



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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DAVID S. EKERN, P.E.  
COMMISSIONER

July 13, 2007

Mr. Clark Tyler, Chairman  
Mr. Keith S. Turner, Member  
Tysons Land Use Task Force  
Tysons Corner Special Study  
c/o Fairfax County Department of Planning and Zoning  
12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 730  
Fairfax, VA 22035-5505

Dear Mr. Tyler and Mr. Turner:

Commissioner Ekern has asked me to thank you for and respond to your letter offering suggestions on how the Department might enhance the proposed development of Tysons Corner.

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is fully committed to accommodating bicycle and pedestrian travel around and through the new Tysons Corner. The Commonwealth Transportation Board directed us to integrate accommodations for these modes into all our projects through its policy adopted in March, 2004. Further, we share your vision that Tysons Corner, the region's economic engine, should become the "urban center" for Fairfax County. Clearly, it needs to be served by a multi-modal transportation network to support the mixture of uses that you envision and to require less dependence on auto use.

We very much appreciate the work you and the members of the Task Force have done to identify changes that are needed in the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan to align future zoning and permitted land uses in Tysons with your vision of a more pedestrian-friendly and livable community. VDOT designers already use context sensitive design to ensure that we serve the needs of all the local stakeholders as best we can. Design and planning staff met with you and Fairfax County staff last April to discuss development of urban design standards and principles for the Tysons redevelopment, and we will continue to work with you toward that end. We will gladly review any design standard changes that are proposed.

The design of the future Route 7, as co-located with Dulles Rail, has been examined in detail as part of the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) Dulles Rail project. The final report on the analysis of Route 7 was published on March 29, 2007 (see [www.dullesmetro.com](http://www.dullesmetro.com)). Fairfax County and VDOT provided design comments to DRPT to help ensure safety and to balance the needs of diverse users of Route 7. The proposed design is consistent with both the current version of the Fairfax County Transportation Plan and the locally-adopted TransAction 2030 Plan, both of which envision an eight-lane road. The proposed Route 7 design, which includes sidewalks on each side of the road and rail in the median, was developed following a "context sensitive solution" approach that incorporates Fairfax

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County's vision. There are more discussions ahead. I certainly encourage you to share your thoughts and concerns about the future of Route 7 with the rail project leadership and with officials at the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA). The Commonwealth and MWAA recently signed an agreement giving MWAA control of, and responsibility for, these projects.

VDOT will review the final design for improving Route 7, since we will have to certify to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) that the proposed transit use will not preclude future highway improvements or plans. Federal law requires such a certification before FHWA will grant permission to use the highway right-of-way for other use.

The grid system of streets that you propose can have significant benefits for pedestrian mobility and access as well as for vehicular circulation. Such changes raise significant and complex questions that still are being addressed by multiple public bodies in the context of the evolving land use and transportation plans for Tysons Corner. At this point, we likely will be able to support the grid concept in principle. However, because of Route's 7 role and function (a National Highway System road as well as a primary arterial used by both through and intra-Tysons traffic), we are not in a position to provide a commitment without the benefit of objective analysis (including review of modeling results).

We understand that your sub-consultant, Cambridge Systematics, is in the process of performing analyses of land use scenarios and the respective impacts to the transportation system. We trust that you will share the results of those analyses with VDOT and offer us the opportunity to review and comment on the methodology, assumptions and results. Such a submission and VDOT review are consistent with Chapter 527 of the 2006 Acts of Assembly, which added § 15.2-2222.1 to the Code of Virginia. That legislation establishes procedures by which localities submit proposals that significantly affect the state's transportation system, including updates to portions of the locality's Comprehensive Plan, to VDOT for review and comment. The statute intends to improve the coordination of land-use and transportation-planning decisions throughout Virginia by establishing standardized methodologies and procedures for analyzing transportation impacts and providing that information to citizens and policymakers.

We agree that utility re-location (normally one of the first phases of roadway relocation or improvement) should be coordinated so that it does not become a barrier to implementing a street grid system. It is our understanding that the rail project plans do include underground relocation of utilities. Fairfax County staff should share this proposed grid system information with the rail project team so that the team can work with appropriate utility companies to provide adequate utility line depths and protection, if necessary, at the likely locations of future grid streets.

As you know, VDOT has been monitoring and supporting the Tysons Land Use Task Force in its work to update Fairfax County's 1994 Comprehensive Plan and address transportation, including a pedestrian-friendly grid of streets. We have presented the Task Force with information on our context sensitive solution approach and about regional transportation management plans. We have participated in the public workshops and provided both county staff and Task Force consultants with data and analysis. We recognize that Tysons Corner, the economic engine for Northern Virginia, must grow into a regional urban center readily accessible to residents, workers, shoppers, and visitors in order to accommodate projected growth in both households and employees.

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The current adopted Cooperative Land Use Forecast for the metropolitan Washington region, for example, predicts dramatic increases between 2000 (3,850 households, 74,361 employees) and 2020 (10,484 households, 105,396 employees). VDOT understands that such growth will generate more trips in all modes – transit, cycle, walking and vehicles. Average daily traffic on Route 7 in Tysons is 69,000 vehicles today with 92,000 projected for 2020. These figures do not include the additional trips that would be generated by denser land uses being considered for Tysons Corner. To support all modes during the development of rail and the redevelopment of Tysons Corner, we will have to creatively balance the needs of all these users.

Please be assured that we will continue to coordinate our efforts fully with DRPT, MWAA, Fairfax County and your Task Force. We support rail to Dulles. We support public transit, passenger, service vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle uses of the Tysons Corner road and street network.

Thank you for your interest in improving our transportation network.

Sincerely,



Dennis C. Morrison  
District Administrator

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David S. Ekern, P.E.  
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