

COMMENTS BEFORE THE I-66 ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEARING

MAY 28, 2015

"My name is Kris Unger, with the Friends of Accotink Creek, a local watershed organization. We experienced first-hand the destruction and damage associated with the 495 HOT Lanes Expansion. So I know what we're getting into with the proposed I-66 expansion. My impression of the initial design plans was that they pitted homeowners against transit against watersheds, so one interest could only gain at the expense of the others. You could have houses and roads, or transit or stormwater and roads, but you were getting roads.

If VDOT stood for the Virginia Department of Trees, we'd all be living in dense forests. We'd never see the sky for all the leaves! VDOT is an extremely effective organization - they have the resources and commitment to do excellent work. But I feel that VDOT's focus has been too narrow. It's good to see that VDOT has responded to citizen concerns by reducing the number of homes taken, and by adding transit to the plan. It shows that VDOT is capable of working to a higher standard, and it shows that citizens and communities need to push VDOT to that higher standard.

The current proposal lowers the environmental standards for this project, leaving the existing road areas with minimal environmental protection. This isn't a savings, it just dumps the costs on downstream communities and watersheds. The Accotink Creek watershed will be forced to bear the costs that VDOT isn't willing to pay, and as the Friends of Accotink Creek, we will work with our friends and partners to hold VDOT to a higher standard.

We stand with the I66 Coalition in calling for a Tier 1 Assessment that would show the true costs and impacts of this project."