

## McLean Traffic Concerns Community Meeting

September 18, 2017

Cooper Middle School

Condensed/Edited Notes

- Introduction from Elected Officials
  - Supervisor John Foust began by stating that there is a problem around the Balls Hill Road and Georgetown Pike intersection, emphasizing that traffic around Balls Hill and Georgetown Pike is congested. He stated that a lack of capacity on both the American Legion Bridge and the Beltway has led to this issue. He also stated that Maryland will ultimately expand the bridge but in the meantime, we need to work together to alleviate what congestion we can until that time. He indicated that many residents provided good suggestions, which VDOT and FCDOT have reviewed and added their own suggestions as well. Supervisor Foust said that VDOT and FCDOT have made some progress in their review and that the presentation tonight by VDOT and FCDOT will review topics such as what has been done so far, the status of the suggestions made by residents, the cut through restrictions process, and transportation improvements that can be evaluated. He asked that the audience please hold questions until the Q & A section.
  - Senator Barbara Favola reiterated that she is here to listen. She stated that the elected officials have been looking at how traffic congestion impacts quality of life and as of right now, there is no magic answer. She said that they have directed VDOT to evaluate all suggestions made so far. Senator Favola reminded the group that it is important to realize that for every potential remedy, there is probably a negative impact on someone else. She also stated that in order to expand the bridge, Maryland needs to come along with us and there has not been much headway with Governor Hogan.
  - Delegate Kathleen Murphy said that after receiving complaints from citizens, she met with state legislators in Maryland. She indicated that she is hoping to send a letter to Maryland with signatures and also start a website to collect signatures. Delegate Murphy stated that she hopes that getting signatures and giving them to the Governor of Maryland will convince him to act.

- Dale Stein (President of McLean Citizens Association (MCA)) welcomed the group on behalf of the MCA. He stated that the MCA knows what the problem is and they are dedicated to doing whatever they can to mitigate it. He indicated that MCA is attempting to establish relationships with elected officials at all levels, raise visibility, and encourage cooperation.
  
- Presentation from VDOT & FCDOT
  - Tom Biesiadny, Director, Fairfax County Department of Transportation, introduced the staff in attendance from VDOT and FCDOT. From VDOT: Helen Cuervo, Northern Virginia District Engineer, and Allison Richter, Northern Virginia Assistant District Administrator, Director, Fairfax & Arlington Counties. From Fairfax County: Neil Freshman, Chief, Traffic Engineering Section, and Steve Knudsen, Transportation Planner III.
  - Allison Richter gave the first portion of the presentation, discussing what would be covered and what has been done, before turning it over to Fairfax County Police Captain John Trace.
  - Captain Trace spoke about logistical challenges of policing the entire McLean area (705 miles of roadway) with a limited number of police officers.
    - Officer John Alford spoke about the Balls Hill Road and Georgetown Pike intersection in particular and the difficulties surrounding the tight corridor there. He emphasized that once VDOT has widened the shoulder, the police will be out there to ticket violators who “block the box.”
  - Steve Knudsen spoke about the FCDOT cut through restriction process.
  - Allison reviewed the entire Citizen Idea Matrix (see Citizen Idea Matrix for details).
  
- Question & Answer
  - Tom Biesiadny served as the moderator. Citizens stood to the side and formed a line. Microphones were used so that the audience could hear questions, comments, and responses.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Speaker – Would like to see use of the shoulder lane for traffic on 495 NB eliminated. She believes that the shoulder lane has increased congestion in the Balls Hill Road & Georgetown Pike intersection. She referenced a 2014 Traffic Study done by VDOT and stated that the study had said that the shoulder lane would increase congestion and

accidents and VDOT went ahead with it anyway. She questioned how the shoulder helps mitigate congestion and encouraged that VDOT shut it down.

- Response (Allison Richter) – If VDOT were to shut down the shoulder lane, I-495 would hold even less traffic and more cars would be on the neighborhood streets. The mentioned 184-page study from 2014 says until additional capacity improvements are made in Maryland, the shoulder project would be helpful. VDOT and FCDOT staff are trying to resolve the problem of too much congestion in the neighborhoods with other solutions, rather than one which would negatively impact regional traffic by limiting Beltway access.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Speaker – Indicated that he has several ideas. First, he stated toll booths on Spring Hill Road encourage people to drive on Lewinsville Road or on Swinks Mill Road. He suggested a partnership between VDOT and MWAA to facilitate the best way to move forward with looking at the regional issues in McLean. Second, he suggested that the citizens further investigate the Code of Virginia to make an argument for the two citizen ideas (permitting “local traffic only” during peak hours and issuing windshield stickers for local residents) that currently are not viable due to the lack of code. If no solution can be found through current code, he implored the legislators there to think about proposing a piece of legislation and working on a bi-partisan basis to get it passed. Third, he suggested that since closing the ramp from Georgetown Pike onto the Beltway is not a feasible idea, perhaps adding a toll to the ramp would incentivize people to stay on the Beltway. Fourth, he suggested extending Algonkian Parkway north to build a new Potomac River Crossing in Loudoun County.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Speaker – Lives west of the Beltway, off Georgetown Pike. She stated that there is already tremendous traffic on Swinks Mill Road, and more cut through traffic will just make that worse. She views the main source of the cut through traffic as people who work in Tysons trying to get to the Beltway. She thinks VDOT should extend the Express Lanes all the way to the American Legion Bridge when it is widened. She believes this would reduce traffic on local streets.
- 4<sup>th</sup> Speaker - Commented that any regional analysis needs to include people coming from west of the Beltway. They contribute to 50% of the “blocking the box” issues, in his opinion. Any analysis will only make sense if it looks at Georgetown Pike on both sides of 495. He suggested using electronic ticketing systems to mail tickets to people who

block intersections. If tickets are issued that way, people would begin to comply more with the “Do not block the intersection” signs.

- 5<sup>th</sup> Speaker - Lives near the George Washington Parkway, off of Balls Hill Road. She agrees with the idea of closing the 495 Shoulder Lane. She thinks the main issue is problems with the cars merging to or from the George Washington Parkway and the Express Lanes. She would like for the Express Lanes to end well before the GW Parkway. She also stated that people are violating the “No U Turn signs,” which she believes is dangerous.
- 6<sup>th</sup> Speaker –Retired transportation planner. He cited a national study about traffic congestion, and says VDOT is treating the symptoms, not the cause. He would like to see another crossing of the Potomac, an “outer Beltway” crossing. He also suggested that peak tolling be used on the American Legion Bridge and that the elevation of the bridge be raised.
  - Response (Tom Biesiadny) – Stated that FCDOT and VDOT have forwarded the toll lane idea to Maryland and are working with them at the local and state level. He indicated that Maryland has not moved on the idea yet.
- 7<sup>th</sup> Speaker – The Comprehensive Plan for Tysons Corner includes a traffic demand management plan requirement. He believes the implementation process is not being appropriately followed. He suggested that developers are not complying with their obligations and the County should ensure that this happens.
- 8<sup>th</sup> Speaker – From the Bellview Road area. She suggested that the Toll Road toll booth plaza be moved west of Route 7, so Maryland drivers will not avoid tolls by cutting through neighborhoods. She also cited issues with the traffic cut through process regarding Bellview Road.
  - Response (Allison Richter) – The study on Bellview Road is still underway. Regarding the six areas included in the McLean Area Traffic Analysis (shown on display boards), VDOT and FCDOT have been working together simultaneously to look at possible cut through options to ensure agreement from the beginning of the process.
- Discussion at Boards
- Meeting Adjourned