

Submitted @
public hearing
by Colin Mills

**Prepared Statement to
The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
On the Draft Reston Master Plan
By Colin Mills, President, Reston Citizens Association
January 28, 2014**

Good evening. My name is Colin Mills, and I am president of the Reston Citizens Association. RCA has participated on the Task Force review of the Comprehensive Plan since its beginning in 2009. In that time, in addition to attending every meeting, we submitted over a dozen papers to the Task Force containing detailed analysis and recommendations, and we submitted many comments as the draft plan progressed.

RCA is a staunch supporter of the Silver Line; like most Restonians, we eagerly await the opening of the Wiehle station later this year. And we believe that if the development around the Silver Line stations is done right, it can enhance Reston and help ensure that we remain a thriving, attractive community for decades to come.

Unfortunately, we believe that the plan before you falls short in several key areas. I'm here tonight to discuss the ways that RCA believes the draft plan should be strengthened to sustain Reston's values and quality of life.

One of our greatest concerns is transportation. The Dulles Toll Road corridor is Reston's biggest transportation bottleneck; it divides our community in half and is the source of our greatest traffic jams. The Silver Line will bring a lot of traffic to our community, and careful planning is needed to avoid gridlock on our streets.

The Rosslyn-Ballston corridor has been cited as a model for Reston to follow; traffic in that area has actually improved over time as development has occurred. Unfortunately, the County Department of Transportation's modeling suggests that won't be true for Reston; our traffic is projected to get worse — in some cases, much worse — if the plan goes forward as written.

The models show that we'd face average delays of up to 5 minutes per intersection around the stations. String several of those intersections in a row and add in spillover effects, and the Toll Road turns into a virtual wall between north and south Reston during rush hour. That level of gridlock just isn't acceptable.

Another of the plan's shortcomings concerns athletic fields. The development near the stations will bring over 35,000 new residents to Reston. Those residents need places to play: not just pocket parks and playgrounds, but athletic fields as well. The plan calls for only 3 fields to be built in the transit areas. There aren't any fields there now, and the Park Authority says the new residents will demand the equivalent of 12 new full-size turfed and lighted fields.

So if they need 12 fields, and the station areas will have only 3, where will the rest of the demand go? Into the rest of Reston. The Park Authority expects that existing Reston fields will be turfed and lighted

in order to meet the demand. But the plan is silent on where these enhanced fields should go. Reston's existing fields are well-used, and many are paid for by us through RA assessment dollars. We believe that the fields serving the transit areas should be located within the corridor or at least within walking distance.

Our last major area of concern is implementation. Here, we're not concerned about what's in the plan, but rather, what isn't there. The plan's language is important, but it must be paired with guidance about how to achieve the goals and objectives laid out, and how to ensure that the plan's constraints are followed. RCA produced a paper on this subject, and its title has become a mantra for us throughout this process. That title: "Planning Without Implementation Is Empty."

Implementation is where the rubber meets the road. If the desired placemaking and transformation of the Toll Road corridor is going to happen, implementation will be a vital piece of that. If this vision fails, or if the development comes at the cost of Reston's quality of life, our citizens will look to our elected officials for blame. It's in everyone's best interest that we get this right.

We are thankful to Commissioner de la Fe for recognizing the importance of this issue in his follow-on motion regarding transportation funding. RCA and others stressed transportation funding as a key issue unaddressed by the draft plan. It is essential for turning our vision of the station areas into reality.

However, transportation funding is only one piece of the implementation puzzle, and Restonians are anxious to know how the whole puzzle will come together. If the plan doesn't call for the creation of a separate implementation entity, as the Tysons plan did, then we need follow-up to determine how implementation questions will be addressed, how Reston's citizens will have input, and who will ultimately be responsible. If implementation isn't someone's responsibility, it's no one's responsibility. We can't let that happen in Reston.

Also, speaking of funding, we do not support another special tax district on existing Restonians to fund transportation or other corridor-related improvements. The rest of Reston shouldn't foot the bill for the infrastructure that the transit areas need.

We've come a long way in developing a vision for transforming Reston and the areas around the future stations, but our work is not done. The plan still falls short in key areas – especially transportation, parks and rec, and implementation – and that runs the risk of preventing Reston from growing and thriving in the future. We urge the Board of Supervisors to ensure that these shortcomings are addressed before approving the draft Comprehensive Plan. Thank you for your time and attention.