



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 5, 2014

CONTACT

Stewart Schwartz, Executive Director, Coalition for Smarter Growth

[\(703\) 599-6437](tel:7035996437)

Columbia Pike Streetcar will prevail because it is the key to economic growth

VIRGINIA -- It would be reading too much into Arlington voters' intentions to ascribe the election of John Vihstadt to a full term on the Arlington Board over Alan Howze primarily to the debate over the Columbia Pike streetcar. Streetcar opponents linked the price tag of the streetcar to general concerns over government spending and the state of the economy. But a hard look at the streetcar and the record of transit and transit-oriented development in the region demonstrates that new transit investments are a critical economic development tool for Northern Virginia.

A 2013 study for the US calculated that the economic value of transit for a jurisdiction could be up to \$1.5 to \$1.8 billion.[1] A study this year estimated around 50,000 new jobs created for every \$1 billion invested in transit.[2]

In the Washington region, a recent study found that 84% of current office development is within ¼ mile of Metro stops.[3] A 2011 WMATA study noted that the real estate located within ½ mile and ¼ mile of Metrorail stations generated approximately \$3.1B and \$1.8B in property tax revenues, respectively, for the Washington area in 2010.[4] People and companies have certainly been voting with their feet and flocking to walkable, transit-oriented communities in DC, Arlington, and Alexandria.

In Arlington County, just 11.4 percent of its land area -- in its two Metro corridors -- generates 50% of its property tax base, producing revenues for the schools, libraries, recreation centers, police, and fire services. In the 1970s, Arlington allocated an extra \$100 million and the federal government an extra \$200 million to put the Orange Line underground, and in the process the county generated billions of dollars in real estate value, stemmed an economic decline, and created the most vibrant and successful transit-oriented corridors in the nation.

The Streetcar -- a joint project of Fairfax and Arlington -- promises similar economic benefits and is the lynchpin

for the economic revitalization of the Columbia Pike Corridor and Bailey's Crossroads. The streetcar is projected to bring between \$3.2 and \$4.4 billion in real estate investment to the Columbia Pike corridor, as well as attract 6600 new jobs, and an increase of \$375-735 million in countywide revenues.

It is also the foundational piece for Arlington's vision for Columbia Pike: preserving affordable housing is linked to development incentives and revitalization which are linked to modern streetcar and the capacity it provides. Bus ridership has reached near maximum capacity at 17,000 riders per day, and the streetcar is needed to carry more people per hour.

Finally, on a per-mile *or* per-user basis, the streetcar costs less than other projects. The Beltway HOT lanes, for example, cost \$1.4 billion for 14 miles and an estimated 66,000 users per day. Maryland's ICC cost \$2.6 billion for 18 miles and an estimated 30,000 users per day. The streetcar's upper estimated cost is \$261 *million* -- for Arlington's 5-mile segment with an estimated 26,000 users per day...

So, we are confident that the streetcar will continue to stand up to scrutiny and prove to be the best investment for the Columbia Pike Corridor. We see overall support for walkable, transit-oriented communities as remaining strong, and the results of the transportation referendum in Fairfax County bear this out. Over 71% of voters supported a bond package of which 83% percent went to bicycle and pedestrian investments.

About the Coalition for Smarter Growth

The Coalition for Smarter Growth is the leading organization in the Washington DC region dedicated to making the case for smart growth. Its mission is to promote walkable, inclusive, and transit-oriented communities, and the land use and transportation policies and investments needed to make those communities flourish. Learn more at smartergrowth.net.

###

[1] <http://www.citylab.com/work/2013/08/public-transit-worth-way-more-city-you-think/6532/>

[2] <http://www.apta.com/resources/reportsandpublications/Documents/Economic-Impact-Public-Transportation-Investment-APTA.pdf>

[3] http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/capitalbusiness/every-foot-matters-when-it-comes-to-real-estate-near-metro-researchers-say/2013/12/10/7e042f6a-6120-11e3-bf45-61f69f54fc5f_story.html

[4] <http://www.wmata.com/pdfs/planning/WMATA%20Making%20the%20Case%20for%20Transit%20Final%20Report%20Jan-2012.pdf>