



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
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Board Matter

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Madam Chairman—anyone driving through our county this spring could be excused for wondering if the County is returning to its rural roots, given the height of the tall grass covering our VDOT medians.

It's not back to the future—it's the Virginia Department of Transportation's latest attempt to balance its budget by reducing its median maintenance to only three mowings during the growing season. A May 20 email sent to several board members by the VDOT (NOVA) Fairfax Maintenance Division stated "I expect that you will get a lot of complaints concerning the lack of mowing, but in an effort to save us all time, I would appreciate you informing your constituents of VDOT's mowing policy this year."

Not only is the state sidestepping its responsibilities, but it expects the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to assume VDOT's obligation to communicate with its residents. This reinforces a common misconception—that Fairfax County is responsible for state roads. Virtually, at every citizen meeting that I attend, I spend better than 50 percent of my speaking time answering questions and often complaints about these roads.

If VDOT believes that unkempt medians are no more than a cosmetic issue, then VDOT should be willing to state that upfront. Tall grass in the medians is more than an aesthetic issue. It's a safety issue not only because it blocks visibility, but also because drivers' attention may well be focused on what is not supposed to be there—tall waving grass—than what is. It sends the wrong message about our communities—unkempt public spaces invite unkempt private property and further diminish the property values of neighborhoods already hard hit by foreclosures and short sales. And most of all, it sends the message that the state is not functioning.

Madam Chairman—I believe it is important for this board to be on the formal record with our concerns about the lack of VDOT maintenance. I move that the Board of Supervisors send a letter to the Secretary of Transportation Pierce Homer, expressing its concern about VDOT's median maintenance and communication policies and that staff prepare that letter to be sent by the end of this month.