

We, the members of the Livability 22202 Route 1 Working Group, are submitting these additional comments in support of the March 15, 2021 Livability 22202 response to VDOT.

At-Grade Options: The Livability 22202 Route One Working Group opposes the proposed VDOT at-grade concepts presented at the March 3 meeting. These proposed concepts endanger pedestrians and cyclists crossing the highway, encourage frustrated Route 1 drivers to switch to our parallel side streets, and encourage more drivers to choose Route 1 as a faster option than I-395 when traffic backs up. These proposed concepts are the antithesis of County plans for its streets under its [Vision Zero](#) initiative.

At-Grade Route 1 at 15th Street:

The VDOT proposed concepts for an at-grade Route 1 at 15th do not meet the following VDOT project goals:

- **Multimodal accessibility and accommodations** are not improved, and **transit** would not be more accessible or convenient.
- The **environment** would not be improved, and the **urban fabric** would remain torn.
- A key part of the environmental goal is to provide additional land for new development. However, the proposed 9-lane at-grade design appears to provide only a limited amount of additional land.

We are most concerned that the VDOT proposed concepts do not meet the number one project goal of **safety** for current travelers and future travelers crossing at 15th: East-west bike-ped traffic at 15th will continue to grow, and we need to ensure the safety of these future travelers:

- 15th Street will be a key gateway for Amazon employees who take transit to Crystal City and then walk, bike, or scoot to the HQ2 campus.
- The Livability 22202 Open Space Working Group envisions a pedestrian-friendly greenway along 15th that will provide comfortable, convenient, inviting pathways between Virginia Highlands Park to the west and Long Bridge Park, the Mount Vernon Trail, and Roach’s Run access to the east.
- Children on both sides of Route 1 will need to cross Route 1 to attend a future new neighborhood school and park facilities.
- Neighbors will continue to cross Route 1 to visit the community center, public library, and commercial venues.

The proposed at-grade urban highway would put all of us at risk!

At-Grade Route 1 at 18th Street South:

An at-grade Route 1 at 18th Street South is unnecessary, unsafe for all modes, inconvenient for travelers on Route 1 and 18th Street, and challenging to build. Further, it does not support the Commonwealth’s commitment to Amazon to improve safety, accessibility, and the pedestrian experience crossing Route 1. Finally, bringing Route 1 down to grade at 18th does not support **any** of the VDOT project goals:

- **Safety for all travel modes:** Because Route 1 is currently above 18th Street, residents traveling on 18th are already safe. Whether we are walking, cycling, or driving, we currently have no conflict with Route 1 traffic at 18th. The at-grade concept creates a new intersection which greatly increases the potential for new conflicts with Route 1 drivers. Our decreased safety – and perception of decreased safety – may encourage residents to drive rather than walk and bike, creating more traffic and pollution in our neighborhood. The Pentagon City Planning Study traffic study shows that National Landing cannot continue to increase vehicular traffic – we need to increase the use of multimodal transportation, not decrease it.
- **Multimodal accessibility and accommodation:** Currently, crossing Route 1 at 18th is safe, easy to cross, convenient, and well-connected to desirable destinations in our neighborhood. The Livability 22202 and the VDOT survey of Route 1 use both show that crossing Route 1 at 18th is the preferred option for all modes, and HeatMaps confirm that pedestrians and cyclists prefer this route. But a new at-grade intersection at 18th will create a new barrier for all travelers on 18th, making multimodal travel less accessible and accommodating, because of increased wait and crossing times and decreased safety for all modes. Additionally, the planned growth in commercial and residential properties to the west of Route 1 in the walkshed for the Crystal City Metro station will result in a significant increase in pedestrian traffic across the at-grade intersection, as acknowledged by VDOT. This expected increase in pedestrian traffic would create significant safety or timing conflicts at a new at-grade intersection on 18th.
- **Transit effectiveness:** Many 22202 residents choose to live in our neighborhood because of our extraordinary transit options. We rely on the Crystal City [Multimodal Center](#), located along Bell and 18th, for access to the Metro and many bus lines. Many of us enjoy a car-free or car-light lifestyle because of this excellent, convenient transit infrastructure. Currently, we can safely access transit by traveling under Route 1 at 18th and at 15th. We would lose safe access if Route 1 is brought down to grade, and the existing bus stations and bus routes along 18th would need to be relocated. Transit will be less accessible and convenient for visitors, workers, and residents.
- **Vehicular operations:** The VDOT “no build” analysis for 2040 shows that existing 18th Street intersections continue to operate with acceptable delays. Throughput traffic on Route 1 above 18th Street is not impacted by the traffic on 18th, and vice versa. However, an at-grade Route 1 at 18th grade will slow Route 1 traffic throughput because of the new traffic signals, pedestrian walk times required for safety, and resulting delays for Route 1 traffic. Local traffic congestion may grow, as the distances between Eads, Route 1, and Bell are relatively short and drivers frustrated by traffic jams on Route 1 may take to local parallel streets.
- **Environmental:** The VDOT existing conditions analysis indicates that building an at-grade Route 1 at 18th is challenging, disruptive, and expensive. The space around Route 1 is more constrained than at 15th and at 20th, and existing infrastructure and utilities create additional barriers unique to this at-grade conversion. Because the space around 18th and Route 1 is constrained and the management of existing infrastructure and utilities must be considered, project staff may find

that little buildable land is available for future development. Space constraints may prevent adding more green space to the area as well.

- **Urban Fabric:** Given the space constraints around 18th Street, making an at-grade Route 1 at 18th into a beautiful, multimodal urban boulevard will be challenging at best. A new at-grade intersection at 18th is an additional, unnecessary barrier to connectivity and neighborhood livability goals. Keeping 18th and Route 1 grade separated continues to give the community a demographically central, preferred crossing where safety is the number one priority and where crossing Route 1 is both perceived to be safe and actually is safe for all travelers.

Crystal City Sector Plan – Why We Support It

We continue to support the CCSP proposal for these reasons:

- The CCSP concept keeps Route 1 grade-separated from 18th, thus continuing to provide safe passage for all modes traveling along 18th. Transit stops and routes can continue to function on 18th and will not need to be relocated.
- The CCSP concept provides the safest and shortest Route 1 crossings along 15th Street compared to the proposed at-grade concept or the no build concept.
- Drivers on the northbound new ramps in the middle of Route 1 have their own lane when they merge onto Route 1. In addition to safety, this new lane will make traveling to Route 110 easier and more convenient because drivers will already be in the far-left lane.
- The new exit/entrance ramps at 15th will not impede transit flow through the area – either turning onto 15th, from 15th, or continuing along Route 1.
- The CCSP design keeps the right and left turn lanes, which are necessary to access the neighborhood.
- The proposed new bridge for Route 1 at 15th will have two separate spans that are higher than the current single span bridge. This new bridge – and the new gaps created by the proposed access ramps – will open up the space on 15th allowing more sunlight and improved street views.
- The CCSP concept provides more available land for future development than the no build option (and probably more land than the proposed 9-lane at-grade concept).
- The CCSP concept supports making Route 1 an urban boulevard.

According to VDOT preliminary CCSP concept evaluation presented at the March 3 meeting, the rebuilding of Route 1 over 15th per the CCSP guidelines appears to be feasible. There are ways that this option could serve as a compromise.