

COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

B22-0663 Comprehensive Plan Framework Amendment Act of 2018 DC City Council, Committee of the Whole

Statement of Beth Purcell on behalf of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society

March 20, 2018

My name is Beth Purcell, and I am testifying on behalf of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS), the largest civic organization on Capitol Hill. Since 1955 CHRS has advocated for the welfare of Capitol Hill, including planning for present and future transportation needs.

The Draft Framework Element Ignores the Role of Commuter Rail

Section 206 is entitled MOBILITY AND ACCESS CHANGES. It acknowledges that “road congestion remains an issue” but in terms of addressing the problem, the draft deletes the statement: “... increasing road capacity alone cannot solve the region’s traffic problems.” The Framework Element (Section 206.3) claims that the City has “diversified its transportation choices,” but discusses only the DC Circulator Bus and Capital Bikeshare. Commuter rail is not mentioned.

Commuter Rail Is Essential

Two-thirds of the cars on DC’s streets during rush hour are from out of state and those cars impose increasing demands on parking and pressures on congestion. Of US cities with more than 100,000 residents, DC has the highest daytime percentage increase in population due to commuters, and in terms of absolute numbers of people coming into the city each workday, we’re second only to Manhattan.¹ The number of jobs in DC is projected to increase by over 30% by 2045² and thus the number of commuters will increase. Commuters must have a viable alternative to automobiles or DC’s congestion and parking problems will become untenable.

MARC and VRE Projections

MARC’s plan shows that ridership will increase to 75,000 daily riders by 2040 (MARC Growth and Investment Plan Update 2013 to 2050, September 9, 2013). VRE projects they will be able to carry up to 50,000 weekday passenger trips by 2040 if the Long Bridge and SW track

¹ US Census Bureau, 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates: **Total Commuters**

	Total Commuters	Work in Place of Residence	Commute by Car/Truck/Van	Commute by Railroad
District of Columbia	773,735	220,409	420,454	21,523
Manhattan	2,334,100	769,884	321,070	270,690
Boston	555,227	209,100	278,990	44,295

The Census Bureau no longer separately reports data about commuters who use rail, but rather reports “Public Transportation,” that include busses and ferries as well as rail. However, the relative ratios of the data in the table above are expected to continue to the present.

² CP Framework Section 215.2 projects the number of jobs in DC will increase from 672 thousand in 2015 to over a million jobs by 2045.

constraints can be removed (Virginia Railway Express System Plan 2040 Brochure, March 27, 2014, page 3)³. The total amounts to 125,000 riders per day, or five times the number of commuters that the new Metrorail Silver line can carry. The Silver line can move a significant number of commuters, but commuter rail has a five-fold greater potential.

A Rewritten Framework Element Must Address Commuter Rail

Commuter rail offers the most cost effective approach to moving large numbers of people for work, tourism, special events and important appointments while removing hundreds of cars off already congested highways and streets. Adequate train scheduling throughout the day will make commuter rail a much more viable transportation option for commuters, tourists and others who need to come into the District. The Framework Element must be rewritten to include Commuter Rail.

The Council should reject Office of Planning's Attempt to Water-down the Framework Element

Through the existing Framework Element the Council has provided definite rules on where change and conservation will occur (in the Generalized Policy Map) and where to locate commercial and residential facilities (in the Future Land Use Map). Office of Planning wants to fuzz up the standards and boundaries, and remove definite rules and protections for neighborhoods. We urge the Council to reject OP's rewrite of the Framework Element.

Thank you for considering our views.

³ The VRE System Plan 2040, Final Report, page 8 states: "Washington region's population is forecast to grow by another 2 million persons from 2010 levels to 2040, with Virginia absorbing over half of the increase."