

Business

Businesses back rail to Dulles

By Tom Ramstack
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The Washington Times Danny Vargas, chairman of the Dulles Regional Chamber of Commerce, was joined by area business leaders yesterday in announcing support for Virginia Gov. Tim Kaine's efforts to resuscitate plans for a Metrorail extension to Dulles.

Northern Virginia business leaders stood solidly behind Gov. Tim Kaine's pledge yesterday to complete a Metrorail extension to Washington Dulles International Airport, even if the state must change its plans to meet federal guidelines.

Virginia's "unshakeable goal ... is to make this project work and to do so in partnership with the federal government," Mr. Kaine said in a letter to U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary E. Peters.

Business leaders led by the Dulles Regional Chamber of Commerce yesterday produced a petition they plan to present to the Department of Transportation in support of a passenger rail line from Tysons Corner to Dulles.

The petition was signed by some of the region's biggest employers, including Northrop Grumman, AOL, Kaiser Permanente, Howard Hughes Medical Institute and George Washington University.

After Mr. Kaine delivered his letter to Mrs. Peters, Danny Vargas, chairman of the Dulles Chamber, said, "He did absolutely the right thing. This project is essential for citizens of the region. It's too important to not be willing to roll up our sleeves and make that happen."

The business group's petition was a response to statements from the Federal Transit Administration last week notifying the Virginia Department of Transportation that the Dulles rail project suffered too many financial and management problems to win federal funding.

Mr. Kaine's letter said Virginia transportation officials and their partners in the project were willing to cooperate with the FTA in revising the plan.

Jim Dinegar, chief executive officer of the Greater Washington Board of Trade, called the governor's letter "compelling."

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