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# NEW GUM SPRINGS CIVIC ASSOCIATION

January 25, 2012

Supervisor Gerald Hyland  
Mount Vernon Magisterial District  
2511 Parkers Lane  
Alexandria, VA 22306

Dear Gerry--

As we discussed on January 19<sup>th</sup>, this letter serves as the Gum Springs community position concerning a proposed transit facility at the intersection of Richmond Highway and Fordson Road, which is also a main entrance to the Gum Springs community.

Gum Springs is strongly opposed and not supportive of a transit facility or center at the entrance of its community. After hearing rumors about the proposed transit center, this position is further based on a meeting with the Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT) on January 11<sup>th</sup>.

Although there may be certain individuals who are not aware or concern about the fact that Gum Springs is a historic 176-year old African American community in Mount Vernon or one who continues to label a part of our community as crime ridden, has not recognized the great strides that has made the Gum Springs area attractive to many, including residential and commercial developers. Otherwise, those individuals would not have sought the area for their homes and businesses would not have improve its establishments or sought out the area for its business. So, it appears that certain individuals feel that acknowledging the history of Mount Vernon is only for "selected" sites and areas and will continue to view the Gum Springs area as a negative and a stumbling block for change. We know better.

However, it does appear that Fairfax County (County) has been slowly chipping away at dismantling this 176-year old African American community by allowing adverse development and re-development that brings severe traffic impacts at each entrance to the Gum Springs community.

What benefit would there be for the Gum Springs community to have a transit center at a major entrance of its community? FCDOT was unable to answer that question other than to state that the benefits would be for the "broader" community. What about the immediate community? Why are we being subjected to have a facility that we strongly oppose placed at the entrance of our community and one that has such an adverse affect on the community?



8100 Fordson Road  
Alexandria, VA 22306  
[www.newgumspringscivicassociation.com](http://www.newgumspringscivicassociation.com)

Queenie Cox, *President*  
Judith Garrett, *Vice President*  
Vacant - *Secretary*  
Mildred Cox, *Treasurer*  
Ada Singletary, *Parliamentarian*

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We live here. We've experienced the pains and benefits of various developments that surround us. However, the transit center is now becoming our most immediate target. Keep in mind that we are continuing to move forward and be proactive by creating its community Sherwood Hall Lane Task Force to work collaboratively with INOVA Mount Vernon, Costco, County officials and any other developer willing to work with us to improve the section of Route One that directly affects the Gum Springs community without adverse impacts.

The most controversial non-benefit to Gum Springs is the closing of Fordson Road. FCDOT stated that a controlled signal would be placed at the realignment (Fordson Road at Boswell). However, when questioned about the closeness of the signal to Richmond Highway and Boswell, it was stated that a waiver could be granted and that this was a separate matter. That response definitely did not sit well with the community. Coming off the heels of the INOVA Mount Vernon special exception application that requested a signal in the same manner, the Fordson and Boswell signal light would be less in distance from the signal light proposed by FCDOT for the INOVA Mount Vernon special exception application. So, is the Gum Springs community supposed to be naïve enough to believe that VDOT would grant such a waiver for the transit facility? It's the County's old bait and switch game with the Gum Springs community

For example, at the Fordson Road entrance to accommodate Wal-Greens, the County informed Gum Springs that vehicles would be allowed to turn left onto Boswell while exiting the Boswell entrance/exit in order to minimize traffic on Fordson Road. Well, signs and lane markings have quietly been erected contrary to the agreement by the County to Gum Springs. This action was undoubtedly taken to move the traffic onto Fordson Road in order to minimize traffic to the Hybla Valley Farms (HVF) community, which was HVF initial request for supporting Wal-Greens.

In addition to the closing of Fordson Road, the community raised concerns about 1) increase emissions from buses; 2) noise; 3) lighting; 4) safety; 5) security; 6) crime resulting from a lack of security based on the increased foot traffic the transit center will bring to the Gum Springs community; and 7) unintended undesirable uses of the facility during non-manned hours of operation.

It was not envisioned for Gum Springs to have a transit center at a major entrance of the community. In fact, one of the seven goals and recommendations made by the Gum Springs community that was published in the 1st Anniversary of its newsletter--The Gum Springs News--on February 10, 1965, stated in part that, "Immediate plans should be made for Fordson Road underpass of Richmond Highway to link Gum Springs and other Sherwood Hall neighborhoods to the proposed Potomac Freeway, which will roughly follow Kings Highway and Telegraph Road. Harrison Lane would be the most direct route to the Freeway from Fordson, and the Lane (Harrison) would need to be widened considerably. A mass transit system, perhaps of high speed buses, down Richmond Highway with two stops in Alexandria, should be contemplated. The Highway should be closed to private vehicles. This deathtrap, which is presently being widened at great expense to the taxpayer, is now the focal point of many controversial zoning decisions, and should be studied carefully by the Planning Division of the County."

Hmmm...does not that Freeway sound like the Fairfax County Parkway? The high speed bus is not Rex bus along Richmond Highway; but, rather the 11Y that services communities along the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway with two stops in Alexandria.

After more than 46-years, we're still talking about Richmond Highway being a deathtrap; but, look at what has happened to Fordson Road. It was closed off from the access it once had to Harrison Lane. Albeit, you can still access Harrison Lane through a loop de loop. And guess what—you can access the "Freeway" via Harrison Lane, Kings Highway and Telegraph Road.

It is well known that the North Hill property (Richmond Highway and Lockheed Blvd.) has been in the hands of the County for more than 25-years. The County has not yet made any meaningful advancement to bring that development to fruition for the planned affordable housing and park for the property mainly because of a lack of funding. Yet, the transit center development would involve the Fairfax County Board of Supervisor's (BOS) authority for eminent domain to complete the project. In today's economy and the County cutting and/or reducing services because of a lack of revenue sources and funding, why would the County contemplate the taking of prime commercial property that would generate taxes and use it for themselves? Who would foot the bill for the annual maintenance and other operating costs associated with the transit center?

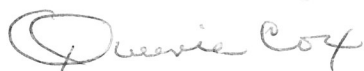
Although FCDOT stated that property owners often submit site plans in order to increase the property value once it is known that local government is interested in the property, FCDOT did state that this may not be the case for Marx although it submitted plans. However, the FCDOT did not reveal that while it was having discussions with Marx about Marx development plans, Marx was unaware of the County's interest in its property. See attached letter.

So, on the "flip" side, Gum Springs is wondering whether or not the County is stalling Marx's zoning application in order to mitigate costs that may increase the value of the property should the BOS exercise its eminent domain authority.

The "community" building was also met with extreme resistance since the community has a community building. FCDOT was asked why it would not invest the funds planned for the transit community building into the current community building. An adequate response was not provided and FCDOT stated that it would obtain an answer to the question. As of the date of this letter, we have not yet received the response.

Gum Springs is again facing, what could arguably be, its third major controversial zoning matter in less than 1-year. We want to be clear that we, the Gum Springs community, are in no way against development or revitalization or re-development along the Route One Corridor, to include INOVA Mount Vernon expansion plans or the Costco development. What concerns us is the lack of consideration for the quality of life for the residents of Gum Springs and what appears to be misplaced responsibility on the part of the County when it comes to traffic along Richmond Highway—specifically between Richmond Highway and Boswell Avenue and Richmond Highway and Buckman Road. Although once certain issues came to light during the past year and the BOS took action for temporary resolutions, we are aware that these are merely "stays of execution." At some point in time, action will be taken and Gum Springs will be considered collateral damage by the BOS.

I would be happy to further discuss the contents of this letter with you at your convenience.



Queenie Cox  
President