



July 14, 2022

Dan Reinhard  
VDOT P.E., Project Manager  
4975 Alliance Drive  
Fairfax, VA 22030

RE: Livability22202 Comments on the Second PIM Presentation for Phase 2 and  
Reiteration of Selected Comments from our May 20, 2022, Letter

Dear Dan:

Thank you and other VDOT staff and consultants for attending the June 15, 2022, Crystal City Civic Association meeting on Route 1. We appreciate your acknowledgment of our May 20, 2022, letter on PIM #1, your presentation of VDOT ROW options, and your patient listening to extensive public commentaries during PIM #2 on June 21.

On July 7, 2022, the Livability22202 Route 1 Working Group and the People before Cars Coalition sent VDOT a new joint letter outlining areas of agreement on Route 1 ROW, TDM, and 18th Street. Livability22202 remains concerned about the impact upon our community from many of the details in the proposed at-grade Route 1 urban boulevard plans. This, our current letter, includes specific comments on the PIM #2 ROW proposals which were not addressed in the July 7 joint letter. Our letter therefore reiterates and refines some of our May 20 comments. We also raise questions about VDOT's use, and misuse, of the Crystal City Sector Plan (CCSP).

### **1. Crystal City Sector Plan Primacy:**

The Crystal City Sector Plan has the following about Route 1 (p. 61):

*"Jefferson Davis Highway will become an attractive urban boulevard and unifying element of Crystal City. The laneage and capacity of this regional connector (Type F) roadway will be maintained, but not expanded. Its environment will be improved with new buildings and streetscapes that address the street. In Crystal City, Jefferson Davis Boulevard will generally have 140' to 160' between building faces. Grade separations at 12th, 15th, and 18th Streets will remain, although the plan includes a reconfigured, more urban interchange at 15th Street. Between 20th and 26th Streets the street would remain at grade, and south of 26th Street traffic would be trenched under a newly created National Circle, with service roadways that provide access to the airport with ramps connecting to the roadway's through travel lanes. The design and operations of the circle must continue to accommodate commercial vehicle access to and from the airport, as this is its only permitted access point."*

In the June 15 meeting, we heard that compliance with the CCSP precluded consideration of some concepts such as a boulevard wider than 140'. We do not understand how some parts of the CCSP statement are considered set in stone and other parts of the Plan are tossed

aside. Having ROW widths of 150' or 160' is clearly in the CCSP. VDOT's proposal does not explain the rationale behind complying with some sections of the Sector Plan, while ignoring other requirements. It is equally unclear why all deviations from the CCSP do not need to go through Sector Plan revision. VDOT should articulate the points where the Route 1 study diverges from the CCSP and address the rationale. Please include a table that shows deviations from the CCSP so Arlington County government and community leaders can more effectively consider the proposal.

## 2. ROW:

Our recommendations for the ROW are:

- Examine strategies to increase the ROW width from 140' to 160'. We continue to recommend a 160' wide ROW to ensure sufficient space for needed streetscape furnishings to create an active, comfortable, welcoming boulevard. We disagree with the VDOT conclusion that the ROW is limited to a maximum of 140 feet because of the CCSP.
- However, if the 140' width is eventually adopted, VDOT must narrow the travel lanes to create more space for essential features of the streetscape, while maintaining an adequate pedestrian refuge median with healthy trees.
- Require that any cafe zones/shy zones be provided outside of the overall ROW width.

Three of the four VDOT ROW options are unacceptable: Option 1 has no protected bike lanes (PBL), Option 2 has inadequate PBL widths, and Option 4 has an unnecessary 11' wide "planting strip" with trees planted far off center. Both Options 2 and 4 have "sidewalk widths" significantly less than the 10' minimum clear zone width specified in the Crystal City Multimodal Transportation Study (Table 5.1. Recommended Street Characteristics) and the 8'-12' minimum clear zone width in NACTO guidelines.

Although Option 3 does include one-way PBLs on both sides and 10' "sidewalks" on both sides, it fails to meet the safety, comfort, and functional needs of the community for a desirable walk-, bike-, and transit-friendly urban boulevard:

- The 10' "sidewalk zone" is not divided into a clear/through zone and a shy/cafe zone. No cafe zone or shy zone is specifically shown in the streetscape, although an available icon for cafe seating can be added. Most new buildings along an at-grade Route 1 will need a shy zone for new building entrances, and many will want to offer cafe seating. It must be made clear that the "sidewalk zone" only refers to the sidewalk clear zone, and that any future cafe zones, shy zones, or other extra space will require that the building edge be moved back to accommodate them.
- The 6'6" "planting strip" is the "landscaping/utilities" zone of the sidewalk. It is not clear from the illustration if this distance includes any protective barriers, curbs, or drainage that might limit the width of the planting area.
- Pick-up drop-off (PUDO) zone: The streetscape includes no space along Route 1 for any PUDO activities, although the need for PUDO for people, home goods, groceries, and take-out is great. Although freight deliveries will be located elsewhere, providing some safe and convenient space for PUDO along Route 1 is essential for people's convenience and for retail success. A 160' ROW would facilitate the provision of PUDO zones and transit facilities.

- Bike lane/median: A 160' ROW would facilitate better bicycle and pedestrian safety (through potentially wider bike lanes), creating better bike access to new retail. The proposed design does nothing to moderate the length of the existing “superblocks.”
- Curbs and stormwater management: It's not clear from the VDOT streetscape options where zones are separated by curbs and gutters or how stormwater will be managed adequately.

### **3. Safety and Convenience of an at-Grade Route 1 intersection at 18<sup>th</sup> Street:**

We reviewed the various 18<sup>th</sup> Street improvements proposed during PIM #1 in our May 20, 2022 letter. If Route 1 is brought to grade at 18<sup>th</sup> Street, our first choice is still the Livability22202 Woonerf between Eads and Clark-Bell, with a Dutch underpass to allow cyclists and others to avoid the Route 1 intersection, as they do now. For pedestrian safety, we also recommend Barnes dance signalization for any at-grade intersection proposal at 18<sup>th</sup> that does not have the Woonerf plaza design.

Community data gathered by VDOT and the Livability22202 collaboration consistently show that the majority of community members do not support the proposed at-grade conversion of Route 1 at 18<sup>th</sup> Street. These surveys show that community members feel safe and comfortable using the current grade-separated layout and fear that an at-grade conversion will be more dangerous to cross and create more traffic diversion to our local streets. There is no available data that suggest problems with crime or roadway safety at this location. VDOT's own Phase 1 charts illustrate that the current grade-separated Route 1 overpass over 18<sup>th</sup> Street is safer than the proposed at-grade conversion, even with TDM applied. We believe that any proposed at-grade intersection of Route 1 and 18<sup>th</sup> Street must be as safe, and feel as safe, as current conditions, especially for pedestrians. We emphasize the need to prioritize pedestrian and bicyclist safety over vehicle Level of Service (LOS), which we believe is an inappropriate measure for evaluating mobility in such a multimodal environment.

### **4. TDM:**

We believe that an effective TDM program is critical to the safety of our community and to ensure that traffic diversion to our local streets is limited. We remain concerned that VDOT has not disclosed its TDM strategy and plans and will not do so until PIM #3 this fall. While VDOT predicates success of this entire effort on a 32% reduction of traffic (to 34,000 vpd) by 2025, it has provided no details on how this reduction will happen or where diverted traffic will go. Even this significant theoretical reduction may be insufficient for safety.

Arlington County has a strong TDM program, and the Livability22202 community has a higher use of “car-free” transportation than other areas. However, because VDOT shows that 60% of traffic on Route 1 is through traffic – not originating or terminating in National Landing, a regional TDM effort is essential. Arlington County cannot run a regional program. We believe VDOT needs to provide a comprehensive plan that will ensure commuters and travelers in our super region have alternative modes of transportation available to make the switch from Single Occupancy Vehicles.

There should also be assurance that these alternatives are affordable, convenient, reliable, comfortable and safe for everyone. As we all seem to agree on the value of a TDM program, VDOT should work with the COG and other governments to implement it immediately. The

benefit to the region from such an effort should be viewed as independent of changes to Route 1.

## 5. General Issues

For an at-grade conversion of Route 1 to be successful, we continue to recommend the following improvements and ask VDOT to provide a status update on their planning and implementation:

- 25 mph maximum speed limit on Route 1, with automated enforcement, from 12<sup>th</sup> Street to the Alexandria border.
- All at-grade intersections designed as protected intersections, according to the latest urban street design standards (e.g. NACTO).
- “No right on red” applied at all signalized intersections in the 22202 community, with automated enforcement.
- Overall streetscape design, speed limits, and other boulevard features applied consistently from 12<sup>th</sup> Street to the Alexandria border to ensure safety and compliance with Vision Zero and Complete Streets guidelines.
- VDOT’s proposal for 23<sup>rd</sup> Street: We applaud VDOT’s efforts to redesign the at-grade intersection of Route 1 at 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and support Option 2 (if protected lanes). We again encourage VDOT to implement the proposed design before other sections of Route 1 are brought down to grade. The community could experience a much safer intersection and VDOT and the community would have more relevant data to study the impact of proposed lane and signalization changes.
- Strategies to induce speed reductions for northbound motorists to the south of the study area similar to the alignment shift on the northern portion of the study area.

## Conclusion

For the vision of an urban boulevard to be successful, Livability22202 is convinced that:

- Deviations from the CCSP must be addressed publicly at the local and County level.
- It must include an adequate ROW.
- The intersection at 18<sup>th</sup> Street must be made safe and convenient. Any at-grade proposals for 18<sup>th</sup> need to be, and feel, as safe and convenient as current conditions.
- It must include an effective TDM program.
- VDOT must take a holistic approach for the project design.

We look forward to meeting jointly with the VDOT team and County staff, as previously suggested by County Staff, and discussing some of the concerns we have raised in this letter. We look forward to continuing to work with VDOT on the best possible solutions for a Route 1 boulevard that are safe, comfortable, convenient, accessible, and enticing for the entire community. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Kateri Garcia, President  
Arlington Ridge CA



Ben Davanzo, Acting President  
Aurora Highlands CA



Eric Cassel, President  
Crystal City CC