

Riverbend Park offers Friday night sunset tours and Sunday sunrise tours. Kayakers at Riverbend are often repeat customers who cannot get enough of the adventure and wildlife scenery the Potomac River has to offer.

## Riverbend's Summer Attraction: Kayaking

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Happy Birthday Silver  
Line, and Many More

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'Happy Days' in Home Sales

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Wiehle-Reston East Station surpassed first-year ridership projections with nearly 9,200 boardings, or 18,400 weekday entries and exits last month.

In addition to the 9,197 boardings at Reston's station last month, McLean had 1,842 boardings; Tysons Corner, 3,423; Greensboro, 1,185; and Spring Hill 1,441, totaling 17,088.

## Happy Birthday Silver Line, and Many More

### Reactions to the \$3 billion project up and down the line.

BY KEN MOORE  
THE CONNECTION

“Herndon is ready,” said Mayor Lisa Merkel, regarding Herndon’s future Silver Line stop. Merkel dubbed Herndon, “A Next Generation Small Town.”

“We are so fortunate,” she said. “This is a huge project, one of the biggest infrastructure projects in the country. There aren’t many towns that can get involved in projects like this.”

The Washington Metropolitan Airports Authority recently projected cost of Phase I, the 11.7 mile segment of the Silver Line with five stops, to be \$2.982 billion.

After a recently announced 13-month delay, construction is hoped to begin on Herndon’s future Silver Line Stop in 2016 with its opening by 2019-2020, according to a talk Merkel gave in May.

The entire Silver Line will be a 23-mile extension of the existing Metrorail system from East Falls Church, through Tysons and Reston, and eventually to Washington Dulles International Airport west to Ashburn.

The Herndon Town Council approved 38 acres to be set aside for its future Metro stop in February 2012.

“It’s the right space, we could never consider that in any other part in town,” said Merkel.

**THE SILVER LINE CELEBRATED** its first birthday Sunday evening, July 26 with an outdoor movie and festivities at the Wiehle-Reston East stop.

“Wiehle-Reston East continues to be the Silver Line’s commuting powerhouse, surpassing first-year ridership projections with nearly 9,200 boardings, or 18,400 weekday



PHOTOS BY CAROLINE WATKINS/THE CONNECTION

Walking to Tysons Corner Metro via Skybridge.

entries and exits last month,” said Mike Tolbert, public information officer with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

Silver Line has been a positive and exciting addition to Reston and the area, in general,” said Sridhar Ganesan, president of the Reston Citizens Association.

“Even though Silver Line currently ends at Wiehle, which is at one end of Reston, we are still seeing a lot of people arriving to Reston during peak times,” he said. “Clearly, a positive impact is that this many people are off the roads and making it an easier commute.”

In addition to the 9,197 boardings at Reston’s station last month, McLean had 1,842 boardings; Tysons Corner, 3,423; Greensboro, 1,185; and Spring Hill 1,441, totaling 17,088, according to Tolbert.

“The other important note is that ridership patterns at the Tysons-area stations are more distributive than other Fairfax County stations, with afternoon peak ridership higher than other time periods, including the morning peak,” according to Tolbert.

Nearly 220,000 trips were taken to and from the five new Silver Line stations during the first week of service one year ago in 2014.

“It’s going to get a lot of people out of their cars,” said Dranesville Supervisor John Foust.

“I’ve heard from a lot of people that are using it,” he said. “It’s been a big success.”

**GREAT FALLS** resident Sherry Stanley Whitworth uses the Spring Hill station, the second stop on the Silver Line.

“It’s good for me, it’s good for my car, it’s good for the environment,” she said. “And it’s good for my stress level.”

“It’s kind of a new thing for me. It’s convenient,” she said. “It will be great when it goes all the way out to the airport.”

Silver Line is being constructed by the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, and will be operated by Metro once construction is completed.

“I have, in fact, used the Silver Line and find it an easy way to get downtown. Visitors have found it easy to use,” said Sally Horn, of McLean Citizens Association.

Tom Brock, of McLean and also on the citizens association, started using Metro 15 years ago, resolving to drive every weekday morning to East Falls Church or West Falls Church stations. Now he commutes to the McLean Station.

“It’s definitely improved the service of

“This helps us to become a major league city.”

— Jerry Gordon,  
President and CEO, Fairfax County  
Economic Development Authority

Metro to residents of McLean, even those with easier access to East and West Falls Church stations than I did,” said Brock.

Bill Canis, Great Falls Citizens Association vice president, commutes downtown with a carpool early weekday mornings, but his son Patrick Canis, 22, takes advantage of his own starting time.

Patrick Canis commutes to the Wiehle-Reston Station every morning on his way to Cogent in Foggy Bottom. He believes he saves up to 25 minutes of commuting by car each way to Falls Church like he had before.

“I like how easy it is, you get a smart card and it’s in and out,” said Canis, a 2014 graduate from the University of Mary Washington who majored in international affairs and studied geographic mapping systems.

“**THIS HELPS** us to become a major league city,” said Jerry Gordon, president and CEO of the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority.

Two large international corporations have made Tysons their home. Cvent, Inc., a cloud-based enterprise event management platform, and Intelsat, a multi-billion industry that is a provider of fixed satellite services.

“Had it not been for the Silver Line, they would not be in Tysons Corner,” said Gordon.

The Silver Line stops in Fairfax County’s largest business district (Tysons Corner) and in the county’s second-largest commercial center (Reston). The Silver Line has already had a big effect on business and workforce development and “changes are just beginning,” according to Alan Fogg of the Economic Development Authority.

“What’s already been realized is our abil

SEE SILVER LINE. PAGE 8



The Silver Line celebrated its first birthday Sunday evening, July 26 with an outdoor movie and festivities at the Wiehle-Reston East stop.



Metro leaving Tysons Corner stop.

PHOTOS BY CAROLINE WATKINS/THE CONNECTION

## Silver Line Birthday Celebrated

**“We want to be ready on day one.”**

— Lisa Merkel, Herndon Mayor

FROM PAGE 3

ity to retain and attract businesses,” said Gordon. “These are the corporations that every community wants ... technology driven, long term industries that are growing and high paying.”

Plans for the extension of the Silver Line to the airport will only enable the county to continue to attract more businesses, he said.

Without access to the airports on metro lines before, “They would say, ‘What kind of city is this?’” said Gordon.

Merkel called the Silver Line the “economic engine for the next 50 to 100 years.”

Herndon has more than 1,100 businesses and four corporate businesses with headquarters in town. Herndon anticipates attracting additional businesses and perhaps a campus or satellite campus in the future.

“We want to make sure we capitalize on this opportunity,” she said.

**ANXIETIES, OF COURSE,** are always produced by such a big project in the area.

“While the Silver Line has quickly ramped up to the averages of many of the stations within the metro area, the proposed funding formula creates anxieties for those that are forced to use the toll roads,” said Ganesan, of the Reston Citizens Association, “as the tolls are supposed to make up for revenue shortfalls to service the financing of Silver Line.”

Great Falls Citizens Association researched the importance of Metro to its members.

“Only 10 percent of Great Falls residents responded that they intend to use Metro regularly while another 56 percent plan to use Metro occasionally,” according to its 2014 survey that 592 residents completed.

According to the GFCFA transportation committee, “Unlike commercial areas (such as Tysons) that have immediate access to Metro, Great Falls will likely not benefit measurably from the Silver Line. Similarly, Great Falls will not benefit at all compared to communities such as Reston that have bus access from local neighborhoods to Metro.”

“While some Great Falls residents may benefit from the commuter parking lot(s) at the Wiehle-Reston East and McLean



Passengers departing Tysons Corner stop.

Metro stations, survey data suggest that commuter parking lots should not be built in Great Falls as relatively few residents of Great Falls would use them on a daily basis,” according to the committee.

“I have mixed feelings about Metro coming to this area because the cost of Metro is causing the tolls on the Dulles Toll Road to increase and when you raise the tolls it causes more cut through traffic to go through Great Falls,” said Scott Knight, co-chair of the GFCFA Transportation Committee.

“That’s a legitimate concern as toll rates go up to pay for Metro,” said Foust. “You have to expect that there will be less usage as people will be looking for alternatives.”

But Foust noted that he doesn’t think motorists will use Georgetown Pike for alternative purposes if the county keeps addressing Route 7 and keeps it flowing properly such as a widening project that has public information meetings scheduled for this fall.

According to the Airports Authority, toll rates will remain at current levels through 2018, and the previously published toll rate schedule will remain unchanged.

Revenue from tolls is one of several sources of funding for the Silver Line project.

McLean Citizens Association has been studying the impact of the Silver Line on McLean and on Tysons Corner, in terms of parking, traffic flow, and impact on house

values. The citizens association is even trying to determine if the Metro has had impact on crime at Tysons, McLean and in and around Silver Line stops.

The MCA Transportation Committee is staying aware of Metro’s plans and possible proposals to service changes on its crowded Blue Line that might impact commuters on the Silver Line used by McLean residents.

**NINE OUT OF TEN** times, Tom Brock of McLean, gets a seat. He liked to people watch when the Silver Line first opened, and he always carries a hardcover book on the Metro.

“I’ve gotten better at using my time on Metro better,” he said.

He has tried the downtown carpool, but “it was unpredictable because of a little thing called the Potomac River,” he said. “On good days it could take 25 minutes, but on really bad days it could take two and a half hours.”

Reliability is critical said Brock, former president of MCA and a member of the MCA Transportation Committee. “Delays people face on the Metro system isn’t good for Metro business,” he said.

Patrick Canis finds himself wanting better explanations than Metro gives when there are delays.

The Metro itself is expensive, noted Connie Hartke, of the Reston Citizens Association, who rides the line for fun, such as to soccer games in D.C. or Maryland plus

the opening ceremonies of the recent World Police and Fire Games.

“It is expensive, but probably no more so than driving and parking and it is so nice to relax on the way home rather than worry with getting safely out of a sports event parking lot and dealing with the beltway,” she said.

Whitworth notices that the drop off space at Spring Hill isn’t sufficient for eastbound traffic.

And Darlene Murphy found that a private parking lot is adjacent to the Metro lot that offers free Sunday parking.

“They trick you. It cost me \$10 to get out,” she said. Murphy was reimbursed by “a nice manager,” but she wants to alert others to the signs that she didn’t see.

“I bet this has happened to other people,” she said.

Back in McLean, Foust said he and his colleagues ensured that there would be sufficient parking when the Silver Line opened. The 711-space lot in McLean has plenty of space for those ready to try the Silver Line, he said.

**HERNDON WANTS** all details perfected by day one.

Herndon plans for 2,400 residential units and 3.1 million square feet of additional commercial space for business and retail use as well as a revitalized downtown.

And Herndon has planned vehicular traffic to stay on the south side of town by the Silver Line stop.

A year-long task force made recommendations to ensure residents to get to Metro easily. Approximately \$21 million is dedicated to projects resulting from the task force.

“We passed a resolution in February advocating for the county to put a Circulator Bus route for Phase II because we want our residents to get to the Metro without having to get in the car,” Merkel said. “If we have reliable, frequent transit options, people will use it.”

Merkel wants everything in place by the time the Silver Line’s doors open to Herndon in four or so years.

“People are going to establish their commuting patterns on that first day,” Merkel said. “We are working with Fairfax County because we do want to be ready on day one.”

# A View from Wiehle: D.C. Gets Closer

**Taking a train from Reston: Commuters express satisfaction and some criticism.**

BY MADDY WEINGAST  
THE CONNECTION

**C**lean, safe, on time ... Also: crowded, long wait time ... These are some of the mixed emotions coming to light in conversations with commuters reflecting on the one-year anniversary of the new Silver Line Metro operation. The line includes the following new stations: Wiehle-Reston East, Spring Hill, Greensboro, Tysons Corner and McLean, leading into the District and ending at Largo Town Center. Many locals use the new line to commute to work in Washington D.C.

"It's good to have a connecting station so close but it's always full. The commute to work in D.C. and Tysons is better than driving—to get to D.C. this is the option," said Metro commuter Swetha.

Commuters also credited the line with providing an atmosphere of safety.

"It's always on time and I'm able to get to work easily. Rarely are the trains delayed, and they are always clean. I've



**Passengers prepare to board the Silver Line train toward Largo Town Center, which runs through downtown D.C.**

never felt unsafe on the Silver Line, even late at night," said Adele Gibson from Great Falls.

Some suggestions for improvement in-



PHOTOS BY MADDY WEINGAST/THE CONNECTION

**In town for the week, visitor Annie Condoluci boards the metro to go visit museums on the National Mall.**

cluded increased signage and maps at the station and on the train especially for visitors so they are aware of upcoming stops.

In its one year of operation it appears the line is an efficient way for many visitors that

are unfamiliar to the area to travel into Washington, D.C.

"The metro was really fun and a lot cleaner than I thought it would be, but very crowded. It was really convenient to get to the museums in the District because there was no traffic and I would definitely ride it again when I come visit," said visitor Annie Condoluci from Brielle, N.J.

Despite an overall favorable impression some passengers expressed frustration with crowding and a lack of knowledge regarding train wait times.

"Around 5 o'clock the trains are pretty crowded and I normally have to stand for around 30 minutes for a seat, so more trains running on the line would be nice," said Gibson.

One commuter said many of her friends turned to ordering cars from the Uber app when faced with exorbitantly long wait times for a train.

"Lately I feel like the Metro has been worse. There's lots of track work, delays, it's crowded and less reliable. It seems like a systematic and political problem of not enough funding. The tri-state area of D.C., Virginia and Maryland need to collaborate and see it as a shared resource," said Metro Commuter Joy.

## 'Impressive' Change

**Commuters discuss conveniences of Silver Line.**

BY ALICJA JOHNSON  
THE CONNECTION

**J**uly 26 marked the first anniversary of the Metro's Silver Line opening. In the year since, the new rail has changed commuting for Fairfax County and the area. The Silver Line begins at the newly constructed Wiehle-Reston East Station and travels four stations including Tysons Corner and McLean before lining up with the Orange Line at East Falls Church and then continuing to Largo Town Center.

As Chris, a salesman in D.C. puts it, the new route is "more expensive, but consistent." Before the silver line was opened last year, Chris had to take a bus out to Falls Church every day. "Now, my commute to work is more consistent and streamlined," said Chris.

For commuters like Steven Shearer, the silver line provides less of a hassle than driving. "It's much easier for me," said Shearer, "the toll and parking in D.C. is more expensive [than the Silver Line.]" Having been commuting from Northern Virginia to D.C. for 17 years, Shearer has found the Silver Line to be a great convenience this past year.

Loudoun County is also now connected to the D.C. metro more conveniently, via the Loudoun County Transit. Commuters can catch a bus and run to one of the Silver Line stations, including Wiehle-Reston and Spring Hill. This has been revolutionary for Loudoun commuters like Sara Johnson. "I never thought 15 years ago, from Loudoun, you'd be able to commute [to D.C.]," said Johnson. Johnson has been commuting to D.C. twice a week for the past three years, and she has been very impressed with the Silver Line. "The fares seem reasonably priced given the expanse of the distance," said Johnson, "and the cleanliness is outstanding."

The Silver Line also offers connections to other bus systems. The Fairfax Connector serves the four stations in Tysons, as well as Wiehle-Reston. The Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission provides a connection from Tysons Corner to Prince William County. In addition, Washington Flyer will provide a Silver Line Express service between Dulles Airport and Wiehle-Reston East.

The Silver Line has been attracting more than commuters. Nineteen-year-old Molly McKnight and her brother, residents of the Herndon/Reston area, use the silver line to see museums and monuments in D.C.

Whether they be commuters or sightseers, the Silver Line travelers seem to be enjoying the new conveniences.



PHOTO BY CAROLINE WATKINS/THE CONNECTION

**The Silver Line stops in Fairfax County's largest business district (Tysons Corner) and in the county's second-largest commercial center (Reston).**



PHOTO BY ALICJA JOHNSON/THE CONNECTION

**Riders prepare to board a train to go sightseeing in D.C.**