

# Local News

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## Funding Advances for Garage, Intercha

By ERIC M. WEISS  
Washington Post Staff Writer

A congressional subcommittee earmarked federal money for two key Prince William County transportation projects late last week, in a hopeful—but early—step in the federal funding scramble.

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Treasury and Independent Agencies approved Friday a spending package that includes \$1.5 million for a new parking ga-

rage at the Virginia Railway Express station in Old Town Manassas.

"If this sticks in the bill, hopefully we can get going," said Manassas City Manager Lawrence D. Hughes.

The funding measure now must be approved by the Appropriations Committee and then the full House, and go through a similar process in the Senate, before the money is guaranteed.

The bill passed Friday also includes \$1.75 million for improvements to the I-66/Route 29 interchange in Gainesville.

The legislation would complete the federal share of funding for the Manassas garage, said Dan Scandling, spokesman for U.S. Rep. Frank R. Wolf (R-Va.), a senior member of the subcommittee, who announced the approval.

Hughes said the inclusion of money for the parking garage is a hopeful sign in tough budget times and when spaces in Old Town are increasingly scarce because of the downtown's revitalization and skyrocketing VRE ridership.

The proposed 316-space garage would be built between Main and Battle streets south of

### A HOUSE DIVIDED

Linda Wheeler

## Bill Could Pave Road to Ruin For Battle Sites

**R**emember all the fuss about the proposed widening of Route 29 through the Manassas National Battlefield Park? It led to a standoff between Rep. Frank R. Wolf (R-Va.), who wanted to expand the road, and battlefield Superintendent Bob Sutton, who said his mission was to protect the park from just such intrusions.

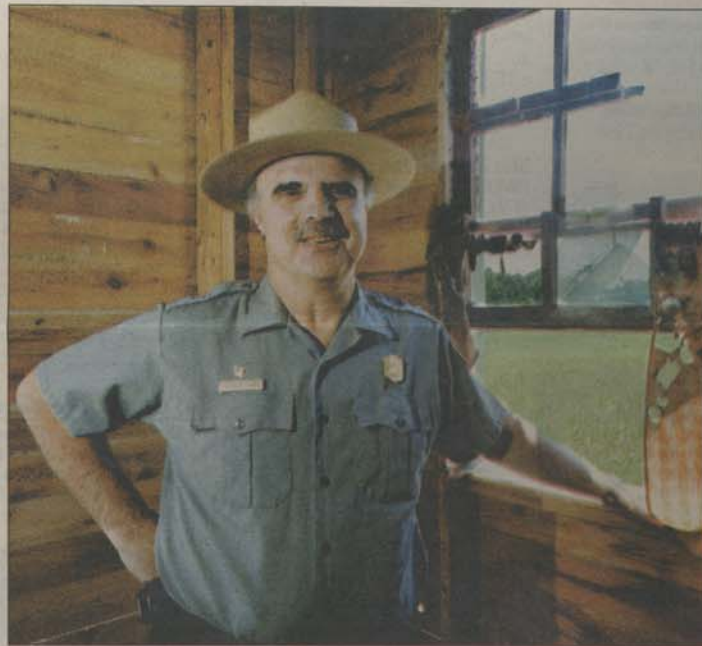
In the end, two turning lanes were added where Route 29 crosses Route 234.

It could have been a lot more complicated than that. There had been talk of doubling or tripling two-lane Route 29 so more commuters could hurry to work. What stalled all those larger plans, as well as prevented highways from being built through historic districts in Baltimore, New Orleans and other cities, was a provision in the 1966 Department of Transportation Act known simply as Section 4(f).

After years of public outrage at the federal government for building highways wherever it pleased, the Transportation Act provision was created to play the role of bulldog in protecting public parks, wildlife refuges, recreation areas and historic sites on federal and state land from government highways.

Section 4(f) requires the transportation secretary to consider every feasible and prudent alternative to placing a road or bridge where it harms public lands and, if there is no such alternative, then he is required to minimize any harm.

That protection will change if Congress passes pending legislation known as the Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act of 2003 (SAFETEA), part



BY LARRY MORRIS—THE WASHINGTON POST

Manassas Battlefield Superintendent Bob Sutton is worried that Congress might handicap historic preservation if it weakens a review requirement for federally funded roads.

of which would substantially weaken the protections of Section 4(f).

The bulldog would become a wimp.

Although much of Section 4(f)'s original language is retained, proposed additional provisions in SAFETEA direct the transportation secretary to "consider" any or all of five factors when making his decision. They include the relative significance of the resource being protected, the views of local officials on the project and the relative severity of the adverse effects to the site.

Citing just one of the factors would allow the secretary to decide in favor of the proposed project, according to Elizabeth Merritt, deputy counsel for the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

"He can just say he felt the property was not as significant as Mount Vernon or not the most significant building in the world," Merritt said. "He could say the local mayor wants this highway and decide on that basis."

Superintendent Sutton finds those possibilities "scary."

"I've invoked 4(f) a lot of times," he said, including the struggle with Wolf over widening the roads through the Manassas park.

Section 4(f) was also used to prevent West Virginia's Corridor H from marring Corrick's Ford battlefield near Parsons and might be used against a large residential

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