



Coalition for Smarter Growth

Better Communities...Less Traffic

TESTIMONY REGARDING PROPOSED ROUTE 1 REDESIGN

The future of the Route 1 Corridor represents a clear choice between a wide commuter highway and a main street that would help revitalize communities along the corridor. We come down strongly in favor of the main street approach.

We recognize that VDOT has sought to provide pedestrian, transit and other benefits in its expansion project, but in the end, it is still proposing to build an 8-lane highway through the Fairfax portion and 6 lanes in Prince William. This will promote additional sprawl development to the south and significant increases in cut-through traffic. The sheer width of the highway – ten lanes with turn lanes at intersections, and proposed highway ramps, will continue to make pedestrian crossing hazardous. HOV lanes like those proposed are often later weakened or removed, as they were after VDOT widened Route 50 in Arlington. Other proposed amenities such as pedestrian safety improvements are often dropped due to budget cuts.

There is ample evidence that mixed-use walkable communities tied to transit are the best way to promote revitalization. We support an approach that puts light rail or bus rapid transit and pedestrian and bicycle improvements as the top transportation priority, even to the extent of converting an existing lane for bus priority use. The acres of parking lots and low density strip shopping in the corridor can be converted to mixed-use town centers – linking residential, retail, office, services and public institutions with a walkable grid of streets. In many areas, as shopping centers are replaced, parallel streets can be built to support local auto traffic and take pressure off of Route 1. Medium density nodes of development should be focused at primary rail or express bus stops. The focus must be on those who will walk or bike to the stations, not on huge park-and-ride lots.

We support maintaining the existing road as it is at 4 and 6 lanes, but with the addition of the wide median, some turn lanes, and provision for on-street bike lanes, which are safer than sidepaths. We support sidewalks on both sides of the highway instead of a sidewalk on one side and the hiker-biker trail on the other. Bus shelters should be located near crosswalks. Crosswalks should be provided at frequent intervals, not a half-mile apart.

For a safer and more livable urban boulevard, traffic speeds should be limited by posting lower speed limits, timing traffic lights to those speeds and narrowing lanes by one foot to 11 feet vice 12 feet. 12-feet is the standard for interstate highways. Narrower lanes will help to reduce the crossing distance for pedestrians.

The recent uproar over VDOT's proposal for the Route 1 intersection with Kings Highway is warranted. What the design shows is the antithesis of a pedestrian friendly environment, with its high-speed ramps, what looks to be a 10-lane wide section of Route 1, and intersections far too wide for safe pedestrian crossing. It would prevent the creation of a mixed-use town center. Instead of Old Town Alexandria, we would get yet another Baileys Crossroads or Seven Corners. We cannot

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even imagine the cost of just this one interchange. We should be maintaining at grade crossings for pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists.

We are submitting for the record, a distinguished lecture of 2001 to the Transportation Research Board, by Dan Burden, Director of Walkable Communities. This paper is a passionate call for change and for designs like those we mention in our testimony today. The paper and the www.walkable.org website contain guidance on boulevard and pedestrian friendly intersection designs.

In conclusion, we urge a community design charette on Route 1 and would request that Dan Burden or comparable expert be brought in to design Route 1 as a true Main Street and tool for revitalization. Thank you.