

McLean Citizens Association



M c L e a n C i t i z e n s . o r g

May 15, 2012
via Email

Honorable Walter Alcorn
Chairman, Tysons Committee
Fairfax County Planning Commission
12000 Government Center Parkway
Fairfax, VA 22035

Re: Funding Tysons Infrastructure

Dear Walter:

On behalf of the Mclean Citizens Association (MCA), we want to express our thanks for the efforts that the Planning Commission's Tysons Committee (PCTC) and County staff are making to develop a fair and equitable plan for paying for the infrastructure required to urbanize Tysons Corner. We are writing to urge your continued focus on ensuring these substantial costs do not fall disproportionately upon Fairfax county taxpayers but are equitably shared among all stakeholders. Yours is a most complex and difficult task, and we are very grateful for your efforts.

We recently reviewed the publicly available information regarding the estimated capital costs for the four elements of the required transportation infrastructure – Tysons-wide transit improvements, the grid of streets, neighborhood and access improvements, and transit capital costs -- and the County staff's proposed apportionment of these costs between the private and public sectors. We are concerned that the methodology, which lumps all public costs (federal, state and local) together may well result in negative consequences for residents of Fairfax County.

As you know, since December 2010, the MCA has advocated for a cost-sharing formula that would limit the contribution of Fairfax County taxpayers to the development and construction of the required infrastructure to no more than 25% of the total infrastructure cost. This continues to be our steadfast position. Given the methodology for calculating contributions referenced above, we believe further amplification of our position is appropriate.

In this regard, and in order to protect County taxpayers, we respectfully request that the expected public contribution be disaggregated into three categories – Fairfax County, Virginia, and Federal. Further, we request that County staff and the PCTC include in their final proposal an option or options for funding in the event the hoped-for Virginia and Federal contributions do not materialize. Such an option or options must not, in our opinion, be built on the expectation that the burden on Fairfax County taxpayers would exceed 25% of the total cost of the infrastructure.

We understand that the Tysons landowner and developer community is pressing for a “fixed-sum, bottom line” on the funding that it would be required to provide, which translates into a dollar cap similar to the landowner/developer cap on contributions to the construction of Dulles rail. We strongly oppose setting any caps unless they apply to both landowners/developers and Fairfax County taxpayers. We are concerned that applying the “Metro-to-Dulles Fixed Dollar Contribution Financing Model” to Tysons would mean that Fairfax County taxpayers – much like the users of the Dulles Toll Road – could end up paying for any project cost overruns and/or financing costs or cost increases due to inflation that go beyond this cap. We are all aware of the serious problems Dulles Rail faces from the failure to protect Toll Road users.

Additionally, we strongly support your efforts to ensure that any formula for calculating the private contribution include inflation and debt service. We urge, however, that you also include a legally enforceable requirement that ensures the private sector also contribute its fair share to pay for any cost overruns. There are a number of options available to accomplish this goal, such as tying the rate for any special tax district(s) to actual capital costs or not “sun-setting” any special tax district until the private sector pro-rata share of any cost-overruns had been paid. If it is not possible to secure a legally-enforceable commitment from the private sector to share in the burden of any cost overruns, then we would advocate for limiting development to what the sum of all contributions, as currently calculated, can cover (the “phasing” option). Whatever approach is finally taken, it must ensure County taxpayers are not being required to shoulder this burden alone.

Finally, while we understand that you are under considerable pressure to finalize a plan for paying for the Tysons transportation infrastructure in the very near term, given pending rezoning applications, we ask that before you make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors, you schedule one or more public meetings to enable you to hear from the public, gauge its concerns, and consider whether any modifications might be in order. Any such meeting(s) should be widely publicized, so as to encourage public participation and acceptance of the final plan.

Walter Alcorn
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Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Rob Jackson in black ink.

Rob Jackson, President
McLean Citizens Association

Handwritten signature of Sally K. Horn in black ink on a light yellow background.

Sally Horn, President-elect
McLean Citizens Association

cc: Board of Supervisors
Planning Commissioners
Tony Griffin
Barbara Byron