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## **# 20 SYNERGY PERSPECTIVE ON THE OUTER BELTWAY IN VIRGINIA**

This brief Current Perspective addresses one simple question:

**Since rational opposition to new Roadways is still being overwhelmed by the Myth that more roads will ‘get Virginians moving’ and ‘get the economy growing,’ what are the alternatives to “Just Say No” for those concerned with a sustainable future and prosperity for the majority of citizens?**

The answer may be a MultiUse Corridor: A way to move people and goods and at the same time create The Clear Edge that is agrarian-friendly.

### **The Problem**

If you have expressed concern to a conservation Organization about VDOT spending money on an “Outer Beltway” in the northern part of Virginia you have probably gotten letters that sound like this:

**“Dear John, please send MORE money so we can say ‘NO’ EVEN LOUDER.”**

That strategy has not worked well over the past two years and it will not work at all until the current state administration runs out of borrowed funds.

This is the case in spite of the fact that almost every one of the points made by the conservation community concerning the utter futility of building an Outer Beltway are valid. No one in their right mind would waste money on building an ‘Outer Beltway’ as currently envisioned by the proponents.

There is, of course, a more important question:

**Why build more expensive infrastructure – primarily limited access roadways – to serve Large, Private Vehicles and generate more Urban land with settlement patterns that are untransportable? See THE PROBLEM WITH CARS – PART THREE of *TRILO-G*.**

Even raising this important question has not made ANY difference.

As we have seen in the National Capital Subregion with the Intercounty Connector in Maryland, and will see in Greater Charlottesville-Albemarle with the US Route 29 ByPassByPass, the only way that more Large-Private Vehicle Beltways and ByPasses will NOT be built is for there to be no money to build more transport facilities of any kind.

That is because of:

- The current uninformed context of the discussion concerning Mobility and Access and human settlement patterns. See SETTLEMENT PATTERN CONSILIENCE, Current Perspective #26
- The level of understanding and awareness of ‘Running-as-Hard-as-they-Can’ citizens. See PROPERTY DYNAMICS – PART ELEVEN of *TRILO-G*
- Those who not have control of the way resources are allocated for Mobility and Access infrastructure

In the current political climate, if Conservation groups just pushing for a stalemate ‘succeed’ it will mean there will be no money to build the Mobility and Access infrastructure that IS needed to support functional and sustainable human settlement patterns. It also means that there will be no money for maintenance of existing infrastructure.

### **Where To From Here?**

Here is the view from SYNERGY:

- The entire context of the Mobility and Access debate – and resource allocation in general – must be changed. See again SETTLEMENT PATTERN CONSILIENCE, Current Perspective #26
- Those who oppose the Outer Beltway – The Coalition for Smarter Growth, the Piedmont Environmental Council and other conservation Organizations – need to become known in the Virginia portion of the National Capital SubRegion as something other than ‘The Institutions of NO.’
- There IS a need for improved North - South circulation for private vehicles (Large, Private Vehicles AND small private vehicles) west of Dulles Airport.

Therefore:

Conservation / smarter growth and other citizen-interest Organizations need to propose to JOIN with all transport facility advocates to select a rational alignment for a North-South MultiUse

Corridor West of Dulles Airport. This MultiUse Corridor would be an AntiBeltway, a NonByPass that serves the adjacent land uses AND the through travel demand.

### **A MultiUse Corridor That Defines The Clear Edge**

Here is a first draft of the criteria for a MultiUse Corridor for conservation Organizations to put on the table:

1. A minimum 250 foot right-of-way corridor – wide enough to provide for buffering and a MultiUse Corridor.
2. Within the MultiUse Corridor there must be reservation of right-of-way for a future shared-vehicle system if the need can be justified and resources exist to provide that system.
3. The MultiUse corridor would also provide SEPARATE facilities for
  - a. Low-power / Self-power vehicles
  - b. Large, Private Vehicles / Rubber-Tired, Shared Vehicles, and
  - c. Recreation / Leisure / Short Distance Travel including bicycles and pedestrian movement.

To make the MultiUse Corridor concept work, there must be specific criteria for the Large, Private Vehicle / Rubber-Tired, Shared Vehicle Facility:

- a. Maximum speed of 40 mph.
- b. A ‘No-Stop’ design with roundabouts / traffic circles as well as very small footprint interchanges and grade separations.

The ‘no-stop’ design will maintain an average speed comparable to a 55 mph ‘parkway’ with stop lights. This design will also cost less due to fundamentally different design criteria.

The 40 mph speed limit reflects the fact that about 40 mph is the speed at which wind resistance starts to make large vehicles exponentially LESS energy efficient. About 40 mph is also the tipping point at which tire noise becoming oppressive. Engine noise and stack noise is also less intrusive below 40 mph.

Because of these design factors – no stop and go, slower speeds – the Large, Private Vehicle / Rubber-Tired, Shared Vehicle Facility would have much less impact on adjacent uses due to the design criteria.

- c. Finally, the number of interchanges of the Large, Private Vehicle / Rubber-Tired, Shared Vehicle Facility would be limited to Five: The south terminus, I-66, US Route 50, The Greenway and VA Route 7. (There would be no limit to the access points to the low-powered / self- power vehicle facility or the recreational / leisure / short distance facility.)
4. Most importantly, the location of the new MultiUse Corridor would become The Clear Edge around the Core of the National Capital SubRegion in Virginia.

**Inside The Clear Edge** infill development on Vacant and Underutilized land adjacent to the MultiUse Corridor would be Urban development including Community and SubRegional serving OpenSpace as well as Agricultural Urbanism, Agrarian Urbanism or Urban Agriculture. (For definitions of these land use pattern alternatives, see *Theory and Practice of Agrarian Urbanism*, Andres Duany and DPZ , 2011) Existing Urban land uses INSIDE The Clear Edge would be in harmony with one or more of these development prototypes.

**Outside The Clear Edge** development would be OpenLand or development that meets one of the following development types: Agricultural Retention, Agricultural Urbanism or Agrarian Urbanism. (For definitions of these land use pattern alternatives, again see *Theory and Practice of Agrarian Urbanism*, Andres Duany and DPZ , 2011). Existing Urban land uses OUTSIDE The Clear Edge would be compatible with and could be integrated into one or more of these development prototypes.

The current proponents of the Outer Beltway might or might not accept the challenge to come up with an environmentally responsible corridor.

They would be stupid if they do not, but the FIRST objective would be to change the context of the discussion about what sort of infrastructure must be built in the future. See THE PROBLEM WITH CARS – PART THREE of *TRILO-G* and WHAT FOLLOWS THE AUTONOMOBILE Current Perspective # xx (forthcoming).

The concept of MultiUse Corridors is further developed and placed in context in SETTLEMENT PATTERN CONSILIENCE, Current Perspective #26.

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N.B. For the definitions of terms in this email that may appear at first glance to be irregular Capitalizations see GLOSSARY linked from the *RESOURCES* page of this website.