



Remarks by Jason Stanford

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The Stephen S. Fuller Institute's Third Annual Economic Forum, December 10, 2019

For more than 30 years, the Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance has been the leader in advancing regional transportation solutions.

However, many of the transportation projects and priorities that the Alliance has advocated for over the years have been in the region's long-range plans for many decades.

In my office, I have an enormous poster of the region's long-range plan that was developed in 1960 – the year 2000 plan. It includes a number of major transportation improvements including new bridges crossing the Potomac River to the east and west of our region - as well as major north-south connections that have long been forgotten.

And despite abandoning these plans and failing to invest in the transportation infrastructure necessary to accommodate the anticipated growth in our region, I often see people shrugging their shoulders saying, "I just don't see what could be done to address our region's transportation challenges."

Looking back, one of the biggest transportation challenges we've faced as a region is moving beyond that same short-term "Not in My Backyard" mentality that we see in housing and development.

Our elected leaders need to have the political courage to work together and to do what's right for the long-term success of our region, even if that means they don't have the opportunity to cut a ribbon or attend a ground-breaking ceremony.

So what is the "right thing" for our region? I'll do my best to address 60 years of major regional transportation challenges in just a few short minutes.

First and foremost, transportation is absolutely vital to the long-term success of our region. It is directly connected to housing affordability and economic development.

Our transportation network gives people access to jobs and opportunity while providing them with a variety of housing options and lifestyles. If we want our region to continue to grow, we need to invest in the transportation infrastructure that supports that growth.

I see three major areas where we can still achieve tremendous progress both making those necessary investments and increasing the housing supply our region so desperately needs.

First, we must continue investing in high capacity transit including Metro, VRE, and BRT as well as ensuring that we maximize the density in those corridors.

Mixed-use and transit-oriented development are important to the long-term sustainability of our region. That's why the Alliance was actually the first private sector organization to call

for dedicated funding for Metro many years ago and has long supported a regional express bus network using the express lanes.

In fact, that's one of the reasons why the region's business community has come out strongly in support of the Maryland Traffic Relief Plan - because of its ability to improve reliability for both drivers and transit riders.

Second, our region has long been hamstrung by the lack of suburb-suburb connections including between our two most populous jurisdictions – Fairfax and Montgomery County. With much of the region's anticipated population growth in Fairfax, Prince William, and Loudoun Counties, it's important that we have regional cooperation to improve these connections – including a new Western Crossing over the Potomac River.

I think it's often forgotten that the region has major activity centers outside the Beltway such as the I-270 and Dulles Corridors.

In fact, the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority has a great graphic showing where people live and work in Northern Virginia. One of the biggest connections is actually a big U from Fairfax County going right back into Fairfax County.

The more job opportunities that we have in Fairfax and Montgomery Counties, the shorter the commute will be for the large number of people who live and work in these jurisdictions.

Finally, we absolutely need better regionally coordinated land use and transportation planning. For example, in Montgomery, Fairfax, Prince William, and Loudoun Counties, we have areas that are artificially constrained from development.

Each jurisdiction pats itself on the back for preserving open space, while areas like Faquier, Winchester, and Frederick MD explode just on the other side of their border.

If we are serious about addressing transportation and housing affordability, we need to come together as a region to take an all-of-the above approach to housing development, and in addition new density in the urban core, strategically identify where it makes sense to open new areas in a limited way for transportation improvements, workforce housing and development.

Otherwise, we'll be back here in 2030 talking about how we should address the growing transportation challenges of getting workers from affordable housing in Winchester and Frederick to Fairfax County, Arlington, and D.C.

Each of these improvements will take significant regional collaboration, courage from our elected leaders, and the recognition that housing and transportation are not a one-size-fits-all approach.

JASON STANFORD

Jason is the Executive Director of the Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance. He oversees the day-to-day operations of the Alliance including long-term planning, transportation policy analysis, advocacy, and community outreach. Jason is focused on applying his experience in the Virginia General Assembly to unite regional stakeholders and prioritize key transportation projects that will keep our region moving forward for decades to come. Before leading the Alliance, Jason spent six years and seven legislative sessions as the Chief of Staff to a member of the Virginia House of Delegates. During that time, he worked on numerous public policy issues including multimodal transportation, small business economic development, sustainable energy infrastructure, and housing affordability. Jason earned his bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of California, Berkeley.