

July 27, 2017

Dear Members of the Arlington County Board,

The Crystal City Civic Association (CCCA) strongly urges you to slow down the process and to postpone the decision-making regarding the VRE station location, until such time that there has been a genuine dialog between senior County representatives and our community.

A decision with such major ramifications for our community needs to be taken in the spirit of full and mutual awareness of the objectives and impact for all Crystal City stakeholders, including the residents, and we are confident that a genuine dialog can lead to a 'win-win' outcome.

Despite the unequivocal statements by several senior County and VRE representatives, to the effect that the VRE's formal decision will, as always, reflect the preferences of the County affected, the County has so far declined to participate in any dialog with the Crystal City residents, leaving this to the VRE.


This means that, while no doubts have been left as to the County's currently preferred option, this position has not been officially stated, and the County's underlying arguments have never been shared with the community. Similarly, the County Board and staff have not so far provided a forum for hearing and discussing the arguments of the residents. The CCCA finds this to be an unacceptable treatment of the residents in our community, and a complete departure from normal practices.

This has left the residents, especially those most directly affected at 1801-05 Crystal Drive, with no alternative to efforts such as finding individual Board Members at 'Open Door Monday' events and speaking during Public Comment in the recent Board meeting. Clearly, this is not a substitute for a proper dialog. Similarly, while the opportunity to testify in hearings of two Commission is noted, we all know that Commissions do not speak for the Board or the staff and can only offer advice to the Board.

As matters now stand, you plan to hear the matter and take your decision in the September 16-19 Board meetings. This would mean that the only opportunity for CCCA representatives and individual residents to testify in front of the County Board, moreover without any kind of dialog, would come literally minutes before you start your own deliberations and proceed with your decision-making. With all due respect, this does not signal an intention to give serious consideration to the testimonies presented.

But as we said at the outset, this is the time to permit a sufficient delay in the process, to allow for the kind of dialog to which all neighborhoods in the County should be entitled. It is public knowledge that, given the timeline and the funding status of the overall VRE project, no harm would be caused by such a delay. It could, however, serve to repair the damage done to the relations with our residents, and also to provide time for you and the County Attorney to further pursue the train horn issues with CSX.

At the CCCA, we are at your disposal as a conduit for the dialog which we hope you will now initiate.



Christer Ahl  
President, CCCA



Carol Fuller  
Communications Director, CCCA