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## New lots in works for south Stafford

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By KELLY HANNON

Commuters displaced when a southern Stafford County Walmart put a stop to informal carpool and vanpool parking in its lot could have new meeting places soon.

Two possible locations for new commuter parking near State Route 3 have been identified by the George Washington Regional Commission in Fredericksburg.

The agency is close to signing leases to secure 60 spaces at Fredericksburg Field House in Spotsylvania County and 30 spaces in Chatham Heights in Stafford, said Diana Utz, director of GWRideConnect, a commission service that matches commuters with carpool, vanpool and public transit options.

Negotiations are ongoing with the owner of a third lot in Stafford that could add another 15 spaces, Utz said.

The potential lots are close to Route 3 in southeast Stafford. The Walmart lot was a popular meeting point for commuters headed to employers in the Dahlgren area of King George.

Using federal funds targeted at reducing congestion, the commission would pay property owners \$1 per space every day, Monday through Friday. Vanpool drivers would be allowed to leave the vans in the lots over the weekend.

If the agreements are reached, participating carpools and vanpools would have to register with the commission to park in a specific lot.

Commuters would have to hang a tag on their rearview mirror to identify their vehicle. Any vehicle not displaying the tags could be towed.

Utz presented the possibilities to the commission's board at a meeting last night. Members approved a resolution authorizing Executive Director Bob Wilson to sign leases with the property owners.

About 100 commuters had been parking at Walmart in Stafford's Washington Square Plaza on Route 3 until mid-October.

The Ferry Farm-area Walmart recently expanded from a standard store to a Supercenter, which includes a grocery store. Store officials said additional parking was needed for customers, and gave commuters

two weeks to find a new location.

Utz commended the private-property owners for assisting the community and providing parking when few options were available.

"We are so grateful," she said.

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