Improving Transportation in Prince William County
From Prince William County Department of Transportation

Ferry Feasibility study

Study Purpose
This project is an attempt to bring an innovative, easily implemented, low cost solution to the commuting problems facing Northern Virginia. No one mode is a "solution" for our congestion picture, but sensible use of the Potomac River in this area will positively impact Prince William County, Fairfax County, Prince Georges County, Alexandria, and the Southeast, Washington DC developments, e.g., new baseball stadium. Ferry services will be an affordable addition to our transit solutions and will promote tourism.

In some parts of the country, new waterside communities are being planned to offer citizens a choice of travel modes through the waterways, clearly demonstrating the linkage between transportation and land use in those areas. In other areas of the country, it has been demonstrated that more value has been added to shoreside developments that include marine transit services.

In addition to economic development, this service will take the form of new environmentally-sensitive ferry designs with low emissions profiles, low wake/wash profiles, and low ambient noise levels. Few, if any, new transit initiatives can offer such an environmentally benign mode as can the passenger ferry. Moreover, passenger ferry services can be deployed in a shorter time period and at a much lower cost than the road or rail improvements needed for Prince William County.

Traffic Issues
This proposal is an extension of the recommendations made in a 1999-2000 VDOT study of passenger ferries. It is intended to address four major transportation issues facing Prince William County and its neighboring jurisdictions:

(1) the increased traffic density experienced along the I-95/Route 1 corridor as a result of regional demographic growth;
(2) the degradation in air quality as a consequence of this growth;
(3) the additional traffic congestion to be contributed by the BRAC implications at Fort Belvoir; and
(4) the increased costs and timelines associated with conventional landside surface solutions to mitigate the congestion problem.

Route Proving Exercise
The study will include a plan to charter a passenger ferry for a period of 4-5 days, conducting runs from several points in Prince William County to the planned docking sites in Southeast DC; ferry runs between Cherry Hill and Occoquan, the Navy Yard, Fort Belvoir, Alexandria, and the National Harbor site; runs made on selected commuter schedules, morning and evening, off-peak hours and a weekend.

This study will be completed this summer. Check back regularly for updates.