

July 7, 2022

Dear Mr. Reinhard,

On May 20, 2022, the People Before Cars Coalition and the Livability22202 Route 1 Working Group sent a joint letter to VDOT (attached for reference) providing our combined input on VDOT's current plans for the VDOT Route 1 Multimodal Feasibility Improvements Study. Those points remain valid. Following the second Public Information Meeting on June 21, 2022, we met again and agreed to provide a few additional comments and priorities as follows.

- **Design Standards and Right of Way:** We are concerned by VDOT's use of Federal Highway/AASHTO standards for this project and believe those standards are leading to a design that allocates too much space and priority to vehicles at the expense of safety for cyclists and pedestrians, our most vulnerable users. For example, the inclusion of a 6' "clear zone" for street trees prioritizes driver convenience over pedestrian safety while hindering the design of a world class streetscape. Instead, we urge VDOT to use standards appropriate for an urban boulevard, not a rural highway, such as the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) design guidelines, and to ensure the design is consistent with Arlington County's Vision Zero policy. In addition, we recommend the following specific changes to ensure the design is consistent with the goal of a slower, safer urban boulevard:
  - Reduce travel lanes from 11' to 10'.
  - Remove or minimize the use of gutter pans and use alternate design strategies to address stormwater management.
  - Remove the 6' clear zones that prevent street trees and prioritize vehicle speed over pedestrian and cyclist safety.
  - Include one-way bike facilities on both sides of Route 1, which are behind the curb, separated from the sidewalk, and wide enough for safe, comfortable cycling.
  - Include large street trees along the roadway and median, similar to the existing condition on Route 1 in Alexandria near East Reed Avenue. Where possible, VDOT should also preserve existing, mature trees as part of their design.
  - If the final recommended ROW remains at 140', ensure that café zones are located outside of that ROW in order to preserve sufficient space for clear zone sidewalks, protected bike lanes and lush, healthy tree-lined landscaping with street furniture and lights. Additionally, consider reducing the width of the median by two feet to add to the pedestrian space on the east and west side of the boulevard.
  - Set a posted and design speed of 25mph, which will save lives and allow for more design flexibility.
  - Ensure that speed limits and general streetscape designs are consistent from 12th Street to the Alexandria border.
- **Transportation Demand Management (TDM):** We understand that an aggressive TDM effort will form part of VDOT's overall strategy for the project, and that VDOT will be providing more information about their TDM recommendation during an upcoming Public Information Meeting this fall. According to VDOT's analysis, 40% of Route 1 traffic has a local component, but 60% of drivers

are just passing through. To be successful, TDM efforts must address the regional nature of transportation demand, a super region that includes the entire DC metro area, Virginia, and beyond to include exurban and rural commuters. Thus far, VDOT has not shared any information about its intended TDM strategy beyond citing Arlington county's past successes. We look forward to hearing more about how VDOT intends to reduce regional traffic through this corridor.

- **18<sup>th</sup> Street Options:** We continue to agree with our recommendation in our joint May 20 letter to reduce or remove the existing travel lanes on 18th Street and replace them with wider sidewalks, landscaping, and protected bike lanes (PBL). We further agree that the design must include separation of PBLs from not only emergency vehicles and buses but also from pedestrians. When evaluating the potential for reducing or removing travel lanes from 18<sup>th</sup> street, we encourage VDOT and Arlington County 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.

We appreciate your consideration of these priorities and will remain engaged as the process moves forward to ensure that the needs of the community are met.

Sincerely,

-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)

Attachment

Joint PBC/Livability Letter to VDOT. May 20, 2022.

May 20<sup>th</sup>, 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 23<sup>rd</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> Street South: We recommend reducing or removing the existing travel lanes on 18<sup>th</sup> 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 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, which has a red light camera has an average of one red light violation per hour, while 20<sup>th</sup> Street, which

does not, was observed to have 34 violations in one hour<sup>1</sup>. 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 15<sup>th</sup> 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 15<sup>th</sup> 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)

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