

July 14, 2022

Subject: CCCRC perspective on VDOT Route 1 Multimodal Improvements Study, Phase 2

Dear Chair Cristol and Members of the County Board,

We are writing to share the Crystal City Citizen Review Council (CCRC)s perspective on the status of the VDOT Route 1 Multimodal Improvements Study, Phase 2, following the second Public Information Meeting on June 21, 2022. The CCCRC fully endorses the priorities described by our colleagues in the May 20, 2022, letter sent by the People Before Cars Coalition and the Livability 22202 Route 1 Working Group (attached here for reference). In addition, the CCCRC has identified the following further priorities for the project:

- **Design Standards:** Incredibly, VDOT insists its guidelines require that both sides of a Route 1 urban boulevard include a 6' "clear zone" free of any obstructions that might injure a driver who leaves the roadway, rather than providing protection for pedestrians and cyclists who risk being struck. This auto-centric approach is fundamentally at odds with the County's Vision Zero goals and the community's priorities for Route 1. We encourage the County to work with VDOT to employ National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) design guidelines on the project instead.
- **Transportation Demand Management (TDM):** VDOT intends to recommend a TDM program to accompany the Route 1 project. To be successful, TDM efforts must address the broad regional nature of transportation demand. Thus, we encourage the County to work with VDOT on a regionally based approach to TDM. VDOT should also be encouraged to share with the public how the TDM measures it is proposing have been successful elsewhere.
- **Vision Zero:** The redesign of Route 1 through National Landing presents a once in a generation opportunity to further the County's goal of eliminating traffic fatalities by 2030. We feel that it is inappropriate that VDOT is applying Federal highway standards to this urban project, rather than the guidelines in Vision Zero. VDOT's design should be subject to County review to ensure that it complies with the County's policies re: vision zero design.
- **18th Street:** At the request of the Livability 22202 coalition of local civic associations, VDOT is studying several options for an alternative, grade-separated crossing for bikes and pedestrians at 18th street. While CCCRC takes no position on which, if any, of these options is appropriate, we agree with the Livability and PBC groups that reducing or eliminating vehicular traffic on 18th street would prioritize and improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists crossing Route 1. Thus, we encourage the County and VDOT to work together on a plan for reducing vehicular traffic on 18th street without concern for any traffic congestion impact and LOS change.
- **ROW:** Adopted as a 40-year plan in 2010, the Crystal City Sector Plan (CCSP) may not always reflect current situations and needs. But VDOT says it needs to limit its ROW recommendation to 140' because of the CCSP guidelines, although the CCSP does allow for 140'-160.' We have some concerns that VDOT's current design dedicates too much space for vehicles and does not leave sufficient space for a people-focused streetscape. We therefore encourage the County to consider carefully whether VDOT's 140' ROW meets the requirements for all the components of a true urban boulevard in 2022.

- Finally, we encourage the County Board to participate publicly and actively in the VDOT meetings and negotiations, as we are approaching the end of the Phase 2 study period.

We appreciate your consideration of these priorities and look forward to continuing to work with VDOT, Arlington County, and local stakeholders to ensure that the Route 1 project reflects the needs of our community.

Sincerely,

Michael Dowell
Chair, Crystal City Citizens Review Council

Attachment: PBC-Livability22202 letter to VDOT, May 20, 2022
Cc: Dan Reinhart, Virginia Department of Transportation

May 20th, 2022

Dear Mr. Reinhard,

Given the importance of the Route 1 to our community, the members of the Livability 22202 group and the People Before Cars Coalition have been working together to identify a set of shared priorities to guide the boulevard project. While we may not agree on everything, we are united in ensuring the future Route 1 advances the County's Vision Zero goals by prioritizing the safety of vulnerable road users and reflects National Landing's status as a walkable, bikable, transit-oriented community.

By narrowing the existing roadway and improving problematic intersections between 23rd and 15th Streets, the Phase 1 recommendations bring us closer to that goal, but we believe the project can and should go even further. To that end, we offer the following recommendations for your consideration as you continue to advance Phase 2 of the Route 1 feasibility study:

Design

- Protected bike lanes: We support including one-way, protected bike lanes on both sides of the Route 1 boulevard. If we truly want to increase cycling to reduce driving, and if we want cyclists to be able to visit places along an at-grade Route 1 comfortably, safely, and conveniently, then we need to provide safe facilities for cyclists along Route 1, as well as on connecting streets. These facilities need to be separate from both the clear zone sidewalk and the travel lanes for everyone's safety.
- Hardened protective barriers at median: While we believe that signals should be timed to allow ample crossing time for pedestrians, we recognize there will be instances where pedestrians need to cross in multiple phases. To ensure their physical protection from vehicles while waiting in the median, we request VDOT update its proposed design to include crash rated barriers. The current design concept calls for "flexible posts".
- Narrower 18th Street South: We recommend reducing or removing the existing travel lanes on 18th Street and replacing them with wider sidewalks, landscaping and protected bike lanes. We request the VDOT study the impacts of those options as part of its Phase 2 work.
- Protected Intersections: The current concept includes painted bike lanes crossing Route 1 but does not provide physical protection for those lanes. We encourage VDOT to include fully protected intersections in its Phase 2 design.

Operations

- Automated enforcement: Analysis by the National Landing BID found that 23rd Street, which has a red light camera has an average of one red light violation per hour, while 20th Street, which

does not, was observed to have 34 violations in one hour¹. This disparity points to the importance of automated enforcement as a tool in promoting safety on Route 1. While we recognize expanded automated enforcement requires state legislation, we nonetheless encourage VDOT to recommend them in its final report as a signal of its intent.

- Dedicated signals for bikes and pedestrians: Given the high volume of pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle activity anticipated at Route 1 intersections, a signal plan that enables vehicle turns during bike and pedestrian phase would create unacceptable conflict. Instead, we recommend providing a dedicated, all-way (aka “Barnes Dance”) signal phase for bikes and pedestrians at all Route 1 intersections. At a minimum, there should be a Barnes Dance at 18th Street, with dedicated phases at all other intersections.
- 25 mph speed limit: Lower speeds save lives. A BID analysis found Route 1 drivers averaged 43 mph, or 8 mph over the 35 mile per hour (mph) speed limit, at 15th street, while further down at Montrose Road in Alexandria, where the limit is 25mph, the average speed was 27 mph.
- No right turn on red: Right turn on red policies create unsafe conditions by encouraging drivers to turn in conflict with pedestrian signals. Indeed, a BID analysis of the Route 1 offramp at 15th Street found that 69% (302 in one hour) of drivers do not stop at the red light, when the pedestrian has the right of way, while 19% stopped in the crosswalk before proceeding. Only 12% were observed making legal/compliant turns.
- On-Street Parking: Curbside parking along Route 1 can help improve safety by reducing speeds and providing an additional buffer between the roadway and sidewalk. We encourage VDOT to incorporate on-street parking into its operations plan for the project.

We appreciate your consideration of these recommendations and look forward to continuing to work with you and your team to design a Route 1 that reflects the goals and priorities of the National Landing community.

Respectfully,

People Before Cars Coalition (Arlington Families for Safe Streets, Washington Area Bicyclists Association, Sustainable Mobility for Arlington County, JBG SMITH, National Landing Business Improvement District, Coalition for Smarter Growth)

Livability 22202 (Crystal City Civic Association, Arlington Ridge Civic Association, Aurora Highlands Civic Association)

¹ Based on APD data for 23rd Street red light camera between 2018-2021 and observation at 20th Street in December 2021.