



COALITION FOR SMARTER GROWTH

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Testimony to the Planning Commission Tysons Corner Committee on Financing Transportation Improvements

Stewart Schwartz, Executive Director

My thanks to the Planning Commission for the opportunities you have created for public input in the planning process for Tysons Corner. The public can often identify issues and questions and make recommendations that are helpful to decision makers. I thank you too for your dedication and your stamina!

Benefits of Tysons Corner Plan:

I will start with some general observations on the economic and fiscal benefits of the Tysons Corner plan:

First let me note that transit-oriented development can generate significant tax benefits for Fairfax as demonstrated by the Arlington experience. Arlington's two Metro corridors occupy just 11 percent of their land and generate something like 50% of their property tax base, generating revenues that have supported improvements in neighborhoods across Arlington -- recreation centers, traffic calming, parks and schools.

Second, compact, transit-oriented development is efficient in terms of infrastructure as compared to low density suburban and rural development. For most public utilities, your infrastructure can serve more people or units per linear mile at lower per unit cost. This can be seen in roads, water, sewer, and electrical service. I believe Dominion Power, in the event of widespread storm outages like we recently experienced, may even prioritize fixing service first in the areas where the most people will be brought back on line by a repair. Even police and fire service can be more efficient. One study has shown that fewer fire stations are needed to serve areas with a well-interconnected and compact street network and that response times are quicker than with suburban development, which is reliant on just a few arterials.

Third, TOD in Tysons Corner and the Tysons plan help the region deal with population growth, by reducing the amount of regional traffic that will be generated -- because these new or relocating residents will take fewer car trips and drive fewer miles than residents of more suburban areas. At the same time, with population growth, the best place for Fairfax to absorb that growth and prevent development pressures on existing suburban neighborhoods is in the commercial centers and corridors of the county.

Fourth, changing demographics and market demand are leading to significantly increased demand to live in urban, walkable and transit-accessible environments. The demand is coming from young professionals, empty nesters and retirees looking for these communities. At the same time, in recognition of the high cost of transportation, people of many income levels are looking to lower their transportation costs by living close to work and transit.

Reviewing the Transportation Project Package:

My second set of observations regards the package of transportation improvements. I haven't reviewed Table 7 recently but have long thought that there may be more arterial road expansion in the plan than will be necessary as the benefits of TOD become apparent and people shift their mode of transportation. In addition, it may be that some projects should not be assigned just to Tysons Corner, but are more regional in nature and should be funded through the regional and state plans.

State of Virginia Should Step Up and Set Better Priorities:

My main point tonight, however, relates to the role of the State of Virginia. Tysons Corner is a primary economic engine for Northern Virginia and the state. The state should be playing a much greater role in the funding of both Dulles Rail and Tysons Corner transportation needs. The state should be focusing transportation investments on addressing existing congestion and in supporting existing communities and efficient redevelopment.

We believe the state is currently setting the wrong priorities and failing to support Fairfax and other urban and older suburban areas like they should. Let me start with Dulles Rail. The state is only paying about \$250 million toward Phase I and has only tentatively said they will pay \$150 million toward Phase 2. They are paying 5 percent or less of the cost of Dulles Rail. Fairfax and Loudoun landowners and drivers from northern Virginia are paying the vast majority of the cost of Dulles Rail. For comparison, on highway projects the Federal government pays 80 percent and the state 20 percent. Local communities are not required to contribute. We have called on the state to allocate \$500 million to Phase 2, a number that we arrived at independently of MWAA's recent request for the same amount.

The state is in the process of borrowing \$3 billion as part of the addition of nearly \$4 billion to the other existing funding streams going into the Six Year Plan. A record \$1.5 billion of this is directed to a new Public Private Transportation Act fund projects, but not all of this money is allocated in the Six Year Plan. Tysons Corner certainly involves a public-private partnership to fund transportation improvements and should share in this additional state funding.

Yet, where is the state proposing to spend most of its new funds -- especially the PPTA funds? In areas of the state where the need hasn't been demonstrated. A few examples:

Route 460: This new, limited-access highway is proposed to run from Suffolk to Petersburg

parallel to an existing highway that serves its limited traffic volumes very well. The current highway only faces delays at a few traffic lights in four small crossroads towns. It could use safety improvements, but this could be done at far less than the nearly \$800 million in state funds requested by Cintra, the leading contender for the PPTA contract.

Coalfields Expressway: This highway, proposed for two of the most rural and mountainous parts of southwest Virginia would consume hundreds of millions of dollars, mainly to benefit a coal companies, but certainly not to carry significant volumes of traffic.

TriCounty Parkway (Outer Beltway): This controversial road could cost between \$250 million and \$475 million based on various VDOT documents and is being strongly promoted by Secretary of Transportation Connaughton. Yet, it has been shown that it doesn't address the primary traffic problem of east-west commuting on roads like I-66 and Route 50.

Charlottesville Western Bypass: Secretary Connaughton revived this controversial highway in a matter of a few weeks and just a month after the Six Year Plan was passed, he amended it to divert \$230 million to the project (and two other interchanges) despite widespread local opposition and serious questions about its route and benefits. To do this he allocated \$70 million in state CPR bonds (from the 2007 bond package) and about \$160 million in Federal Minimum Guarantee funds (representing the entire balance in this account, which we have been told was used for project study costs around the state).

In a related issue, our research through MWAA and Dulles Rail records indicates that MWAA may be diverting up to \$34 million in Dulles Toll Road revenues to Route 606 on the backside of Dulles Airport. We do not believe that the transfer agreements authorize this and do not believe that Fairfax County supports this diversion. It is not a large amount compared to the rail project costs but it is being taken out of toll revenues at a time when people are concerned about the proposed increased in toll rates. Decisions about where to allocate future toll revenues beyond what are need for debt service on the rail project, should be made in a public process with full agreement by Fairfax County and other relevant local jurisdictions.

RECOMMENDATION:

We recommend that the Planning Commission include strong recommendations to the Board of Supervisors for the commitment of state resources to both Dulles Rail and Tysons Corner transportation improvements. We'll also note that Reston area access studies have shown the need for significant bus, bike, and pedestrian improvements.

Instead of funding projects in areas of the state where the need hasn't been demonstrated, the State of Virginia and VDOT in particular should be addressing the needs of existing communities facing major congestion and redevelopment needs. They should be providing at least \$500 million to Dulles Rail Phase 2 and should make a major contribution to the transit, road and bike/ped needs of Tysons Corner and the other future rail stations. Thank you.