virginia Talent Retention Initiative for Dislocated Workers to the House of Delegates Emergency Committee on the Impacts of Federal Workforce and Funding Reductions (Emergency Committee) – a $3.9 million program designed to serve approximately 2,580 jobseekers and 775 businesses over a three-year period.
- This position is aligned with policy recommendations described in the Emergency Committee report released in September 2025 for similar programs statewide.

In the context of Fairfax County, this work would be led by the SkillSource Group, Inc, the public workforce system lead in the counties of Fairfax and many other Northern Virginia jurisdictions. Other service delivery partners include the Fairfax County Department of Family Services, Northern Virginia Community College (NOVAnext), UVA Darden Executive Education & Lifelong Learning connected to the UVA Darden School of Business (employment transition programs for federal executives and managers), and a local professional services firm (workforce partnership with AI-supported technology). Initiative components include:

- Expanding the successful Talent Up program, which connects employers with local job seekers through paid work-based learning opportunities that can lead to permanent employment.
- Extending professional career counseling and employment placement resources to workers completing skills training.
- Delivering transition programs for federal executives with faculty-led workshops, individualized coaching, and peer network engagement.
- Providing job seekers with access to an AI-powered job search platform including AI resume tools, a job search engine, job application management, and career path exploration.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends adding the following language to the legislative program:

> *Support programs and incentives that encourage employers to adopt innovative strategies to connect with local talent and expand work-based learning or job training as well as career counseling, with a particular emphasis on strengthening pathways for former federal workers and federally-connected contractors.*

TITLE OF PROPOSAL: Preventing Older and Vulnerable Adults from Financial Exploitation from Scammers

SOURCE: Fairfax Area Commission on Aging

PROPOSAL: Support legislation that requires financial institution staff to complete training to detect and prevent financial exploitation of adults and designate such professionals as mandatory reporters of suspected financial exploitation.

BACKGROUND: Scams are the largest category of financial exploitation, and are becoming more prevalent, more sophisticated, and harder to detect as technology evolves. Approximately half of all U.S. states (including Illinois, Florida, and Washington) have some form of mandated reporter requirements for financial institution staff. Nationally, younger adults (aged 20-29) reported losing money to fraud more often than older adults (aged 70-79) – 44% vs. 24%, respectively. However, those aged 70-79 reported higher median losses ($1,000) compared with those aged 20-29 ($417). In Virginia, there were 2,345 substantiated cases of financial exploitation of older adults investigated by Adult Protective Services (APS) in FY 2024. 159 of those cases were from Fairfax County, amounting to approximately $18.8 million, about 18% of the approximately $107 million in statewide losses among older adults.

LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND:

- Since 2001, Virginia law has allowed financial institution employees to report suspected financial abuse, and since 2019, to refuse or delay transactions or disbursement of funds due to suspected financial exploitation. Legislation enacted in 2020 required mandatory reporting by financial institution staff when refusing to execute a transaction, delaying a transaction, or refusing to disburse funds.
- **HB 692** (Maldonado)/**SB 174** (Favola) (2024), the Virginia Senior Safe Act, requires the Bureau of Financial Institutions of the State Corporation Commission to develop and publish guidelines for training on how to identify and report the suspected financial exploitation of elderly or vulnerable adults by January 1, 2026. However, training is not currently required and, as a result, many warning signs may go unreported until significant financial harm has occurred.
- **HB 692**/**SB 174** also permits financial institutions to offer elderly or vulnerable adults the opportunity to submit and update a list of trusted persons that the financial institution staff are permitted to contact if they have reasonable cause to suspect an individual is the victim or target of financial exploitation.
- **HB 692** initially included language requiring mandatory reporting and training, but those provisions were removed before the bill was enacted.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends adding the following language to the legislative program:

> *Support funding and programs that help prevent, stop, and remedy financial scams, especially for vulnerable populations.*

TITLE OF PROPOSAL: Expanding the Use of Drones to Enhance Public Safety

SOURCE: Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD)

PROPOSAL: Support legislation seeking to provide law enforcement and first responders with necessary tools, including drones, to help respond to public safety emergencies, protect against evolving safety challenges faced by localities, and prevent community violence.

BACKGROUND: Law enforcement faces increasingly complex threats and rapidly evolving crises that can unfold in minutes. Time is the most critical factor in these situations, and drones can deliver instant situational awareness that protects both the public and first responders. However, under current law, unless a call for service clearly falls within an enumerated exception, officers are not able to deploy drones without a search warrant and, given the time it takes to acquire a warrant, often choose more traditional methods of response. Amending § 19.2-60.1(C) to include an exception that allows drone deployment during active calls for service when no search warrant would ordinarily be required if not for the use of a drone would increase FCPD's capacity to serve the public and protect officers without compromising privacy protections. Additional permissions to use drones in this capacity:

1. Improve Public and Officer Safety:
    - Drones can quickly provide real-time aerial situational awareness during rapidly evolving incidents, such as active scenes, disturbances, or suspicious persons.
    - Enhances de-escalation by providing intelligence before officers engage and provides critical safety support when officers have limited backup.
2. Do Not Infringe on Privacy Rights:
    - The recommended change clearly limits use to non-search, public-safety-driven deployments, respecting Fourth Amendment constraints.
    - Limited to public places or circumstances where no warrant would otherwise be required under established Fourth Amendment doctrine.
3. Align with Existing Exceptions:
    - The code already allows warrantless use for hot pursuit, crash reconstructions, and certain alerts (Amber, Blue, etc.).
    - Calls for service are often time-sensitive and high-risk, falling into a similar category where drone use is reactive and justified by exigency or safety.
4. Support Drone as First Responder (DFR) Programs:
    - Enables law enforcement to launch drones proactively when a 911 call is received in areas with DFR infrastructure (e.g., rooftop drone docking stations).
    - Promotes efficiency, faster response times, improved coverage of high-risk areas, and reduced unnecessary dispatches.
5. Address Evolving Public Safety Challenges
    - Communities face increasingly complex safety threats, including large-scale disturbances, critical incidents, and acts of targeted violence.
    - Drones allow agencies to respond proportionately to modern threats.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends adding the following language to the legislative program:

> *Expand authority for local law enforcement to employ unmanned aircraft systems (drones) for non-search deployments, in accordance with existing exceptions, during active 911 calls to enhance response times, stewardship of resources, and officer and public safety.*

TITLE OF PROPOSAL: Modernizing 911 Funding Models

SOURCE: Department of Public Safety Communications

PROPOSAL: Support efforts to study, modernize, and diversify funding models for 911 services, accounting for technology advancements, dispatch operations, and staff recruitment and retention challenges.

BACKGROUND: Virginia's 911 system is a critical and under-supported component of public safety in the Commonwealth. The central challenges faced in Virginia are:

- No Unified Oversight or Standards**:** Virginia's 124 primary Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs, commonly known as 911 Centers) operate independently, creating inconsistency in technology, service delivery, staffing, and public safety outcomes.
- Aging Infrastructure: Many PSAPs are ill-equipped to transition to Next Generation 911 (a digital, IP-based system that will increase the speed, resilience, and reliability of 911 Systems), cybersecurity threats, and modern call-handling requirements.
- Workforce Crisis: Chronic understaffing, burnout, and outdated job classification impact PSAPs' ability to recruit and retain staff as well as negatively impact staff morale.
- Public Expectations: Citizens expect a seamless and rapid emergency response across all jurisdictions. Current challenges make meeting these expectations difficult.

To ensure quality public safety across the state, the Commonwealth needs to take a holistic look at its funding, infrastructure, and workforce development support for PSAPs. Critical areas of study include:

- Cyber & Technology
    - Ensure statewide interoperability to eliminate 911 phone transfer delays.
    - Enhance cybersecurity protections and emergency failover protocols.
    - Promote interoperability of Medical Profile systems for pre-arrival data.
    - Ensure all PSAPS have adequate power and generator protections.
- Staffing & Classification
    - Reclassify 911 professionals as first responders to align benefits and support.
    - Fund recruitment and retention program, standardize training and career pathways across jurisdictions, and develop statewide peer support and wellness initiatives.
- Funding & Governance
    - Reevaluate and update the 911 surcharge funding formula to ensure equity and less reliance on jurisdictional general funds.
    - Provide full funding and support for capital improvements & technology upgrades.
    - Explore more robust regional collaboration incentives and shared service models.
- Operational & Policy Needs
    - Create guidance for coordinated response to major events and disasters.
    - Improve data-sharing and system integration with public safety agencies.
    - Address gaps in mental health response coordination.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends adding the following language to the legislative program:

> *Support efforts to study, modernize, and diversify funding models for 911 services, accounting for technology advancements, dispatch operations, and staff recruitment and retention challenges.*