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Funding boosts studies of bus, ferry service

Dan Genz, The Examiner

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WASHINGTON -

Prince William County won federal grants to begin studies of two long-discussed methods to help commuters reach the District of Columbia faster on or around congested Northern Virginia roads.

The county won a \$100,000 grant to study Bus Rapid Transit along U.S. Route 1 and a \$225,000 project to study a Potomac River commuter ferry from Woodbridge to downtown.

The studies could begin in a few months and it is not clear how soon bus or ferry access could be available to road-weary commuters, said Tom Blaser, Prince William County's transportation director.

The ferry study will examine the feasibility of routes from along the Prince William County Potomac River shore in Cherry Hill and Woodbridge to the Navy Yard.

"The route study will see if they can kind of guarantee they have a reliable service that can get you to Washington," Blaser said.

The bus study will examine ways to marry the existing commuter bus transit system with some of the elements of faster-moving bus traffic.

The study could include reserved lanes and new drop-off and pickup sites designed for speed and easier access.

The grant follows other efforts to study bus transit throughout the region, including a federally funded review of lanes along Interstate 66 that runs through western Prince William County.

Bus rapid transit can be "sort of a Metro for the suburbs," said Bill Vincent of Breakthrough Technologies Institute in Washington, especially in areas beyond Metrorail's reach. "I think there's huge opportunities for BRT in Northern Virginia ... The only option right now is to drive."

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