Silver Line Ridership Climbs in Tysons

Recent ridership numbers for Metro conjures thoughts of a line from the popular film *Field of Dreams*: “if you build it, they will come.”

The number of people boarding the Silver Line at the McLean and Greensboro stations in the heart of Tysons represents the biggest percentage increase in users of all stations in the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority’s system.

Ridership at the McLean Station along Route 123 has jumped 28 percent, primarily because of vast new office development and some retail at the Capitol One complex.

Those numbers will continue to rise with construction of Cityline’s massive mixed-use Scott’s Crossing development and other projects. In fact, Fairfax County is planning to push for a second entrance to that station to better serve pedestrians coming from nearby residential areas.

Ridership at the Greensboro Station along Route 7 near the Marshall’s shopping area is up 22 percent. One reason is the opening of new residential projects. The area around Greensboro Station is destined for even more growth with the recent opening of the Boro development nearby, which includes a brand new Whole Foods.

While contractors and Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority officials push forward to complete Phase 2 of the Silver Line which will connect the eastern edge of Reston to the Ashburn area, they are focusing on quality, safety and durability rather than a specific date for opening.

When construction is complete and passes a variety of tests to make sure it meets contract requirements and specifications set by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), the Airports Authority will transfer it to WMATA to operate as part of the regional transit system. A date...
for that switch has not been set.

One of the biggest challenges facing the project now is the complex connection to the existing WMATA system. This is taking place at the Wiehle-Reston East Station.

Charles Stark, the Airports Authority’s executive vice president and project director, says his organization is aware of the increasing public interest in the possible opening date. But he stressed that quality, safety and durability top his list of priorities. “Connecting the systems involves a combination of electrical and technical challenges involving multiple contractors.”

In addition, the Airports Authority continues to work with Capital Rail Constructors (Clark Construction and Keweit) to complete resolution of several issues with precast panels that are installed in five of the six rail stations along Phase 2. The Authority is confident that coating those panels with a protective sealant to prevent water from penetrating the panels will resolve those issues. However, WMATA has not yet accepted the results of the most recent tests of panels that have been coated and discussions between the two agencies are ongoing.

Also, a second contractor, Hensel-Phelps, is building a rail yard on more than 90 acres of Airports Authority land west of Dulles Airport. That construction faces several challenges including problems with rail car hoists, delays with the start of dynamic testing and quality of ballast in the track beds there.

On the brighter side, construction of 15 storm water ponds necessary for operation of the line is ahead of schedule, and plans for completing installation of a glass windscreen at the Dulles Airport Station are in the final stages.