



December 12, 2022

Dan Reinhard  
Senior Project Manager  
VDOT Route 1 Multimodal Feasibility Study Phase 2  
4975 Alliance Drive  
Fairfax, VA 22030

RE: Livability 22202 Comments on the PIM 3 Presentation for Phase 2 for the Route 1 Project

Dear Dan:

We are the Presidents of the three Livability 22202 civic associations: Arlington Ridge, Aurora Highlands, and Crystal. Here are our collective comments on VDOT's PIM 3 presentations on the Route 1 Multimodal Feasibility Improvements Phase 2 study. The Route 1 project is a once in a lifetime opportunity to build what we want and need, so let's build it right!

We congratulate you for including the following safety features in your current at-grade Route 1 plans:

- A Barnes Dance signalization for the intersection of Route 1 and 18th Street, which will give pedestrians sufficient time to cross 18th & Route 1 without conflict with drivers.
- A 25 mph maximum speed limit on this section of Route 1, which significantly reduces the risk of pedestrian fatalities, per VDOT data.
- No Right on Red, which reduces crashes between drivers and pedestrians/cyclists.
- Leading Pedestrian Intervals at all Route 1 intersections, which gives pedestrians and cyclists a head start crossing Route 1 and turning vehicles.
- Reconstructing the intersection of Route 1 and 23rd Street South: We appreciate that VDOT is including plans to reconstruct this currently dangerous intersection. We encourage VDOT to create PBL around and through this intersection.
- The pedestrianization of 18th street on the weekends. Ideally we would like 18th street to always be limited to pedestrians/cyclists/emergency vehicles, but having it be limited during non-peak times is a great idea.
- I-395/Route 1/Route 110 intersections and ramps: We welcome your plans to reconfigure the intersections and ramps between I-395, Route 1, and Route 110. Your proposal safely slows and directs exiting I-395 traffic to new signalized

intersections with Route 1/Route 110, so drivers will begin their travel on Route 1 at a much lower and safer speed. We support your plan to provide a new connection for 10th Street that links Army-Navy Drive to Long Bridge Drive and creates an important shorter route for many drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians, as well as a new relief valve for traffic heading south. Please study how this 10th Street connection might positively impact traffic flow on Route 1 and the cross streets further south.

We are still concerned about the plans for several major VDOT Route 1 projects: the design and features along 18th Street, the design of the ROW on Route 1, and the lack of a Transportation Demand Management plan.

### **18th Street Plans: We still have safety concerns**

18th Street is a major community passage for cyclists, pedestrians, transit riders, and drivers who appreciate the safety and convenience of the current 18th Street underpass under grade-separated Route 1. We continue to have concerns about an at-grade Route 1 intersection with 18th Street.

- We are glad that you have included a Barnes Dance signalization, which stops all traffic so that pedestrians can cross safely in all directions. However, the VDOT-highlighted 150 second total signal cycle is too long. It will encourage pedestrians and cyclists to bolt across Route 1. Additionally, this extended cycle time will encourage motorists to travel north-south on Eads, as the transit time there will likely be better. We ask you to develop plans for safe bike crossings here as well and to work with County staff to reduce the total signal cycle length, while ensuring a generous time for pedestrians to cross diagonally.
- The streetscape design for 18th Street is not significantly different from the existing street: 2 lanes each way, a left turn lane as 18th approaches the intersections with Eads and Bell, and green-painted bike lanes with no protection. We recently asked you to evaluate turning 18th Street into a pedestrian Woonerf, but you rejected this proposal, citing emergency vehicle access and impact on traffic. We therefore request you to study the implications of our proposed three-lane alternative, modeled after several similar sections on S. Eads Street. Eliminating 2 lanes would provide an additional 22' of ROW that can be used for safe Protected Bike Lanes and for a Dutch underpass, as described in PIM 1 of Phase 2.
- We proposed including this Dutch underpass earlier this year to provide greater safety and to separate the motorists on Route 1 from the pedestrians and cyclists on 18th Street. VDOT's rationale for rejecting the Dutch underpass was that the Barnes Dance signalization would be sufficient for bike-ped safety and that there was no public consensus on the additional strategies presented. We believe this decision is short-sighted and strongly recommend that VDOT collaborate with the community to identify a protective strategy that works for all or pursues the Dutch underpass or our other proposals.
- We strongly support including the Dutch underpass for several reasons: **First**, the loss of the current, totally safe, existing 18th Street underpass would represent a

significant loss to the community, undermining the existing connection between Crystal City, Pentagon City, and other neighboring communities. Cyclists and pedestrians, transiting for commercial and recreational reasons, need crossings that are safe and feel safe for everyone. A new Dutch underpass would mitigate the loss of safety provided by the underpass on 18th Street. Crossing under Route 1 on a Dutch underpass feels safer than crossing Route 1 for those of us who are hesitant to cross at-grade, even with Barnes Dance signalization. **Second**, bike-peds would have the option of either crossing Route 1 at-grade or using the Dutch underpass to go under Route 1 more quickly than at-grade with its complex signalization. If some pedestrians choose the underpass during rush hour, when more than 1000 pedestrians are expected per hour, those who choose to cross at-grade will have a greater chance of crossing on one signal cycle. **Finally**, the underpass entrance/exit on the east side entering the existing plaza by the Metro entrance would offer a mutually complementary opportunity to create a destination-worthy art-covered plaza, underpass, and Barnes Dance intersection that would welcome community members to shop, dine, and recreate.

- We are disappointed that VDOT rejected our permanent pedestrian Woonerf plaza, but remain optimistic that 18th can be closed at off-peak hours. We encourage the County and VDOT to evaluate the impact of these street closures and hope they will occur with increasing frequency.

### **Right of Way (ROW) on Route 1: Insufficient for a true urban boulevard**

Arlington County promotes a car-free and safe, Vision Zero environment for people of all ages, races, and abilities. But to encourage people to ride, walk, and take transit instead of driving, VDOT and the County need to work together to design a Route 1 infrastructure that provides safe, accessible, convenient, attractive, and comfortable facilities, as well as transit that is safe, affordable, and reliable.

Currently, VDOT limits the available planning ROW on Route 1 to a 140' maximum total building-to-building width, with seven 11' wide travel lanes, a 10' wide median, and several feet for curbs and gutters. Standard VDOT guidelines also require offsetting street trees at least six feet from the curb. These VDOT requirements consume 105' of the allotted 140' ROW, leaving only 17.5' for the "behind the curb" space for clear zone sidewalks, bike lanes, and landscaping zones for trees. We understand that VDOT is reevaluating the requirement for a 6' offset for trees. However, this still only leaves 23.5' for people and trees. This limited width does not provide sufficient space to create and activate a true urban boulevard, leaving a continuing car-centric road. Furthermore, none of the four streetscape options offered by VDOT adequately meet even the minimum space needs for both cyclists and pedestrians.

We recommend calculating the required minimum widths for specific areas in the "pedestrian zone" – the sidewalk clear zone, bike lanes, and landscaping zone with trees-- before determining the total ROW width and specific Route 1 lane widths. Currently, we recommend 10' minimum clear zone sidewalks, 7' minimum landscaping zones (6' for soil and plants, 1' for edging), 6' for minimum bike lanes, and a 2' minimum buffer between the

bike lane and the clear zone sidewalk. These minimum width requirements total a 25' minimum width, excluding any additional ROW needed for curb/gutter, shy zones, and cafe zones. As we recommend a minimum 25' "pedestrian zone" width, we ask that you work with County staff either to cut the 4 travel lane widths to 10' or provide additional total ROW to provide the minimum necessary "pedestrian zone" space. Of course, creating a more generous width, if possible, will create a more comfortable and enticing pedestrian experience. One possibility is having bike lanes only on the East side of Route 1, although this may not be a preferred alternative.

### **Transportation Demand Management (TDM): Plan is promised, essential, and still missing**

The final VDOT recommendation from the Phase 1 study, for at-grade Route 1 intersections at 15th and at 18th, was predicated on performing a comprehensive and effective TDM strategy that reduces future traffic volumes 20% to 30% **below existing (2019) volumes** to reduce future congestion and future diversion of traffic to local/regional roads.

We are concerned that VDOT still does not have a completed TDM plan that reduces Route 1 traffic volume to a safer level while keeping Route 1 traffic from diverting onto local streets. VDOT states that because current Route 1 traffic levels have stabilized to a relatively safe level, VDOT can move forward on designing Route 1 plans while continuing to develop a plan. We do not support this approach. We note that it is noncompliant with VDOT's own Phase 1 recommendation and strongly recommend that you work closely with County staff now to complete the TDM plan that meets our safety goals. The PIM 3 slides show continuing high volumes of PM traffic on the Route 1 corridor. They also show continuing, albeit not so severe as previously indicated, increased traffic on our neighborhood streets. Both increase crash risks for cyclists, pedestrians, and drivers.

25,000 vpd: [The 2021 Schneider article](#) cites several risk factors for pedestrian fatalities on major roads in the United States, including: multi-lane highways, wide lane widths, speeds greater than 30mph, and traffic volume greater than 25,000 vpd (vehicles per day). Although VDOT is now recommending lowering the speed on Route 1 to 25 mph, VDOT is keeping the seven 11'-wide lanes at 15th Street and six 11'-wide lanes at 18<sup>th</sup> Street. VDOT supports current Route 1 vpd traffic levels as an acceptable goal, even though the data shows more than 25,000 vpd. VDOT 2022 vpd data shared at the BAC-PAC meeting (slide 15) was 39,700 average weekday vpd between 15th & 23rd Streets and 54,300 vpd between I-395 and 15th Street. These traffic volumes, way higher than the recommended 25,000 vpd, are much too high. They need to be brought much closer to 25,000 vpd for the safety of all travelers.

**We need a region-wide TDM program:** It is essential that the promised TDM program for Route 1 be implemented soon. Because VDOT data show that more than half of Route 1 traffic is coming from outside the National Landing area, the VDOT TDM plan needs to cover the entire regional commuting area and promote regional cooperation to create successful regional transportation. In addition to encouraging biking and walking, we need to develop a wide regional network of transit and commuter train options that are safe, affordable, convenient, comfortable, accessible, and reliable alternatives to driving. Unless

an effective TDM strategy is planned and implemented, the traffic volume will increase, notwithstanding the pandemic related reductions. Please continue to work with regional partners on an effective TDM program that reduces Route 1 traffic while preventing traffic diversion to our local streets.

Thank you for allowing us to comment. We look forward to meeting with VDOT and County staff soon and to continuing to work with you on this project.

Sincerely,



Kateri Garcia, President  
Arlington Ridge CA



Cory Jacobbe, President  
Aurora Highlands CA



Eric Cassel, President  
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