



TYSONS

LAND USE TASK FORCE

June 21, 2007

Mr. David S. Ekern, P.E.
Commissioner - Virginia Department of Transportation
1401 East Broad Street - Annex building
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Commissioner Ekern:

As you are aware, Fairfax County has spent the last two years engaged in an intensive urban planning exercise in an effort to redesign Tysons Corner into a true live-where-you-work, transit oriented, pedestrian oriented, mixed-use environment (with civic uses, parks, lower parking ratios, and a mix of housing types). Well-designed streets are essential to support this type of redevelopment and to ensure that the multi-billion dollar Metrorail investment is successful in maximizing transit ridership.

Over the past 40 years Tysons Corner has developed from cow pastures to the 12th largest central business district in America. Tysons Corner is the “urban center” for Fairfax County; it is our “downtown” and our economic engine, with an employment base of 110,000 that generated \$267 million in tax revenue last year alone. While Tysons Corner now functions more as a typical suburban office center, it has the opportunity to transform into the vital, vibrant urban center we have all been working towards – a Tysons Corner which has an appropriate mix of commercial office space, residential units and retail space – a Tysons Corner with efficient transit facilities, parks, open space, arts, community amenities, adequate public facilities, recreational opportunities and environmental enhancements – a Tysons Corner which is less dependent upon the automobile.

We are writing to solicit your commitment that VDOT will support new street configurations throughout Tysons Corner and the application of flexible, context sensitive design principles that will help ensure the development of a transit, pedestrian and bicycle oriented urban center. In this regard, we would like to request that VDOT attend a meeting with Fairfax County Department of Transportation, and the Transportation Demand Management / Transportation Subcommittee of the Tysons Land

Use Task Force to develop a new set of urban street guidelines for the VDOT facilities located within the Tysons Corner Urban Center located in Fairfax County. Further, we would like to ensure that the probability of an elevated Metrorail line in the median of Route 7 not preclude a boulevard-type design which could feature pedestrian and bicycle-walk/path ways, expanded landscaping and other non-auto oriented features. We would like to also add that the Tysons Land Use Task Force is in general support of the specific requests for accommodation made by the Coalition for Smarter Growth in their letter to you dated May 17, 2007 (attached).

We also believe that it is important that VDOT begin to plan for the inclusion of the new street grid soon to be included in the Comprehensive Plan, some of which has been designed in the revised development plans of some of the Tysons Corner landowners. Since a new street grid will most certainly be a prime recommendation of the Task Force, we would hate to see that even the planned movement of utility lines act as a barrier against their inclusion. We seek your commitment to review and include the final street grid, which will be in the revised Comprehensive Plan for the Tysons Corner Urban Center.

At the Tysons Land Use Task Force meeting on May 21, 2007, during a discussion of the VDOT Regional Transportation Management Plan (TMP), the Dulles Metrorail Project TMP, and the HOT Lanes TMP, it became apparent to the Task Force members that congestion problems may arise when the construction is ongoing for these large public infrastructure projects, especially as there will likely be multiple, private construction projects initiated within similar timeframes. We would like to request that the Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services, which regulates private sector construction, be integrated substantively into these efforts so that planning and communication can proactively prevent predictable complaints and concerns from area employers, employees and residents of the surrounding communities.

We would also like you to know that from the meetings that we held with employees of several major businesses in Tysons Corner, we have heard multiple complaints about signalization and the prolonged difficulty in exiting parking structures and gaining left turn access to key streets. This problem needs to be analyzed to alleviate rush hour back-ups.

The Tysons Land Use Task Force is now at the critical stage of developing specific recommendations, based on 26 months of citizen, stakeholder and Fairfax County input from our outreach events. We want to ensure that all of this thoughtful planning will not be constrained by any existing VDOT regulations or standards and we ask that you and your staff work with us to address all of these requests so we can develop the vital, vibrant Tysons Corner Urban Center we have all been working towards.