

McLean Citizens Association



The Voice of McLean for Over 100 Years

July 8, 2022

Maggie Qi, Project Manager (Hongtu.Qi@fairfaxcounty.gov)
Dolley Madison Boulevard Corridor Study
Fairfax County Department of Transportation
4050 Legato Road, Suite 400
Fairfax, VA 22033

Dear Ms. Qi:

Re: Comments on Dolley Madison Boulevard Corridor Study

The purpose of this letter is to provide the comments of the McLean Citizens Association (“MCA”) on the Concept Elements listed in the Community Preferred and Staff Preferred Scenarios on page 26 of the Fairfax County Department of Transportation (“FCDOT”) May 11, 2022 presentation on the Dolley Madison Boulevard Corridor Study (“DMBCS”).

In the May 11, 2022 presentation, FCDOT indicates that the County is focusing on short-term improvements at certain intersections on and near Dolley Madison Boulevard in McLean. In particular, FCDOT notes that it received substantial public feedback on the short-term improvement concepts that were described in FCDOT’s June 13, 2019 DMBCS presentation (Concepts 1 through 6). Based on that feedback, FCDOT has developed two DMBCS short-term improvement scenarios, referred to as the Community Preferred Scenario and the Staff Preferred Scenario. The Staff Preferred Scenario includes all of the short-term improvement concepts in the Community Preferred Scenario (including numbered Concepts 1, 2, 3a, and 5). However, the Staff Preferred Scenario also includes several other numbered concepts (Concepts No. 3, 4b, 7, and 8). Also included in both scenarios is a proposed mitigation project at the Great Falls Street/Chain Bridge Road intersection that is not identified with a number.

Concepts 1, 2, 3a, and 5. On July 29, 2019, the MCA Transportation Committee (“Committee”) submitted comments on the short-term improvement concepts that were described in FCDOT’s June 13, 2019 presentation. In the July 29th comments, the Committee expressed support for Concepts 1, 2, 3a, and 5, which would expand lanes and capacity on and Dolley Madison Boulevard in the vicinity of Great Falls Street/Lewinsville Road, add capacity to Lewinsville Road near this intersection, and provide two exclusive left-turn lanes from Lewinsville Road and Great Falls Street onto Dolley Madison Boulevard. The MCA continues to support Concepts 1, 2, 3a, and 5 (all of which are in the Community Preferred Scenario). As described in FCDOT’s presentation, these are: Concept 1 – “3 Lanes EB through 267 Interchange” (eastbound along Dolley Madison Boulevard); Concept 2 – “3 Lanes EB through

Lewinsville/ Great Falls Intersection” (eastbound along Dolley Madison Boulevard); Concept 3a – “Increased Capacity on Lewinsville” (near the intersection of Lewinsville Road and Dolley Madison Boulevard); and Concept 5 – “Exclusive Left-Turn Lanes at Lewinsville/Great Falls Intersection” (at the intersection of Dolley Madison Blvd with Lewinsville Road/Great Falls St).

Concept 3. The Staff Preferred Scenario also includes a Concept 3 – “Restricted Lefts from Balls Hill” (at the intersection of Balls Hill Road and Lewinsville Road). One of our MCA members says that, since 2019, VDOT has made some adjustments to the timing of the traffic signal at the intersection of Balls Hill Road and Lewinsville Road and those adjustments have reduced the interference of left turn traffic from Balls Hills Road onto Lewinsville Road with the main flows on Lewinsville/Great Falls and Dolley Madison Boulevard. Therefore, it does not appear that restricting such left turns would be necessary or beneficial, and it appears that doing so would be an inconvenience to those who wish to turn left there. In particular, during periods of increased traffic such as when people are voting at the Government Center or going to and from the soccer fields or the Little Langley school, restricting left hand turns from Balls Hill might cause significant inconvenience. Accordingly, MCA does not support Concept 3 at this time.

However, MCA is concerned about traffic congestion on Lewinsville Road approaching Dolley Madison Boulevard, which can impede drivers that are attempting to turn left from Balls Hill Road onto Lewinsville Road. In this regard, MCA requests that FCDOT consider allowing U-Turns on Lewinsville Road (heading away from Dolley Madison Boulevard) at Old Maple Avenue, which would provide an alternative for drivers exiting Balls Hill Road who are unable to turn left onto Lewinsville Road due to congestion. MCA also suggests that FCDOT work with the McLean District of the Fairfax County Police Department to provide greater enforcement at the intersection of the Balls Hill Road and Lewinsville Road to prevent people from “blocking the box.”

Concept 4b. The Staff Preferred Scenario also includes a Concept 4b – “Modified Jug Handle at Old Dominion,” which would restrict left turns from Dolley Madison Boulevard onto Old Dominion Drive in both directions. Instead, travelers would be required to proceed on a circuitous route involving travel on Ingleside Drive and additional stretches of Old Dominion Drive and/or Dolley Madison Boulevard and requiring additional turns. This modified jug handle concept is similar to the Concept 4 jug handle concept FCDOT raised in 2019. Both restrict left turns at Dolley Madison/Old Dominion Drive, and only appear to differ as to what turns would be allowed at Dolley Madison/Ingleside. Concept 4 has been rejected (as indicated at p. 26 of the 5-11-22 presentation). As noted in the May 11, 2022 FCDOT presentation, at page 13, the jug handle concept received significantly more community opposition than support (14% supporting and 41% opposing). Among other commenters, the MCA Transportation Committee opposed the jug handle concept in 2019, stating in its July 29, 2019 comments, as follows: “The Committee believes this is a cumbersome and unnecessary measure that, through these diversions, would increase traffic on other stretches of road and possibly impede access to and from the properties inside the loop created by the new traffic movements. The Committee strongly opposes this concept.” Concept 4b, the modified jug handle, suffers from the same deficiencies. Accordingly, MCA opposes Concept 4b except that, as discussed below, we

support the installation of a traffic signal at the intersection of Ingleside Avenue and Dolley Madison Boulevard.

Concepts 7 and 8. The Staff Preferred Scenario includes two new concepts that were not among the concepts presented in 2019 and, accordingly, not reviewed by the Committee in 2019. One of these is Concept 7 – “WB Option Lane at On-ramp to 267 WB,” which would construct a second lane on Route 123 westbound from the Lewinsville-Great Falls intersection to access the on-ramp to Route 267 west on Route 267 and provide an option lane on Route 123 to either continue west towards Tysons or onto the Route 267 on-ramp. The second is Concept 8 – “Extend Rightmost WB Through Lane at Lewinsville/Great Falls,” which would extend the right-most lane heading west-bound on Route 123 for 500 feet before the Lewinsville/Great Falls intersection to provide additional vehicular capacity. Unlike Concept 6 (a concept aimed at improving westbound Dolley Madison Boulevard flow which has been rejected because of opposition to impairing community access to Dolley Madison Boulevard (as indicated at pp. 17 and 26 of the 5-11-22 presentation)), it appears that Concepts 7 and 8 would facilitate some westbound Dolley Madison Boulevard flow improvement without impairing community access to Dolley Madison Boulevard. Accordingly, MCA supports Concepts 7 and 8.

Chain Bridge/Great Falls Mitigation Project. The May 11, 2022 FCDOT presentation also includes a new mitigation project concept for the intersection of Chain Bridge Road and Great Falls Street in both the Community Preferred Scenario and the Staff Preferred Scenario (as indicated at pp. 23 and 26 of the 5-11-22 presentation). This mitigation project concept has several components, including the prohibition of left turns from Great Falls Street onto Chain Bridge Road in the southwest direction. MCA is opposed to this concept, particularly the proposal to prevent left turns from Great Falls Street (heading towards Dolley Madison Boulevard) onto Chain Bridge Road. This proposal would appear to impose a burden on local residents and, by preventing drivers from taking this left turn, and requiring them to turn left on Dolley Madison Boulevard would actually increase the level of traffic congestion on that road. This appears to be inconsistent with the overall objective of the DMBCS to reduce congestion on Dolley Madison Boulevard.

Vehicular/Pedestrian/Bicycle Improvements at Dolley Madison and Ingleside Ave or Elm Street. Finally, in addition to supporting Concepts 1, 2, 3a, 5, 7, and 8, MCA requests that the County implement improvements at the intersection of Dolley Madison Boulevard and Ingleside Avenue or the intersection of Dolley Madison Boulevard and Elm Street. The MCA would prefer to have a traffic signal installed at either intersection, if feasible, provided that the timing of this signal was coordinated with the signal at Old Dominion to ensure smooth traffic movement. Installation of a traffic signal at either location would heighten safety for pedestrians and bicyclists. A signal at the Dolley Madison/Ingleside intersection would also address concerns raised by residents who are unable to turn left from Dolley Madison Boulevard onto Ingleside Avenue during rush hour traffic.

If a traffic signal is not feasible, however, at a minimum, FCDOT should install a pedestrian hybrid beacon, along with enhanced crosswalks, at either the Dolley Madison/Ingleside intersection or the Dolley Madison/Elm intersection. As the County is aware,

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there was recently a collision at the Dolley Madison/Ingleside intersection which resulted in the death of a bicyclist, which supports the conclusion that this crossing is not safe. Provision of a traffic signal or beacon would enhance safety for pedestrians and bicyclists crossing Dolley Madison Boulevard in order to access the McLean Central Park, the McLean Community Center, and the Dolley Madison Library from downtown McLean. The MCA also suggests further evaluation of the feasibility of a pedestrian bridge over Route 123 in this area as a longer-term solution, but recognizes that there may be cost or other feasibility concerns with a bridge in this location. Implementation of one or more of these traffic improvements would help integrate these somewhat isolated McLean Central Park facilities with the McLean Community Business Center.

The MCA appreciates FCDOT's efforts to develop short-term improvements for the Dolley Madison Boulevard corridor and looks forward to the County's moving forward with design and construction of the short-term improvements supported by the MCA and the community.

Thank you for your consideration of the MCA's views on the DMBCS and the other traffic enhancements discussed above.

Sincerely,

Scott Spitzer

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President
McLean Citizens Association

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