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COUNCIL URGES OPENING OF DULLES ACCESS ROAD TO COMMUTERS

Washington-area commuters should be allowed to use the Dulles access road, the Council on Wage and Price Stability said today in a petition to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

In an analysis filed with the petition, the Council noted that the road is greatly underused even though many commuters presently use it in violation of FAA regulations which prohibit non-airport use except in emergencies. The current commuter pattern of use entails entering the roadway in the airport direction, making a U-turn in front of the terminal, and proceeding in the easterly, or Washington, direction. This use frequently results in traffic congestion in the vicinity of the terminal. The road, originally opened in the early 1960's, cost the Federal government \$28 million in land and construction costs. Construction of the identical road today could well cost in excess of \$100 million.

The FAA's current policy was designed to assure quick and easy access to Dulles by the airport's users. According to the Council's analysis, however, the commuter prohibition is unnecessary to assure such easy access; instead, the policy only costs commuters extra time, wear and tear on their cars, and wasted fuel. The Council estimates that commuters now using the road would save nearly \$1.0 million per year if the road were opened, and additional savings would be realized by new commuters the opening of the road would attract.

Commenting on the Council's petition, Acting Director William Lilley III said: "The FAA's current regulation is another example of inflexible government regulations creating a wasteful use of scarce resources. The Dulles access road is greatly underused because of this overregulation.

"The Council's analysis recognizes the importance of ready access to Dulles Airport but places this goal in the perspective of all area travelers--both air and land--and concludes that the community would be better served by opening the road to commuter use.

"Presently, commuters use the road in violation of the law via a circuitous detour which wastes time and fuel and results in avoidable traffic congestion at the terminal itself. Greater commuter use of the road, without these detours, would lead to less traffic on local roads, less time spent commuting, and greater fuel efficiency."

(More)

The analysis filed with the report evaluates the FAA rule and its possible inflationary effects. The report emphasizes a number of points, including:

- (a) Use of the access road is well below capacity. Traffic could probably be doubled with little or no impact on congestion.
- (b) Despite the prohibition against non-airport use of the road, commuters presently account for nearly one half of total traffic.
- (c) Airport authorities apparently acquiesce in this unlawful use of the road. In fact, airport security police are often seen directing commuter traffic as it makes a U-turn near the airport.
- (d) Commuters and airport travelers tend to use the access road at different times of the day, thereby lessening the potential for traffic congestion.
- (e) If, over time, congestion did become a problem, a more efficient means of limiting traffic could be initiated, such as tolls. In fact, a 1973 study by the Virginia Department of Highways looked into the feasibility of constructing a toll road parallel to the Dulles access road and tentatively concluded that revenues would exceed costs.

The FAA is required to consider the Council's petition and to formally accept or deny the request. The FAA may hold public hearings on the issue in order to gain more information before arriving at its official determination.