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More commuter parking coming

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By SCOTT SHENK

At least one veteran school bus driver will be glad when the planned 1,000-space expansion is completed at the Staffordborough Boulevard commuter parking lot in Garrisonville.

Linda Shotwell and other drivers who transport Anne E. Moncure students have been struggling this year to weave the buses through the overcrowded Virginia Department of Transportation commuter lot, which is the only way in and out of the school.

"We've been playing this shuffle in the morning and afternoon" all year, she said, noting that illegally parked cars often jut out into the two lanes the buses use.

Parking issues at that lot and in Spotsylvania County could be fixed if plans announced yesterday by Virginia Secretary of Transportation Sean T. Connaughton come to fruition.

"I understand the parking and commuter issues," he said to a small group gathered at the Staffordborough lot yesterday, noting that he commutes from Prince William County to Richmond during the week and often stops at the Wawa on State Route 610.

Then he announced the plan to add 1,000 parking spaces to the Stafford commuter lot as well as another 1,000 spaces at the lot on Gordon Road and State Route 3 in Spotsylvania.

He said there also is funding for another 1,000 spaces at the planned Virginia Railway Express station on the U.S. 17 Bypass in Spotsylvania.

Funding for the Stafford borough and Gordon lot expansions will come from the state Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program, according to Kelly Hannon with VDOT. The VRE station funding will come from the

FAMPO/Fredericksburg District CMAQ funds.

The expansion for the Staffordborough lot will involve land owned by the Stafford County Board of Supervisors and the School Board.

The land also presents issues with slopes and gas lines, Stafford Supervisor Mark Dudenhefer said after the announcement.

Regardless, Connaughton said \$5.5 million is set aside for the expansion, and preliminary planning will begin “right away and construction hopefully some time next year.”

Another \$400,000 is set aside for a preliminary study at the Gordon Road lot, he said. The estimate for that project is \$5 million.

During the press conference, VDOT’s Fredericksburg District Administrator Quintin Elliott said \$2.5 million is set aside for parking at the Spotsylvania VRE station, which will cost an estimated \$20.4 million.

Connaughton said the local projects are part of Gov. Bob McDonnell’s statewide \$4.4 billion transportation plan, passed by the General Assembly in February.

“Governor McDonnell has made transportation a very high priority,” Connaughton said. “You will see enormous amounts of work happening” on Virginia roads.

Spotsylvania Supervisor Jerry Logan said “funding has been a major issue” with fixing transportation issues in the area. “These funds are certainly going to be well-used and appreciated.”

Dudenhefer said he knows firsthand that commuter parking is a major issue in the area.

He commutes to Washington, D.C., during the week and uses the Mine Road commuter lot, across Route 610 from the Staffordborough lot. The Mine Road lot is typically full by 6:50 a.m. And the Staffordborough lot is officially identified as being at 130 percent capacity, which he said is “grossly understated.”

The supervisor said he started working to get additional commuter parking spaces about three years ago, when talk of expanding High Occupancy Toll lanes to the area foundered, though that may be back on the table under the governor’s transportation plan.

Either way, Dudenhefer added that new commuter parking spaces won’t come overnight, but these things take time, he said.

Shotwell, a bus driver for 26 years, will be glad when something is done.

“I’m just here for the safety of the children,” she said.

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Garrisonville Commuter Parking

- 795—Minimum number of vanpool passengers at the Staffordborough and Mine road lots
- 180—Minimum number of commuter bus passengers
- 76—Minimum number of car pools
- 70—Minimum number of vanpools based at the lots

- 19—Minimum number of van pools that pick up passengers at the lots

Gordon Road Commuter Parking

- 395—Minimum number of vanpool passengers based at the lot
- 31—Minimum number of van pools based at the lot
- 17—Minimum number of van pools that pick up passengers at the lot
- 8—Minimum number of car pools that pick up passengers at the lot
- 6—Minimum number of car pools based at the lot
- 3—Minimum number of commuter bus routes

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