

Business

Mr. Dinegar blamed the dispute over the project on misunderstandings between Virginia transportation officials, who believed the federal government supported their proposal, and FTA officials, who insist they pointed out shortcomings years ago.

"The mixed smoke signals have apparently been very problematic," he said. "I'm very glad that the governor and the [U.S.] secretary of Transportation will clear the air and sit down in a collaborative manner."

Mr. Dinegar joined Northern Virginia business leaders yesterday morning at a press conference in a Reston hotel to stress the economic importance of the Dulles rail project.

"Every day we experience the same headaches," said Kirk Forman, vice president of business development for Element H2O, a Chantilly bottled water distributor.

Traffic congestion slowed his company's deliveries to customers, raising costs of doing business. Now the company is faced with a choice of raising prices or shrinking its business to compensate for the costs of traffic congestion.

"We don't want to raise prices and cut jobs," Mr. Forman said.

John Wood, chief executive officer of Ashburn, Va., computer security company Telos Corp., said Northern Virginia's congestion is hurting his ability to retain talented employees.

"By and large, people are leaving because of the time it takes to get to work," Mr. Wood said.

Darren Lisse, chairman of Reston Hospital Center's emergency department, said he witnessed a fatal accident on Virginia Route 7 in which an ambulance was bottled up by traffic.

"We need this project to get cars off the road," Dr. Lisse said.

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