



# CITY OF FALLS CHURCH

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**Date:** March 24, 2019  
**To:** Mayor Tarter and Members of Falls Church City Council  
**From:** Citizens Advisory Committee on Transportation  
**Subject:** CACT comments on West Falls Church SEE

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Dear Mayor Tarter and members of Council,

The Citizens Advisory Committee on Transportation (CACT) discussed the West Falls Church SEE at its February meeting. Our comments are as follows:

### **Lane widths, traffic circulation, traffic calming**

- Lanes should be 10' wide wherever possible. Design elements should be used to indicate this is a pedestrian/cyclist-first location.
- Cars queued for school drop off and pick up could paralyze the center of the project. FCCPS estimates a 12-vehicle queue at drop off and pick up times. CACT student reps indicate vehicle queues are often far longer at these times.
- Routing school drop off and pick up traffic through the center of the project will generate cut through traffic and detract from walkability.
- Consider ways to slow westbound traffic on Route 7 adjacent to the development. Speed limit may be 25mph, but traffic travels faster. In particular, it is critical to design intersections to slow cars turning off of Route 7 onto Commons Drive and School Street.
- Consider a gateway feature at Route 7 and Commons Drive.
- Raising the intersection of Commons Drive and Street A will contribute to the sense that this is a pedestrian-first space. There are concerns, however, about how the many stop signs at this intersection will operate.

### **Walkability, pedestrian access and use**

- What will occupy the phase 2 space in the interim? A construction staging area or large empty lot will detract from the walkability of the site for visitors walking or biking from the City. Phase 2 is located at a prominent corner.

- How will ground floors of residential/office buildings and grocery store contribute to an “interesting walk” for pedestrians? Will there be individual units/offices on the ground floor? Will there be design attributes that encourage interaction between the building and the street?
- Street B and Haycock intersection may not be a safe location for a HAWK due to the rise of Haycock and current speeds on this street. This is especially concerning if students will be encouraged to use it.
- Crosswalks should be included on all legs of new signalized intersections.
- The contemplated building heights are far higher than previous developments. The impact of these heights on walkability should be considered. Will it feel to pedestrians as if buildings are looming over them? Should the tallest buildings be tapered back from the street for more light?
- Healthy street trees are critical to walkability. How will street trees be supported so they can thrive? Will structured soil be used beneath the sidewalks?

### **Cycle Track, BikeShare, Bicycle facilities**

- Cyclists on the cycle track will have to cross two lanes of traffic to access Commons Drive in the development. How will street and cycle track design assist cyclists in making this turn, and not impeding flow of cycle track? Would locating cycle track on south side of Street B minimize conflicts between cyclists and drivers?
- How will access to NVC impact cycle track? Current plan makes it look as if cars will turn right through it.
- Recommend installing a landscaped median to separate cycle track from traffic lanes. Bollards are not adequate or attractive for cycle track.
- Where will bike share and bike parking be located?
- Is it possible to protect bike lanes on Commons Drive with bollards?

### **Parking / Garages**

- We cannot comment on the adequacy of parking until more is known about the number and type of residential units and other uses planned for the development.
- We are concerned whether shared garage parking will be enough for school events that occur simultaneously with programmed events in the commercial development. Developer indicates they are planning to aggressively program the development and that it is intended to be active 18 hours a day.
- Developer should incorporate “smart parking technology” in garage and street parking to include wireless sensors and messaging signs that provide real time information on parking space availability.
- All garages should have well-marked pedestrian pathways. A visit to Pike & Rose in Bethesda finds garages where this is not the case.
- Design garage for future conversion to other uses.