



COALITION FOR SMARTER GROWTH

Comments on the Draft Tysons Corner Comprehensive Plan

April 21, 2010

We thank the Planning Commission, staff, Task Force, and civic participants who have worked so hard on this plan. We generally support the plan but urge you to be bolder. You must ensure that you have the density you need to achieve the community benefits, so essential for making Tysons Corner work as a vibrant, transit-oriented, walkable and green community. In addition to the 116 million square feet, there should be density allocated to the linear transit circulator corridors (perhaps phased after certain levels of TOD station density are met) to ensure that the community benefits can be realized in the non-TOD areas, particularly the grid of streets and stream restoration.

Key priority fixes are needed to the transportation infrastructure:

- Bus Rapid Transit for I-66 and I-95 should not be “post-2020” but accelerated to be complete by 2020 at the latest. This is particularly true given the recent award of Bus Priority Corridor funding by the federal government and the strong bi-partisan interest in I-66 BRT.
- Dedicated bus or LRT transit lanes should also be provided by 2020 on Route 7, Route 123, and Gallows, for the same reasons as above, and because these are essential for addressing the all-important need for transit access into-and-out-of Tysons Corner, while minimizing vehicle trips on surrounding roadways.
- The Route 7, Route 123, and International Drive 8-lane designs must still be fixed to shorten crossing distances, improve pedestrian safety and avoid having the roads become a barrier splitting Tysons into disconnected neighborhoods. Off-peak parallel parking might be appropriate.
- The Avenue without median street-cross section should be discarded.
- Additional bike connections are needed into Tysons Corner from surrounding neighborhoods, particularly from the north/Dulles Toll Road side.
- One of the two major rail transit lines should be labeled the Purple Line -- the circumferential line that could connect Tysons Corner to the Red Line corridor, and to points near the Beltway within Fairfax.

In terms of intensity and phasing, we are not yet convinced by Alternative 3A, and continue to favor Alternative 1, although we think incentives for residential such as no phasing cap and 3:1 conversion bonuses should be included. The best overall approach, in our view, to addressing traffic and growth within Tysons Corner is a strong implementation entity reporting to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, overseeing a robust and performance driven Traffic Demand Management plan. Much like the Stanford University/Palo Alto agreement, we need a signed commitment to meet traffic

management goals. Doing so will ensure creative and expanding application of TDM strategies while the density is increased. TDM measures should be implemented early and comprehensively, and incentives should be included to incorporate pre-existing buildings and tenants in the programs. Performance measures should not just include vehicle measures of service, but transit/walk/bike/carpool/telecommute mode shares, parking performance, and other measures. Proffer agreements should include commitment to the area-wide TDM plan and specific TDM measures.

As we mentioned in our March testimony, the transportation modeling is very good but may also understate the potential increase in non-auto mode shares over time. In particular, the forecasts are based on current forecasts of the location of development in the region, and do not factor in the potential for a significant expansion of a network of transit-oriented, mixed-use communities that would generate more transit trips overall. At the same time, demographic changes will magnify the demand to live in transit accessible, walkable communities. The combination of rising energy prices, parking pricing and congestion pricing should also increase the share of non-SOV trips.

Turning to the funding of transportation projects for Tysons Corner, it's important to repeat that many of the projects support other areas and needs besides Tysons Corner and provide overall regional benefits. It is also clear that the State of Virginia needs to rethink its own priorities and place a focus on supporting existing communities within metropolitan areas. It is of significant concern that Route 460 through empty farmland in southside and the Western Bypass are now being mentioned as top regional priorities. Neither comes close to being needed and would divert up to \$4 billion in resources from other needs. The development in Tysons Corner, which would generate far fewer vehicle trips per capita and per square foot, includes a significant share of development that would not occur elsewhere, saving infrastructure funds in other locations.

We hope that strong commitments to affordable housing can be maintained but strongly agree that there should be a level playing field for key requirements in the areas of affordable housing, parking policy, stormwater, etc. -- particularly for all commercial areas of the county. We understand the higher costs of concrete and steel high-rise construction, and support enough flexibility in terms of off-site provision of affordable housing. For example, high-rise might meet the 80-120% AMI requirements, while off-site 4-5 story stick-built in the Tysons Corner circulator areas could meet the 80% and below needs.

In terms of urban design, we continue to support Form-Based Codes for Tysons Corner. But at a minimum, the street-cross sections and the urban design chapter should show build-to lines and not just minimum setbacks -- to ensure that the streets and sidewalks achieve an urban feel. The second-story plaza designs should also be discouraged in order to keep as much activity on the street-level as possible. The street cross-sections, which with the exception of the "boulevards" are very good, should also include "green street" examples -- sidewalk stormwater retention, etc. The proposed combination of rezoning and site plans is also a good idea.

In summary, we urge you to be BOLD. You must approve sufficient density and create the right incentives (including level playing field for commercial areas regarding key policies like affordable housing, parking, stormwater, etc.) to ensure that you obtain the community benefits essential for making Tysons Corner work. You should create a strong implementation entity and transportation demand management program from the outset and create the incentive for developers to meet the TDM goals while progressing to the density goals. This should be a greater focus than some of the overly complex intensity and phasing in option 3A. Thank you.