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Sally K. Horn
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Oral Testimony before the Planning Commission's Tysons Corner Committee
June 21, 2012

- I am Sally Horn, President of the McLean Citizens Association, or MCA. MCA is the informal town council for the McLean area of Fairfax County, an area comprising some 26,000 households.

- Let me begin by thanking the Commissioners and County staff for their very thoughtful and creative efforts to develop a financial plan that will work and that has the potential to ensure that the substantial transportation infrastructure costs associated with the approved densities for Tysons are equitably shared among all stakeholders. Yours has not been an easy task.

- There is much in the Strawman Recommendations to the Board on Certain Tysons-Related Activities that MCA can support.

- That said, we are concerned by the Strawman's relative lack of specificity regarding public sector costs. In this regard, we ask that the language in the Strawman be clarified and sharpened so that County taxpayers know the magnitude of the financial obligations and risks that Tysons' redevelopment will entail for them and so that they are better protected against uncertain and possibly unlimited financial obligations for infrastructure.

- Further, given the financial stakes involved for all Fairfax County taxpayers, we recommend a series of public meetings at convenient locations throughout the County prior to adoption of the financial plan. The meetings should be widely publicized to encourage maximum public participation and acceptance of the final financial plan.

- Since my time is limited, let me now turn to ten specific MCA recommendations for protecting Fairfax County taxpayers. I would refer you to my written statement for further detail.

- One, the Strawman should provide estimates, expressed in 2012 and 2050 dollars, of the financial burden that is expected to be borne by County taxpayers, and the kind of tax increases we may be facing. While Recommendation 16 calls for using County funding sources only "as a last resort," the reality is that state, federal and regional funding sources have not been available for transportation-related improvements for the last several years and may not be available in the nearer term when they will be needed most. Give us a best and worst case estimate, over the next five years, ten years, and planning horizon, including an estimate that assumes, as does Recommendation 16, that only County funding sources may be available to cover the $1.168 B in proposed public sector costs.

- Two, ensure that the County portion of the "public" share for the Tysons-related transportation infrastructure is fair and equitable. MCA's steadfast position continues to be that contribution of County taxpayers to Tysons infrastructure should be limited to no more than 25% of the total cost.

- Three, revise Recommendation 16 to state that: "County funding sources should not be used as the source of last resort for Tysons-wide Road improvements that are properly and historically a state or federal responsibility."
- Four, stipulate in the Strawman that, in the absence of alternative options to make up for any potential funding shortfalls, the pace of development must be adjusted. I refer you to my written statement for the specific language we would propose.

- Five, identify offsets so that the "public" funding burden is not increased by the proposal in Recommendation 19 to allocate 10% of the Service District funding to projects that more properly are considered neighborhood and access improvements. We are concerned that otherwise, sufficient funds would not be available to cover the private sector's share of the Tysons-wide Road Improvements.

- Six, to avoid any misunderstanding regarding the scope of both the private and public sector financial commitments, add language that states that both the private and public sectors would be expected to cover the entire cost (or their share, in the case of shared projects) of the projects with which they are associated in Table 7. This includes, but is not limited to, debt servicing, cost overruns and increases due to inflation. Further, while MCA strongly opposes setting caps, if caps are to be set, they need to apply to both developers/landowners and Fairfax County taxpayers so that funding sources are treated equitably.

- Seven, reject the Tysons Partnership caveats that would walk back existing commitments to County residents by: (1) establishing a prohibition on additions to the Table 7 inventory of required transportation infrastructure projects, and (2) calling for consideration of a reduction in "proffer requirements." County staff already has identified additional transportation projects that will be required to realize the commitment made to reduce traffic congestion – or at least not to make it worse. Follow-through on the proffers fulfills the pledges related to quality of life and traffic reduction made to the surrounding communities and helps offset non-transportation- related capital costs for the basic services required by the permitted density. Otherwise, development must be scaled back.

- Eight, establish parameters to govern the exercise of County bonding authorities to advance funds to the developer/landowner community for a portion of its transportation contribution. My written statement outlines key conditions that MCA believes should be put in place for this purpose.

- Nine, make the first recommendation regarding federal and state funding actionable, e.g., by identifying the projects that stakeholders should lobby for.

- Ten, work more aggressively with the private sector to find interim parking solutions – whether through tax or other incentives.

In conclusion, and as I indicated at the outset, MCA sees much to commend in the draft Strawman. We hope that you will consider our comments as they are intended: constructive reflections of our concerns and recommendations on how to strengthen the protections for the public and ensure a fair and equitable sharing of Tysons costs and benefits. And, we ask that you reflect our concerns in your markup and incorporate our recommendations into your submission to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.