

Memorandum

To: Luxmanor Community
From: Bill King—Former LCA Traffic Committee Chair [6/2006 to 3/2010]
Date: May 17~~8~~, 2010
Re: Recommendations to reduce traffic effects on community quality

The proposal below is meant as a working draft for the LCA to adopt as an official position. It is not complete, but rather represents a start toward specific demands for the community to make to County bodies. Until now, the lack of an LCA sanctioned position and specific detail has hampered our ability to answer the inevitable questions from County leadership “What does Luxmanor want?”. I put this document forth for consideration by the community in the hopes that a published official position can be quickly sent to the County at this critical point in our history.

Introduction

With the strategic decision by the County to increase density at White Flint, Potomac Park, Montgomery Mall, Rockledge, Tower Oaks, and Executive Boulevard; Luxmanor/Windrmere/Tildenwoods/Old Farm/Walnut woods are uniquely placed in between the highest activity and density of development in Montgomery County. The borders of our community will see increases in residential population ~~by~~ over 15,000, increase in office space ~~of~~ over 10 million sq. ft. ~~and~~ increase in retail space ~~of~~ over 1 million square feet. This will drive an additional 200,000+ car trips ~~per day~~ on the roads directly adjacent to Luxmanor, or ~~about~~ a 40% increase ~~over the present volume~~. The intersections at the ~~corners~~ of our community are nearly failing already by State DOT measures. ~~Failure means excessive wait time and congestion as timed by DOT~~. The community ~~leadership~~ must ~~remain~~ vigilant on this issue, forcing the county to measure and ~~respond~~ to increased traffic levels over the next decade. Below are recommendations to alleviate congestions, pollution, noise and safety concerns based on my work as LCA Traffic Committee Chair. These recommendations are based on ~~research and~~ discussions ~~(highlighted below) on what is effective and inexpensive while minimizing inconvenience~~.

- Meetings with 4 levels of DOT management;
- Meetings with 3 levels of Park & Planning management;
- Numerous meetings, e-mail, and phone conversations with community residents;
- Discussion with community associations in Bethesda;
- Discussions with bicycle advocates;
- Meetings with 2 County council members meetings with planners;
- Speed and volume surveys conducted by DOT in Luxmanor;
- Consultation with traffic instrumentation companies; ~~and~~;
- Study of traffic management techniques in several states and countries.

Key Factors/Context

- Population and commerce in land adjacent to Luxmanor to double in density within 5 years and triple within 20 years. (including, but not limited to White Flint Sector Plan ~~and White Flint II~~);
- 2 key intersections at Luxmanor borders are nearing failure (~~Level of Service D grade as of 2008~~) ~~according to American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) standards, on a scale of A to F~~;
- New Montrose Pkwy predicted ~~by County~~ to fail within 5 years as volumes exceed 74,00 per day;
- Luxmanor roads provide alternatives for traffic: less distance, no lights, no congestion
- Cut-Through traffic in Luxmanor varies between 50% (Marcliff ~~Road a~~ Afternoon peak) to 10% on Tilden ~~Lane~~. Luxmanor ~~Road~~, Roseland ~~Drive~~; and Lux ~~Lane~~. ~~all suffer varying degrees of cut-through~~
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- Tilden Middle ~~School~~ will return to Luxmanor location in 4 years, increasing pedestrian traffic.

Conclusion

- Tilden ~~Lane~~, Marcliff ~~Road~~, Roseland ~~Drive~~, Luxmanor ~~Lane~~, Cushman ~~Lane~~, Old Stage ~~Road~~, and Lux ~~Lane~~ will see escalated cut through levels as surrounding roads/intersections fail ~~and drivers seek~~

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to avoid delays on surrounding main roads such as Old Georgetown Road, Montrose Road, Montrose Parkway Tuckerman Lane, Rockville Pike and I270/495.

- Influx of aggressive cut-through traffic will degrade safety, quality of life and property values

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Assumptions

- Luxmanor residents believe that increased cut-through traffic erodes the quality of life due to noise, congestion and decreasing air quality and safety; and
- Cut through traffic is more likely to drive aggressively and carelessly, affecting safety of pedestrians;

Approach and Specific Recommendations (detailed below)

1. Stage measures commensurate with increases in traffic as measured by DOT on a bi-annual basis
2. Install access restrictions only following a 3-month trial period to derive facts regarding effectiveness as balanced against community inconvenience. Community discussion-following trials should determine acceptance of the their permanenee

Stage 1, to be implemented immediately:

The following measures exclude any access restriction. Rather, they focus on slowing traffic to improve safety, reduce noise, and discourage additional cut-through. They are implementable at low cost with very negligible effect on convenience.

Alleviate bottlenecks OUTSIDE Luxmanor to reduce volumes inside

Problem: Intersections just outside Luxmanor are near failure as development in the county has expanded and little infrastructure has been added over the past 40 years.

Recommended solution:

- Dedicated right turn lane on Old Georgetown southbound onto Tuckerman westbound. This intersection has been deemed near failure by DOT as traffic backs up intending to enter the I-270 spur northbound at the following intersection. A dedicated turn lane would alleviate this back-up. Disruption to private property could be reduced by narrowing the lanes at the intersection approach to 10 ft, thereby requiring only 4-5 ft. encroachment into the right of way.
- Extend the dedicated left turn lane on Old Georgetown North for traffic turning onto Executive Boulevard westbound to eliminate multi-light cycle backup; and,
- 'To Montgomery Mall' and 'To White Flint' signage on Old Georgetown, Democracy Blvd. to encourage traffic through Rockledge (redirecting traffic loads from Tuckerman, which is a longer route, yet not intuitive)

Reduce speeds for safety and suburban calmpleasantness

Problem: Luxmanor roads were designed in 1936 before the mass use of the automobile and when the population was 1/10th what it is today in Montgomery County. The design subjects our community to undue traffic and the congestions and noise associated with it.

- Install landscaped island/bump-out calming measures at mid block locations to reduce speeding between stop signs. Bump-outs should be located between property lines and island should not block driveway ingress/egress. Note that this option is available only on Tilden and Danville, as they have curbs/sidewalks. Island/bump-out locations:
 - Between Old Georgetown and Luxmanor on Tilden;
 - Between Luxmanor and Roseland on Tilden;
 - Install a bump-out on Tilden Westbound at Roseland to slow traffic approaching school crosswalk;
 - Between Marcliff and Cushman on Tilden;
 - Between Cushman and Old Stage on Tilden; and,
 - Between Tilden and Cushman on Tilden.
- Return the speed limit on Tilden from 30 Mph to 25 Mph

- Install Speed cameras in Tilden and Luxmanor school zones and Aish Synagogue/Aleph-Bet School set to trigger at 30mph to increase safety in front of schools (note: Nearly all of Luxmanor is a 'walk to school zone' with no bus service);
- Install speed camera at Tuckerman/Whisperwood intersection set to trigger at 40 mph to reduce noise and dangerous speeding at the curve (a site of frequent accidents);
- Install stop sign at Danville and Cushman to slow Green Acres traffic at the curve in the road;
- Install stop signs at Cushman and Struttman to reduce speeds and discourage Southwest cut-through; and,
- Install landscaped entry center island at Old Georgetown and Tilden to provide a visible transition-entrance to Luxmanor and slow traffic crossing from Nicholson;
- Relocate current school zone signs on Tilden and include additional signage on Marcliff and Tuckerman (all primary residential and artery designated roads) to include all areas in the walk to school zone.

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Improve pedestrian/bicyclist safety

- Install crosswalk at foot of hill near Tilden near Georgetown for Aish/Aleph-Bet pedestrians;
- Install 4 way crosswalks at all stop sign intersections;
- Install seconds remaining 'count down' walk lights set to legal ADA standard at Old Georgetown and Tilden;
- Install 'stop at crosswalk' pylons at all crosswalk in front of Tilden Middle School;
- Install bike lanes on Tilden which is a Class II Bikeway, per the 1992 Master Plan; and
- Install bike lanes on Tuckerman, which is a Class I Bikeway, per the 1992 Master Plan; and
- Install bike lanes on Luxmanor which is a Class III Bikeway, per the 1992 Master Plan

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Stage 2, not implemented now and not without a community meeting; vote

To be implemented in the mid-to-long term (e.g., when development proceeds in White Flint, Potomac Park, and Montgomery Mall).

Access Restrictions subject to beta trials and implemented when cut through traffic reaches 60 cars per hour or more as measured by input and output (confirmed cut through) study conducted by DOT:

Problem: Intersections outside Luxmanor at Old Georgetown/Exec Blvd and Old Georgetown/Tuckerman are D grade and close to failure per DOT studies. This congestion is forcing traffic through Luxmanor, adding to congestion, noise, and lowered safety of Luxmanor sidewalks and roadways. Furthermore, the no right turn onto Marcliff from Tuckerman Eastbound keeps many people from accessing their homes.

Proposed Solution:

- No right turn on Rosemont Drive or Lux Lane from Tuckerman Eastbound to prevent southbound cut through avoiding the light at Old Georgetown;
- No right turn onto Marcliff from Tilden westbound to eliminate cut through avoiding ~1 ½ minute and 500 ft extra drive time at the congested Old Georgetown and Tuckerman intersection. *To access Marcliff or Tuckerman residents would have to continue to Cushman and turn left. This would add about 100 to 400 yards to their trips (10 to 25 seconds). This would reduce traffic on Marcliff by 20% or 500 cars per day and increase traffic on Cushman by only about ~50 cars per day or 5%.*
- No right turn from Marcliff Northbound onto Tilden Eastbound to eliminated cut through avoiding congestion/lights at the Old ~~Georgetown~~Georgetown/Tuckerman intersection. *To access Old ~~Georgetown~~Georgetown, residents would have to travel east/north on Cushman to Tilden adding about 500 ft. to their trips. This would reduce traffic on Marcliff by an additional ~20% or 500 cars per day and increase traffic on Cushman by only about ~50 cars per day or 5%.*
- No left turn onto Tilden westbound from Old Stage southbound to eliminate SE bound cut through of (495 to I-270 to Beltway traffic parallel). *Residents of Tildenwood would have to access Tilden by Sherwood or Farmland adding 300 to 600 ft (15 seconds) to an exit. This would reduce traffic on Tilden by ~7% or about 300 cars per day.*

- No right turn onto Old Stage from Tilden Westbound to eliminate NW cut through of Beltway to (I-270 to 195 parallel) traffic. Residents would have to access Montrose by Farmland adding 300 to 600 ft (15 seconds) to an exit. This would reduce traffic on Tilden/~~Cushman~~ & ~~Cushman~~/Marcliff by ~7% or about 300 cars per day.

Note the estimates of traffic increase/decrease are based on data collected by DOT, but actual reduction numbers would have to be verified by a trial.

Green Acres traffic

Problem/Context: Green Acres, a commercial enterprise at the end of Danville Drive has expanded from 60 to 300+ students since its founding in the mid 1950s. This had led to over ~500 car trips per day as well as medium duty truck traffic onto small residential roads in Luxmanor. The school is adjacent to land abutting Executive Blvd. The Montgomery County Planning Board will revise the Exec Blvd. plan over the next 3-4 years. It is likely there will be an access road installed behind the existing buildings ~~currently built~~. This will offer ~~an~~ clear access to Green Acres, eliminating the need for parents to drive through Luxmanor to drop-off and pick-up their children at the school.

Proposed solution:

Move Green Acres entrance from Danville Drive. To a (future) Executive Blvd. Access road to be designed in the upcoming White Flint II sector plan

Next Steps

I recommend that the LCA leadership and/or other community members communicate the immediate need to execute Step 1 to the County Council, the County Executive and Montgomery County DOT via a formal request indicating a high level of support. In addition, letters/phone calls of endorsement by individuals in the community supporting the request will be necessary to gain the political momentum required to overcome the established bureaucracy in place to prevent such measures.