Statement of Rob Jackson, President, McLean Citizens Association to the Tysons Corner Committee, Fairfax County Planning Commission

I'm Rob Jackson, president of the McLean Citizens Association. First, I want to thank the Planning Commission and county staff for continuing to reach out to county residents in order to hear their views on the final proposal for Tysons Corner.

Next, I must correct a misimpression that is clouding the debate over re-planning Tysons. Some say the Task Force represented the views of the McLean Citizens Association. That is not true at all. Several MCA members did sit on the Task Force, but not as our representatives. The MCA was not asked to name or even recommend anyone for the Task Force.

The MCA, however, does appoint representatives to various outside entities, such as the McLean Planning Committee and the McLean Revitalization Corporation. We generally expect our appointees to use their own experience and judgment. However, we advise prospective appointees that, in the event our board has a position on an issue before the outside entity, we expect the appointees to vote in accordance with the MCA's established position. We would not appoint or retain anyone as our representative who would not agree to this important condition.

Thus, for example, if Task Force Chairman Tyler (or any other MCA member sitting on the Task Force) had been our representative to that entity, he would have agreed previously to take instruction from our board when given. Moreover, the MCA board would have certainly instructed Mr. Tyler to vote against the "Vision," which we continue to see as flawed and dangerous to the interests of McLean and Fairfax County.

The Vision was allowed to reach and exceed the point of transportation failure, and so does the final proposal before the Committee. We find transportation failure to be an unacceptable result.

Extensive studies by the county and its consultants clearly demonstrate that, even with rail, mixed-use development, and aggressive traffic demand management, single occupant vehicles will continue to be the primary means of transportation to, from, and around, Tysons Corner. And more density means higher traffic volumes. That is why the staff recommended enormous increases in roads to accommodate the expected surge in car and truck traffic. Indeed, the county has released information indicating the Dulles Toll Road would need to be expanded by three interchanges and five more traffic lanes, just for Tysons' density to increase by only one-third. Yet, despite these and other costly road expansions, the transportation network would fail once Tysons is built to 84 million square feet. That constitutes planning for failure. Moreover, as we all know, the final proposal before this Committee, 113 million square feet (before bonuses), would permit growth well beyond the point of transportation failure. That would be a dangerous result, harmful to everyone in Fairfax County.

Also, unlike the Route 28 corridor where commercial landowners are paying for 75% of the full costs for the transportation infrastructure in exchange for density increases, we have not seen "a single cent" actually committed by the Tysons landowners benefiting from increased density. Instead, we hear mumbles about creative financing, special districts, promises of massive new tax revenues and, of course, amenities. We do not want "amenities," but rather, adequate public facilities that are funded largely and directly by those landowners who will benefit from more density.

The final proposal is also objectionable because it ignores existing county policy, which, in turn, encourages individual landowners to do the same. For example, the county's TOD policy provides that density is to be concentrated within a "¼ mile radius from the station platform with density and intensity tapering to within a ½ mile radius from the station platform." Nevertheless, the final proposal measures distances from the station entrances, which extends density beyond where county policy would permit. Similarly, the same TOD policy expects workforce housing to be located "on-site or, if an alternative location can provide a substantially greater number of units, in adjacent areas within the TOD." Yet, the final proposal would seemingly permit workforce housing to be located outside the TOD, in areas beyond walking distance from rail. This defeats the goals of TOD and encourages more automobile traffic. What purpose do county policies serve when they can be ignored to the detriment of the public interest?

This "loose" attitude about existing conventions will encourage landowners to ignore policies that interfere with maximizing density. Indeed, this has already occurred with the Georgelas demonstration project. Despite the strong, repeated emphasis on the construction of a connected grid of streets, Exhibit C to the demonstration project filing shows unconnected, doglegged streets that will not provide the intended benefits, but will apparently permit larger buildings. For all the Task Force's talk about wanting to see its "Vision" implemented, it sure seems that it is "business as usual."

The county should approve further density at the four new rail stations, but only at the four stations, within the TOD areas, as defined by existing policy. There must be adequate public facilities added concomitantly with all new density, and those facilities must be funded largely and directly by those landowners who will benefit from more density. Triggers, as discussed in my December 2008 testimony to this Committee, must also be added to the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance. The county must not approve density levels that would result in transportation failure by assuming "miracles happen."

Thank you.

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