

Statement of the Greater Tysons Citizens Coalition

My name is Rob Jackson. I live at 6728 Baron Road in McLean and I am co-chair of the Greater Tysons Citizens Coalition, which represents the communities surrounding Tysons. The GTCC has been active since 2008 and has participated in the Tysons rebirth process since then.

Our mission statement includes: "We have a vested interest in Tysons' success. Our Mission and Focus are to monitor Tysons Comprehensive Plan implementation and its amendments, as Tysons redevelops, and to advocate and to collaborate with other stakeholders to protect the interests and concerns of surrounding communities."

We have reviewed the proposed changes to the Tysons Comp Plan and have filed comments earlier in the process. While we agree that most of the changes are editorial in nature and would simply update the plan to reflect changes in facts since 2010, the GTCC has some serious concerns about certain proposed changes that would go beyond an update and, instead, reopen policy issues that were settled in 2010 or that could encourage actions that are not consistent with stated goals for a new Tysons. These goals include:

1. To ensure that the construction of the required infrastructure proceeds in tandem with and is in place prior to development that yields major increases in intensity;
2. To ensure that Tysons truly becomes a destination where residents and employees can live, work, and play; and
3. To ensure that impacts on the surrounding communities, outside Tysons, are mitigated and that Tysons growth does not come at the expense of their quality of life.

The problem areas identified by the GTCC include the following:

1. Ensure the relationship between the achievement of Traffic Demand Management requirements and build-out to level of 84 million square feet (page 37);
2. Retain the Initial Development Level for the amount of permissible office uses (pages 31-32 of the draft Implementation Plan) but add a 5 million square foot exemption to permit build-out of the strip mall area on the south side of Route 7 and the west side of Route 123; and
3. Remove added language that could encourage even greater developer resistance to meeting the urban standard for athletic fields in Tysons and that suggests the acceptability of building some of the required 20 Tysons athletic fields outside Tysons (pages 112-113); and add/re-insert references elsewhere to athletic fields (pages 23, 29, 39-40, 45, 107).

I'll explain our reasoning for the concerns over these three items.

First, as to 84 MSF, studies show that despite the presence of the Silver Line; hundreds of millions of dollars in new roads, bike/ped facilities and non-rail transit; and high-quality mixed use buildings, once Tysons is built to 84 MSF, total gridlock develops and we have failure of Routes 7 and 123, the Dulles Toll Road and the Beltway. To avoid traffic catastrophe every single new SOV trip into Tysons must be cancelled by a non-SOV trip. As I stated to the Planning Commission on January 27, 2010:

"The Vision was allowed to reach and exceed the point of transportation failure, and so does the final proposal before the Committee. We find transportation failure to be an unacceptable result.

"Extensive studies by the county and its consultants clearly demonstrate that, even with rail, mixed-use development, and aggressive traffic demand management, single occupant vehicles will continue to be the primary means of transportation to, from, and around, Tysons Corner. And more density means higher traffic volumes. That is why the staff recommended enormous increases in roads to accommodate the expected surge in car and truck traffic. Indeed, the county has released information indicating the Dulles Toll Road would need to be expanded by three interchanges and five more traffic lanes, just for Tysons' density to increase by only one-third. Yet, despite these and other costly road expansions, the transportation network would fail once Tysons is built to 84 million square feet. That constitutes planning for failure. ... That would be a dangerous result, harmful to everyone in Fairfax County."

While Tysons is off to a good start, transportation failure is still on the radar screen. Total gridlock is still possible. Hence, the County must not allow Tysons to grow beyond 84 MSF unless it can assure all of us that it has the enforceable means in place to prevent any additional and non-cancelled SOV trips into Tysons. I submit that assurance is not possible either today or in the foreseeable future. Hence, the Comprehensive Plan must retain the strong tie between 84 MSF of growth and successful TDM execution with the ability to take a "time-out" on development to prevent total gridlock.

Next, as to the IDL for office, we all know office uses generate more traffic than residential. The IDL of 45 MSF was put in the Plan to ensure office use and its related traffic growth does not overwhelm Tysons and surrounding communities. While we have a transportation funding plan in place and both residential and office growth have been slow, the current "slow-growth period" will not last indefinitely and we don't know how well transit and TDM will work when growth picks up. The IDL is another protection against a likely cause of transportation

failure—too much office. We cannot afford to remove this protection. We do, however, support increasing the IDL by 5 MSF to accommodate office development south of Route 7 and west of Route 123. Similarly, when the County undertakes a major review of Tysons redevelopment in 2024, the IDL may be ripe for adjustment. But today it's just a bud, beginning to turn into a flower that will someday become fruit for picking.

Lastly, we have extreme concern about any attempt to weaken the requirement for the landowners to provide 20-fullsize athletic fields within Tysons. Tysons needs a full complement of athletic fields to allow its residents—children, adolescents and adults to live, work, study and play in Tysons. Forcing them to get into cars to drive elsewhere for field access defeats the vision for Tysons. It also would add to traffic congestion—both inside and nearby Tysons. Further, the availability of 20 athletic fields will most certainly make Tysons a more desirable location as against its competitors.

And both Vienna and McLean simply don't have enough fields for their own use. They cannot take on more users from Tysons and there simply is insufficient vacant land in Vienna and McLean that is suitable for athletic fields. If there were, existing volunteer sports groups would have laid claim to the vacant land years ago.

Finally, it's important to note that an earlier study indicated Tysons would need 60 onsite fields to satisfy internal demand based on existing suburban standards, e.g., fields near homes often cannot have lights and cannot be used very early in the morning or into the night. Instead, the County adopted urban standards that allow fewer fields, but all with lights and long hours to satisfy needs. Thus, if the County were to allow one urban field to be moved outside Tysons, it would be necessary for the County to require three suburban fields to be constructed. We don't see how that can be done.

We thank you for the time to present our views and urge the Planning Commission to incorporate them into the Plan revisions. I am available for questions either now or at some later date.

Robert H. Jackson
Co-Chair Greater Tysons Citizens Coalition
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