

Prince William seeks federal funding of Route 1 revitalization in Woodbridge

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The plan to revitalize a blighted portion of Route 1 in Woodbridge is in place, thanks to a vote by the Prince William Board of County Supervisors in May, but now it's time to make it a reality, Supervisor Frank J. Principi (D-Woodbridge) said.

The first step: Lobby for federal transportation dollars.

On Wednesday, Principi, business leaders and residents in the north Woodbridge area will head to Capitol Hill to seek the \$17 million needed to widen Route 1 to six lanes from Occoquan Road to Annapolis Way. The widening, which will be followed with a planned Route 123 interchange, is needed to jump-start any redevelopment efforts along the Route 1 corridor, Principi and business leaders said.

"Any meaningful development can't happen until the transportation improvements are underway," said Joon Park, who owns the Station Plaza in Woodbridge and will join Principi on Wednesday. "We want to lend a voice to Mr. Principi to make the case that this really does need to be prioritized, and at this point, it's not going to happen without help from the federal government."

Principi said this week's trip to the District is just one of many steps that were triggered after the board's adoption of a redevelopment plan for 160 acres in north Woodbridge. The redevelopment is meant to bring jobs, amenities and transportation improvements to Woodbridge and create a pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use area with housing, businesses and offices. The plan, however, will remain only a vision without more effort.

"You have to put these baby steps in place to move the ball down the field five or 10 steps at a time," Principi said. "Addressing transportation is a key first step."

Principi said he will visit with House and Senate members Wednesday to lobby for federal funding for the road-widening project, which is scheduled for a Virginia Department of Transportation public hearing in November, along with the proposed interchange.

According to Principi's office, the project would cost \$83 million -- \$56 million for design and right-of-way acquisition and \$27 million for construction. Rep. Gerald E. Connolly (D-Va.) already secured \$584,000 for the widening part of the project and expects an additional \$500,000 to receive approval from the House and Senate soon. Principi said Connolly also recently requested \$8 million more in federal funds for the road widening.

"This is an important project for Prince William," Connolly said. "It is a bottleneck that needs to be corrected, and this [project] can solve a lot of problems."

Because transportation is key to the redevelopment, Principi said, he will continue exploring other options, including a proposed commuter ferry along the Potomac River to Washington and points in Maryland, including Indian Head and National Harbor. The feasibility study is complete, and Principi said he would host a regional meeting in September to discuss moving forward with a market analysis to determine costs and potential ridership.

In terms of development, the next steps are to come up with a streetscape design plan, generate interest in the Woodbridge area and determine possible ways to fund a redevelopment. Principi said that, in the fall, he will host a symposium for business people, residents and others to discuss various funding options, including public-private partnerships. Principi said there are several funding tools available.

"There are 52,000 people in the Woodbridge District, and they have said, 'Frank, revitalize the area, bring jobs,' " Principi said. "Now, we can. We just have to keep our eye on the ball."