

Braddock Metro site a battle zone

By Patricia Camp

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Alexandria City Council member Donald C. Casey was president of the Rosemont Civic Association three years ago when he started fighting the location of a Metro transit station on East Braddock Road. He argued at the time that there had not been enough study of the station's possible adverse impact on the community.

Casey claimed the issue was decided by a method called "bootstrapping—first you locate the station, then you justify having it there."

But when Casey takes office today, along with two other new council members, he may be in a position to block the proposed Metro station. The station at Braddock Road is being built under a special use permit granted to Metro by the Alexandria City Council last year. Casey says he hopes to revoke Metro's permit, thus stopping construction on the station.

First, however, Alexandria will have to determine the answer to an important question: Does the city have the right to revoke the special use permit when Metro has already spent about \$1.5 million designing and preparing the project?

According to new City Attorney Cyril D. Calley, neither the plan for the station nor the special use

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Battle likely over Braddock Metro site

BRADDOCK, From Va. 1.

In a memorandum to the council, Calley said members probably would have to seek Metro's OK for any change in the already-approved Braddock station. The Metro board could decide to reject any changes and construct the system, Calley said. Calley also pointed to possible city liability for any costs that the Metro system might incur due to a delay in the completion of the project.

Peter Ciano, assistant general counsel for Metro, said he does not think that Alexandria has the authority to "pull back on a special use permit" at this late date. Ciano said Metro is prepared for a court fight over the issue, if necessary.

At this stage, Ciano said, it would probably cost "more money to delete the station than to put it in."

Earl Long, a Metro urban planner, said the Braddock station is regarded as "the best possible plan." He said Metro plans to advertise bids for construction soon.

"The propensity toward creating a Crystal City around that station is something Alexandria does not need to have hanging over its head," said Casey. "I'm not going to sit back and wring my hands and say the decision was made in the past. The decision was a mistake."

Casey has asked for a special city council meeting July 13 to consider the issue. He is hoping he can delay construction on the grounds that no federal environmental impact study was made of the station and its effect on the community.

Metro and some city officials contend, however, that a system-wide environmental report dealt extensively with the Braddock station and will satisfy legal requirements. Alexandria's department of planning and community development conducted a study of the impact of the station on the community, and concluded that "the negative impacts of the transit station are not significant in light of existing problems and trends...."

According to projections of minimum and maximum development in the area, the major negative impact would be

on parking and displacements of existing homes. No exact figures were given for the number of persons who possibly would be ousted from their homes, but planner George Colyer said that impact is minimal compared to expected development in the area without the Metro station.

The Braddock station, located where Braddock Road intersects with West and Madison streets is expected to draw its ridership from the town house community of Old Town, downtown Alexandria, the northern Potomac River waterfront area, and from several residential neighborhoods west of the north-south railroad tracts running through the city. One of the neighborhoods that would be affected is Rosemont, which is the home of Casey, Councilwoman Nora Lamborne, Councilwoman Ellen Pickering, City Manager Douglas Harman and Calley.

Mrs. Pickering, another new council member, said she has been against the location of the station since it was first proposed.

"It's destructive to neighborhoods and unnecessary," Mrs. Pickering said. She said she doesn't feel it is too late to relocate the station.

"I'm sure the Metro people are reasonable in view of budget restraints," Mrs. Pickering said. "It will not be a difficult thing for them to take the drawings and put them in a drawer for several more years."

Of the other members on the seven-member council, incumbents Nicholas Colasanto and Nora Lamborne last year voted against the special permit for the Braddock station.

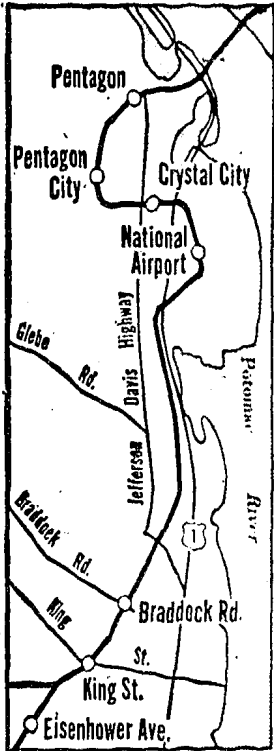
Mrs. Lamborne said she still believes more study of the station's impact is needed. Colasanto, however, said he has an open mind about locating the station and is not sure how he would vote. He said his concern is whether the city can afford this station. "I'm not sure if we can do without it if we're going to end up paying for it anyway."

New mayor Frank Mann and councilman Robert Calhoun could not be reached for comment, but both have indicated in the past that they still have open minds about the controversial station.

Some residents who live near the proposed station argue that it would adversely affect the seventh and eighth grade schools in the area, noise and air pollution, traffic, and parking, as well as force the dislocation of residents.

The Braddock Road station is one of four currently proposed for Alexandria. City Councilwoman Beverly Biedler has supported the location of the station in the past and still says she is solidly behind it.

Mrs. Biedler, who also will be on the new council, said she feels the environmental impact has been studied adequately and that the station is necessary to relieve congestion at the nearby proposed King Street Metro station.



—The Washington Post