



## **I-395 and Columbia Pike Transportation Updates**

**By David Dickson**

In the wake of its decision to kill streetcar service along Columbia Pike, the Arlington County Board has weighed other options and is proposing premium bus service as the new transportation enhancement along the Columbia Pike corridor.

The Mount Vernon Group long supported the proposed streetcar initiative as the most sustainable and scalable long-term transit option along Columbia Pike. However, the project became so controversial among County residents that the Board abandoned it in November 2014.

The proposed new premium bus service will function somewhat like a Bus Rapid Transit service and will feature more frequent express buses from Skyline in Fairfax County to Pentagon City and Crystal City in Arlington. It will be similar to, and connect with, the new Metroway service that's now operating between Crystal City in Arlington and the Braddock Road Metro Station in Alexandria.

Planned for 2019, this new bus service will utilize the new transit stations along the Pike that offer near-level boarding and off-board fare collection. Buses will also benefit from traffic signal priority.

While this is not the transit solution needed to accommodate the long-term growth anticipated in the corridor through 2040, as the streetcar would have, County staff says it will accommodate growth over a ten-year period. For more information see Arlington County's [Transit Development Plan](#):

In other local transportation news, last fall VDOT announced [plans to extend the tolled I-95 Hot Lanes north](#) along the I-395 HOV lanes to the Potomac River. VDOT plans to add a third lane within the existing footprint of the two current HOV lanes. VDOT is working with its private partner on the I-95 Hot Lanes, Transurban, on this extension.

The proposed project includes committed funding for transit improvements along the I-395 corridor. Officials from Alexandria, Arlington, and Fairfax County, however, point out that the original 2008 proposal for the I-95 Hot Lanes promised almost \$300 million for transit

improvements in the corridor which disappeared when the final agreement between VDOT and Transurban was signed in 2012.

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