Citizens Petition to Support Comprehensive, Community Based Approaches to Truck Safety and Parking in the I-66 Corridor, Including Markham and Other Areas

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Petition and Comment Request

Based on recent conversations with community representatives, Fauquier County Supervisor Mary Leigh McDaniel has requested a petition from residents and friends of Markham to understand more clearly the level of support for a community based, comprehensive approach to truck and public safety in the I-66 corridor as an alternative to VDOTs present focus only on development of a truck stop in Markham on Belle Meade Drive. We are encouraged to sign the attached petition immediately to register our perspective. See background and details below.

We are strongly encouraged also to attend a VDOT information session on the proposed Markham truck stop on **Wednesday, August 31, at 6 pm at the Marshall Community Center (4133-A Rectortown Road)** and to file written comments to VDOT at the meeting. Comment boxes will be provided. It is essential that written comments be provided to VDOT. Please attend and be prepared to make brief comments regarding your concerns about the current proposal to develop a truck stop in Markham to the exclusion of additional fact finding on safety issues and solutions, exploration of comprehensive alternatives, and community involvement in truck parking and safety decisions.

In addition to comments at the VDOT information meeting in Marshall on August 31, VDOT has requested that citizens send emails with comments on specific issues related to the proposed Markham facility as well as the more general question of whether such action is premature and requires more detailed study and exploration of alternatives with the community. Please send emails with comments as soon as possible to the following:

- Ben Davison, VDOT at ben.davison@vdot.virginia.gov
- Scott Kasprowicz, Commonwealth Transportation Board at scott@rotor1us.com
- Alison DeTunc, Commonwealth Transportation Board at alison.detuncq@uvacreditunion.org
- Mary Leigh McDaniel, Fauquier County at MaryLeigh.McDaniel@fauquiercounty.gov
- Marie Pham, Fauquier County at Marie.Pham@fauquiercounty.gov

Background

On February 27, 2013 the Fauquier County Transportation Committee passed a resolution requesting exploration of action on development of a truck stop rest area in Markham, apparently in response to roadside truck parking on Route 17 leading to and from Marshall. The

resolution states that it considered citizens in committee meetings held in 2012 and 2013, but no direct notice was provided to residents in Markham, including adjacent property owners on Belle Meade Drive, and no one in the community appears to have been made aware of these proposed actions. Then, in January 2016 two adjacent property owners received notices that development of the facility would proceed immediately. Due to objections from those property owners and others on Belle Meade Drive and beyond, VDOT scheduled a public meeting to discuss the issue in March 2016 in Marshall. Widespread public opposition was registered during and after the meeting, consistent with historic opposition in the community to unnecessary and inappropriate development of this site dating back to the 1970s.

In July 2016 VDOT announced, nonetheless, its intent to move ahead with the proposal and to hold an information meeting on August 31, 2016 in Marshall, Virginia to describe their proposed actions more specifically. Requests to reschedule the meeting to a time that did not conflict with summer vacation season were denied. In its July public communications, VDOT referenced a 2015 VDOT Truck Parking Study as a justification to this new push to develop the Markham site. The VDOT study does not recommend development of the Markham site. Instead, it recommends more detailed local study of specific safety needs and alternative solutions, and the formation of a public private task force to explore alternatives in the best interest of the state and community together. We support this recommendation and ask that it replaces the current proposal for development of a Markham truck stop.

Recent review of truck stop parking spaces from Warrenton through Strasburg (the travel corridor connecting I-95, I-66, and I-81), indicates that many unused overnight spaces are available in the affected corridor at several locations that could address hours of rest needs for truck drivers. It is unclear why trucks are not using these spaces, as most are free or available at very low cost ($3 per night). We understand from the Fauquier Sheriff that no requests have been made since 2012 for enforcement against illegal parking on Route 17 or in the broader travel corridor in the county, nor have citations been issued. Trucks may be using the roadside as a matter of convenience in the absence of clear rules prohibiting them to do so. The Sheriff stands ready to fully enforce parking regulations and redirect trucks to available locations.

Many unanswered questions remain regarding the VDOT parking study which, by its own admission, was designed only for general scoping purposes. Many of these unanswered questions are outlined in a 12-page letter recently delivered to Supervisor McDaniel and representatives of VDOT and the Commonwealth Transportation Board (available through an email to Tom Peterson at the address below). We also understand that the Commonwealth Transportation Board has not endorsed a budget policy that supports expenditure of public funds on commercial truck parking, and questions whether the state should be in the public truck stop business as anything other than a last resort. Over 90 percent of all such facilities are private, and public expenditures may compete with and impair effective private responses that have been implemented for many decades. Public facilities also appear to be underused, particularly the new facility on eastbound I-66 from Front Royal, and the state has been unable to keep up with maintenance on its public parking facilities due to budget shortfalls.

Significant concern exists as well about the wisdom and cost effectiveness of expending $700,000 initially, followed by annual expenditures, on development of a public facility in Markham when current facilities are underused and a variety of lower cost, higher impact solutions exist, such as parking regulation enforcement, information systems to guide trucks to open spaces, partnerships for new private facilities, and others. Residents are concerned that other public safety needs are being neglected and are a higher priority.

Finally, negative impacts to the Markham site and community would be irreversible and widespread based on experience with other remote, unsupervised facilities in rural conservation areas. This includes impairment of the natural and historic landscape, local crime associated with a remote and unsupervised facility, attraction of bears and other animals to trash and associated vehicle collisions on I-66, watershed damages, destruction of birds of prey habitat (the area is used by bald eagles, hawks, and other birds of prey), air and light pollution, noise, and decline of property values as noted by residents near the eastbound I-66 facility. In comparison to these costs, benefits to parking safety form a Markham facility are uncertain.

Markham residents and other citizens who value the heritage, image, and health of Belle Meade corridor and the safety and wellbeing of the community, are concerned that VDOT is planning a poorly conceived truck rest area in a sensitive location with a false sense of urgency, lack of citizen involvement, and failure to assess all issues and comprehensive solutions needed to protect our community and state interests.

We request that VDOT immediately suspend its current plans to develop this facility, and instead work with stakeholders in our community to 1) understand public safety issues more clearly and accurately as they affect the real need for truck parking and other public safety response options, 2) understand more clearly the potential alternatives that may be utilized in order to ensure that best possible, most cost effective solutions are identified and pursued, and to avoid unnecessary, irreversible, and negative impacts to our community, and 3) take targeted actions, where and when needed, that are appropriate and effective.

Our community is prepared to work with public officials through an open, informed, fair, and inclusive process to build a consensus that will result in the best actions. We seek full information, comprehensive solutions, and equal opportunity to be involved in decisions.

For more information, contact Tom Peterson at 703-887-6696, or tdp1@mac.com.

Signed:

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