

## MCA Tysons Liaison Committee Report for April 2008

The Tysons Land Use Task Force (TLUTF), determined to complete its report by mid May, has greatly accelerated the pace of its activities.

The Task Force continues to ignore an essential part of its charter, which is to evaluate and minimize the impact on the surrounding communities. A year ago, the Task Force advised us that it would focus on only the internal roadway grid in Tysons, and would not investigate those areas outside of this limited area of its jurisdiction. Since January, MCA, the Town of Vienna and various citizens associations have requested that traffic studies be conducted of highways and intersections in the surrounding communities so that the impact of the Tysons development can be anticipated and hopefully alleviated. The three Supervisors representing Dranesville, Providence, and Hunter Mill Districts are committed to appropriating County funds to study the projected traffic congestion at a dozen intersections in McLean and elsewhere outside of Tysons. However, the Task Force advised that these traffic congestion studies will not be completed before the Task Force submits its final report and will not affect the Task Force's recommendations on development within Tysons. Task Force Chairman Clark Tyler declared at the last meeting that the Task force now has enough information to make its decisions and recommendations on the future growth of Tysons.

The MCA Tysons Liaison Committee considers such a rush to decision by the Task Force would be irresponsible and would not meet the intent of their charter and the needs of the county.

The foremost concern of the citizens of Fairfax County and McLean today, shown in several polls, is traffic congestion. Traffic congestion remains the primary focus of the MCA Liaison Committee.

How did this area get so congested? Currently Tysons has 45 million square feet of development which provides 108,000 jobs and 16,000 residents in Tysons. The current Comprehensive Plan for Tysons, adopted in 1994, would permit 74 million square feet of development, but only if the metro rail comes through Tysons and 18 additional traffic lanes were added to the highways and major arteries. So far, only six traffic lanes have been added. That imbalance between development and transportation infrastructure is the reason that we have traffic congestion today, not just within Tysons but spilling over into the surrounding communities, including McLean.

Many of us thought that one of the primary purposes of metro rail was to reduce congestion. Such traffic congestion would occur when Tysons residents and workers would take metro instead of driving in a Single Occupancy Vehicle.

But the Task Force consultants have ignored that objective and have shown instead that huge increases in development and density within Tysons will make the area only slightly more congested than would occur if the current Comprehensive Plan were built out as

planned. Such levels of congestion under the Comprehensive Plan would be intolerable, and we see no reason to accept the proposed increases in development and density.

Some examples show how unreasonable the Task Force consultants have been in reaching this conclusion of only slightly more congested than the current Comprehensive Plan (which they call “the Base Case.”):

- (1) The consultants show that with the most intense development of Prototype B, the commuting time for the drive from Route 123 to the toll road on International Drive will increase by only 4.7 minutes. What the consultants do not tell you is that the current drive on this congested segment of the road is 10 minutes. So this drive will be lengthened from 10 to 15 minutes, an increase of almost one half. More significantly, the consultants do not tell you that this drive is only 1.1 miles. Increasing this short drive to 15 minutes would mean that traffic is moving no faster than an average walker. Literally, you could walk this route faster than you can drive.
- (2) On February 11, the consultants reported its preliminary findings to the Task Force. They reported that with prototype B, the total of all daily trips would be 1.8 million. Yet the consultants report to the public, two weeks later on February 27 and 28, was that the total daily trips would be only 1.35 million. About 600,000 trips just disappeared. We have not received a credible explanation for this change.
- (3) The consultants show that for prototype B, 203,000 jobs will be in Tysons. But these 203,000 jobs produce only 280,000 “daily work trips” (slide 18). How can 203,000 people get to and from work with only 280,000 trips? The consultants show that with the current 35,500 workers within Tysons produce 120,000 “daily work trips.” That averages 3.1 trips per worker, which is similar to the data used by traffic engineers. The consultants have not provided any justification for their forecast on a sudden reduction in trips per worker under prototype B...
- (4) ??????????????The consultants show that with the Base case, the majority of the vehicles are SOV, but with Prototype B the people decide to ride HOV. We do not understand the rationale for this change.

Because of these questions and others, the MCA Liaison Committee has made repeated requests to the County for an opportunity to review the assumptions that have produced the traffic congestion forecasts, but no response has been received.

Our concerns go beyond traffic congestion to parks, schools, and sewer.

Regarding parks and recreational areas, both McLean and Vienna have a major shortage of athletic fields for soccer and baseball for our youth, and McLean Youth Athletics is making a major financial effort to convert the soccer fields to artificial turf, which permits much more use.

The Task Force has proposed that the County adopt a new “urban” standard for parks for Tysons, which effectively reduces the acreage per resident and worker to about one tenth of the current County standard requirement. Even with arbitrarily low standard, neither of Prototype A or B provide for enough parks for the projected increase in residents and workers of Tysons. With Prototype B, the Task Force is considering the addition of 84,000 more residents within Tysons but providing few, if any, large parks within Tysons that would provide athletic fields. The report by the Parks states that Tysons residents will use McLean parks:

“Existing nearby parks that serve Tysons include Spring Hill, Lewinsville, Lake Fairfax and Salona. These larger scale parks will be impacted by future residents and workers in Tysons.”

The MCA Liaison Committee urges that the Tysons plan include within the Tysons area, at least, all of the acreage for parks that the new “urban” park standard would require. Moreover, that the parks within Tysons include some large parks, big enough to provide athletic fields for the residents and workers of Tysons.

Regarding schools facilities, neighboring schools in McLean and Vienna are already crowded and have accommodated recent growth in students through mobile classrooms and trailers, which in no way are considered adequate. The Task Force has forecast that with Prototype B, Tysons will have 100,000 residents and only 3,897 of them will be school-aged children. The Task force has provided no explanation of why these residents will have so few children.

To accommodate these children, the Fairfax County Public Schools reported that the existing middle and high schools of McLean, Vienna, and Providence will absorb the middle and high school students of Tysons. Mclean High School will be substantially impacted. The report does not say how these new students will be accommodated, but mobile classrooms are very likely to be the response to the need for more classroom space.

Further, for elementary-age children, the Task Force and the Public Schools are considering “urban” schools where classrooms will be located on the lower floors of larger, taller commercial buildings. Meanwhile, the “suburban” schools of nearby McLean and Vienna beckon to the parents offering playgrounds and ample space. The districting battles will be intense.

The MCA Liaison Committee has asked our Board of Education Representative, Ms. Jane Strauss, to look into this issue in much more detail.

Regarding sewage capacity, the County reported that the potential development of Tysons can be accommodated only with major capital expenditures. The Task Force did not express concern about the cost, but neither did the Task Force determine that its

mission required that it address the issue of where these funds and tax dollars will come from.

The MCA Liaison Committee is working closely with the newly formed Greater Tysons Citizens Coalition (GTCC) which is made up of a dozen citizens associations in Fairfax County to give the surrounding communities a stronger voice in decisions being made regarding development and density in Tysons Corner. The three objectives of GTCC comply with views of MCA stated in our prior resolutions, namely:

- 1) Development must be appropriate to the infrastructure – including transit – that is actually in place or funded.
- 2) Developers must pay their fair share of costs of this infrastructure improvement. Capping developer contributions while leaving public funds and taxpayers liable for cost overruns is both unreasonable and unfair.
- 3) In contemplating increased development at Tysons, the impact on surrounding communities must be an integral part of the planning process, not an add on. Traffic is not the only impact to be measured; development will also affect the schools, parks, water/sewer systems, etc.

The GTCC has scheduled meetings with the Supervisors of the Dranesville, Providence and Hunter Mill Districts. The GTCC is also planning meetings with the members of the Board of Education about the impact of the Task Force’s projection of a six-fold increase in the number of residents in Tysons.

In summary, the MCA Liaison Committee is very concerned that the Task Force is determined to conclude its work and report without taking the time to consider several vital issues that are critical to whether its plan for the future of Tysons is viable. The MCA Liaison Committee is also very concerned that the process of the Task Force must be transparent and the Task Force must provide to the public basic information about how the forecasts of its consultants were developed. Without such basic information, the Task Force report will lack credibility and will not be accepted by the surrounding communities.

One member of the public commented at the February hearings: “This [Tysons development] is going to impact surrounding communities, don’t downplay it, plan for it.” We agree.

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