



## Transportation Planning Must Address Regional Gridlock

Last week the Greater Washington Partnership announced its Transportation Blueprint for the Baltimore-Washington-Richmond super region.

This is a very important initiative and we are encouraged the Partnership is actively playing a major role in addressing the changing nature of transportation.

While the blueprint seeks to align priorities in Richmond and Baltimore with those of the D.C. region, the immediate task is to address the transit and roadway gridlock that is occurring today in Northern Virginia and suburban Maryland.

For more than three decades, the Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance, which represents over 100 major employers, community organizations and concerned citizens, has worked effectively to advance and construct multimodal transportation priorities identified by regional planners as essential to regional mobility. The 2030 Group and the Suburban Maryland Transportation Alliance have also outlined the foundation for regional cooperation and the prioritization of projects that will have the biggest impact on battling gridlock now.

In fact, The 2030 Group in 2014 released a study of the top priorities, based on input from many of the region's top transportation experts that included designating congestion and travel time reductions as the most important considerations for project/investment selection. This study's priority endorsements included dedicated funding for Metro, the immediate replacement and expansion of the American Legion Bridge and construction of a new Potomac River Crossing between Loudoun and Montgomery counties. The net effect of the study's recommended improvements would result in reduced congestion and a performance level that far exceeds the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board's 25-year Long Term Plan.

While the GWP's Blueprint includes some of the key 2030 Group study recommendations, others have been omitted such as a new regional bus network connecting Virginia, Maryland, and D.C. using the Express Lanes and a new Potomac Crossing — which is the business community's top priority. In addition, many of the GWP's proposed solutions lack prioritization as well as specific, quantifiable cost and travel benefit analysis to show improved performance over the current long-range regional plans. As a result, many leading business groups

in the region have chosen not to endorse the Blueprint at this time until urgent existing projects are included and more in-depth analysis is completed and shared.

Despite these differences, we all recognize that regional collaboration is the key to addressing the transportation gridlock facing suburban Maryland and Northern Virginia. This focus on regionalism is what allowed us to successfully obtain dedicated Metro funding and attract Amazon's HQ2 to our community. We look forward to working with the GWP to promote regional solutions that can be implemented now to relieve traffic congestion as well as improve and modernize our transportation network to meet 21st century transportation challenges.

---

*G. Evan Pritchard is chair of the Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance.  
Jennifer Russel is chair of the Suburban Maryland Transportation Alliance.*