Silver Line Phase 2 Anticipated Opening Date: Mid-Summer 2020

Now that the two major contractors building Phase 2 of the Silver Line missed their deadlines for substantial completion, project owner the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority has restudied the schedules from both contractors and performed a Monte Carlo statistical analysis to set a spring goal for construction completion. If met, Phase 2 could open to the public in mid-summer 2020.

Project Director Charles Stark said both contractors know what has to be done to make that happen, adding that he is confident that service date can be achieved if all parties work together during the next 10 to 12 months.

Capital Rail Constructors (CRC), led by Clark Construction, is building most of the system, including tracks, aerial guideways, support facilities and stations. Hensel Phelps is building the 90-acre rail yard and maintenance facility on property owned by the Airports Authority along Old Ox Road (Route 606).

Meanwhile, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) will have the final say about opening date after the Airports Authority transfers the rail project to that entity.

Both WMATA and the Airports Authority agree that much work remains even though motorists passing the six future rail stations might think the structures are ready. Among the outstanding issues are problems with track installations at track crossovers, ongoing concrete problems, installation of large equipment at the rail yard and repairs to tracks there, and completion of support facilities such as traction power substations that will control the necessary flow of power to the tracks.

Project officials continue to work with WMATA to complete multiple tests that must be done before the transfer. WMATA will perform additional tests after the transfer takes place before setting an opening date.

In addition, WMATA and the project team must complete complex connections to tie Phase 2 to Phase 1 at the Wiehle-Reston East Station, now the terminus of Phase 1.

Did you know that Phase 2 of the Silver Line which will run from the existing Wiehle-Reston East Metrorail Station through Washington Dulles International Airport to Ashburn, includes not only the rail, track, stations and a mega 90-acre rail yard but also dozens of facilities needed to operate the line.

Contractors also are building stormwater control ponds, traction power substations, train control equipment rooms and tie breaker stations spread throughout the corridor.

Here’s a list of those facilities:
- 29 Stormwater Best Management Practice ponds which will control and treat the water to rid it of pollutions before releasing into creeks and streams.
- 11 Traction Power Substations
- 11 Train Control Rooms
- 6 Tie Breaker Stations.

Left: Stormwater management pond under construction near Dulles Airport Metrorail Station. (Courtesy Phil DeLeon, DRPT)
Phase 2: A Focal Point Of Transportation

Construction of Phase 2 of the Silver Line is a huge economic boost for Northern Virginia and is the number one priority of several local transportation professionals who addressed a recent forum sponsored by the Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce.

Keynote speaker Ed Mortimer, vice president of Transportation and Infrastructure at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, came together with industry experts in Tysons, a short walk from the Tysons Corner Metrorail Station, to discuss Northern Virginia’s future role in transportation planning and infrastructure.

The panelists included:
- Virginia Secretary of Transportation Shannon Valentine
- Monica Backmon, executive director of the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority
- Mike Stewart, vice president and airport manager at Dulles International Airport

Throughout the discussion, Phase 2 of the Silver Line was billed as a major player in modernizing transportation across the region and making transit more accessible.

When asked about the Silver Line’s impact on Dulles International Airport, Stewart mentioned that public transit is always a selling point for airports and commuters.

The Phase 2 extension will connect Reagan National Airport with Dulles International Airport and Loudoun County, expanding the transit services available to travelers.

Rail transit also has economic benefits for the region as was demonstrated during the five years since the opening of Phase 1 of the Silver Line.

According to the Tysons Partnership, office space in Tysons has grown by more than 2 million square feet since the opening of Phase 1 in 2014. Transit-oriented mixed-use developments, such as Tysons II Lerner and The Boro being built along Phase 1, benefit from being near rail transit.

Phase 2 appears to be following that trend with new development underway along the rail alignment in the Dulles Corridor in Fairfax and Loudoun counties. These include Reston Crossing near the future Reston Town Center Metrorail Station and Loudoun Station near the future Ashburn Metrorail station.

Panelists were asked to define their number one priority project in Northern Virginia.

Both Mortimer and Stewart identified the opening of Phase 2 of the Silver Line as the key to regional transportation with the idea being to improve highways, transit and build new commitments around the six new stations.

The latest reports call for expectations of reaching substantial completion in April 2020. Then the extension will be turned over to the Washington Metropolitan Airports Authority. That agency will do additional testing before setting the date to begin revenue service.

Can You Guess?

1. How many rail ties are being used to build the Phase 2 Silver Line Project?

2. How many feet of rail are being used?

Answers provided by contractor Capital Rail Constructors (CRC).

Left: Rail ties on Phase 2 of the Silver Line. (Courtesy Charles Samuelson, Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority.)

There are approximately 56,000 rail ties. There are approximately 240,768 feet of track on Package A, which includes the stations and track.