

**STATEMENT OF PORTO VECCHIO RESIDENTS
TO THE ALEXANDRIA CITY COUNCIL
APRIL 12, 2003**

Mr. Mayor, Mr. Vice-Mayor and members of Council, thank you for this opportunity to speak with you this morning. I am Bill Hahn, a resident of Porto Vecchio, and I am speaking on behalf of the 200 plus residents. The subject concerns VDOT's activities with respect to the "Tie-in Contract," which covers the modifications to South Washington Street. The residents impacted include Porto Vecchio and Hunting Towers. Ms. Denzer will be speaking for Hunting Towers.

Request

The issue I want to address is VDOT's proposed location of, and traffic control for, a new access road for Hunting Towers from South Washington Street. I request that the City send a letter to VDOT directing them to refrain from beginning construction of the proposed access road until VDOT has met with City staff to discuss the city permitting process for a temporary access road and any future traffic signals at the South Washington Street/Alfred Street intersection in front of Porto Vecchio.

Background: Although construction of this access road is not scheduled until June, the speed with which VDOT has conducted construction on South Washington Street over the past few weeks has raised concerns that construction on the new access road will begin before the City has had an opportunity to resolve some of the key issues and concerns of affected citizens. On April 9, Porto Vecchio and Hunting Towers representatives met with Vice-Mayor Cleveland, Councilman Euille, Rich Baier and his staff. All agreed that the location of the new access road should be moved further north, with a traffic light coordinated with the light at South Washington and South Alfred Streets.

I have outlined for you below, some of the key safety issues from our perspective, together with our proposal and a history of our interactions with VDOT on these issues to date.

Thank you for your consideration.

Issues

If you will refer to the map handed out, you will see the proposed new access immediately to the north of the Porto Vecchio property line. There is no separate traffic light planned for this access.

We understand the need for such an access during construction activities, and though we do not much like it, we accept that such an access must be provided. Our concern

is with the precise location and traffic control provisions. Although this is for a temporary period only, temporary means approximately five years and we are very concerned about the safety implications of VDOT's plans.

Specifically:

1. During the approximately five years of construction at the southern end of South Washington Street, no southbound traffic will be allowed to use South Street to access Hunting Towers, and all traffic for Hunting Towers and Porto Vecchio will be required to use the slip road in front of Hunting Terrace and access the properties using the traffic light at Porto Vecchio.
2. Thus, southbound traffic on South Washington St. wishing to enter Hunting Towers will have to turn right onto the Hunting Terrace slip road, perform a U-turn in front of the Porto Vecchio gateway, and go north to the new access, where they can turn right into the new access to Hunting Towers.
3. All traffic leaving Hunting Towers (whether south or northbound) will be compelled to make a right turn and go north on South Washington Street. If they wish to go south, they must first go north to Greene Street and then turn around to go south. Since there is no traffic control on the new access, this traffic will depend on the traffic light in front of Porto Vecchio to create a gap in the northbound traffic allowing Hunting Towers traffic to exit. However, Porto Vecchio traffic wishing to go north will also be controlled by this same signal. Thus the Porto Vecchio traffic and the Hunting Towers traffic will be competing for the same stretch of road, from two access points in close proximity. We regard this as an unsafe condition, particularly during commuting hours.
4. At the same time, there will be additional traffic at the Porto Vecchio light at the intersection of South Washington and South Alfred Streets:
 - The bus stop will be relocated from its current position on South Washington Street to a new stop on the Hunting Terrace slip road. Therefore, buses also will be required to make a U-turn in front of Porto Vecchio before traveling North.
 - A new bicycle trail is being constructed to access South Washington Street adjacent to the new access road at Hunting Towers. Cars and pedestrians exiting Porto Vecchio will have minimal visibility of these cyclists, with high probability of collisions.
 - There will be an increased number of pedestrians also using the Porto Vecchio light to cross over to the bus stop at Hunting Terrace, since a number of Hunting Towers residents use bus transportation. In addition, when construction is performed on the western side of S. Washington Street, the current, western sidewalk will be closed and pedestrians from Porto Vecchio will also need to cross at the traffic light.

Please note that there are a number of elderly residents at both Hunting Towers and Porto Vecchio for whom these conditions pose a particular hazard.

Our proposal

We are proposing that city transportation staff meet with VDOT to discuss:

- Relocating the new Hunting Towers access point as far north as possible. Even another 50 feet would make a difference.
- Provide the new access point with its own traffic light, appropriately coordinated with the Porto Vecchio traffic light.
- Provide direct access to the Hunting Terrace slip road opposite the new Hunting Towers access point, enabling Hunting Towers southbound traffic to turn left on the slip road, turn right in front of Porto Vecchio, and continue south.

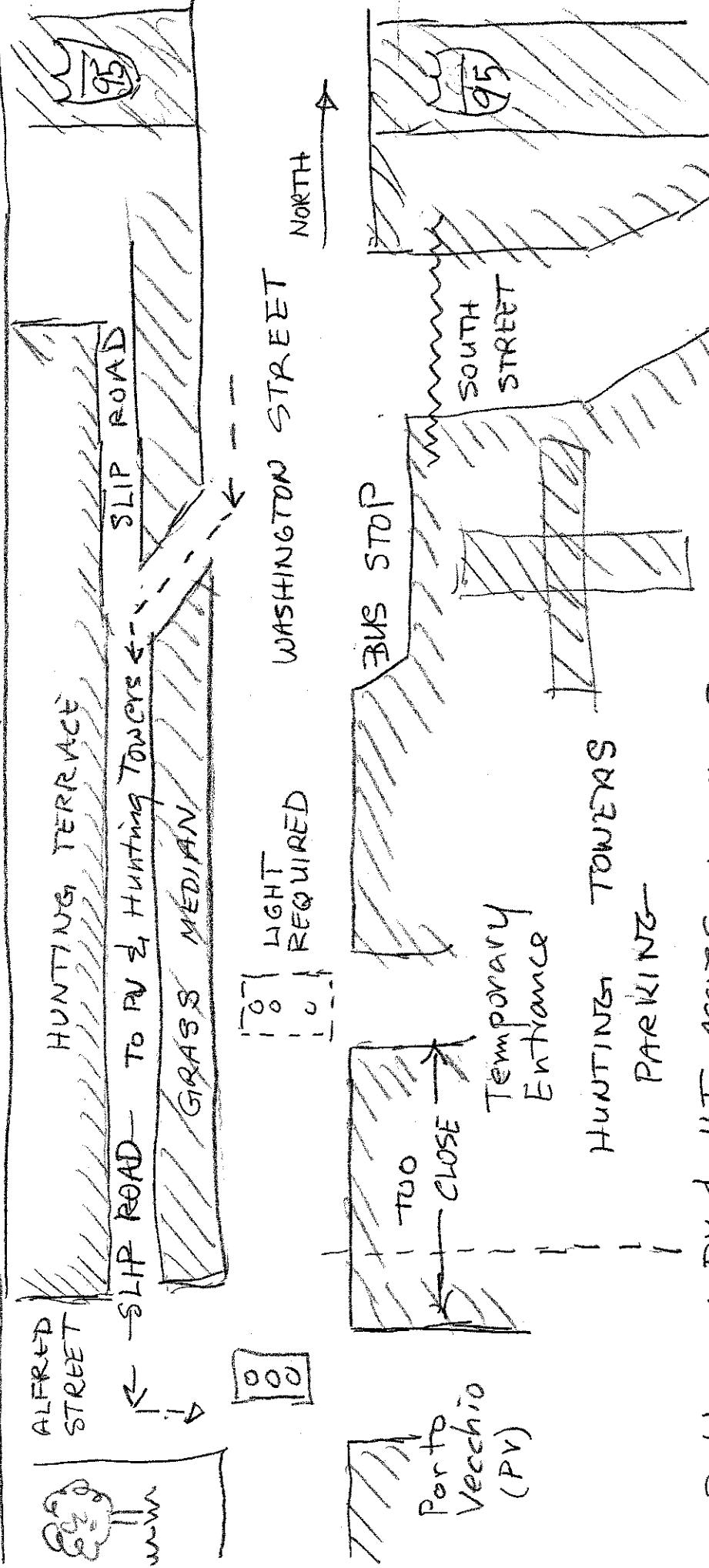
Interactions with VDOT

I would also like to take a moment to give a brief history of the issue:

- December 10 we met with VDOT and expressed our concerns. VDOT said they understood, but it was too early to address the concerns and that we should raise the issue again once the "Tie-in Contract" had been awarded.
- March 4 we raised the issue, since the "Tie-in Contract" had recently been awarded. We were told it was too late now that the contractor was on board. We protested, with support from City staff.
- Faced with this protest, VDOT agreed to meet with us and explain their approach. This meeting took place on March 20.
- During this meeting, VDOT agreed to take a bona fide look at how far north the access point could be placed and the practical aspects of providing a traffic light.
- On April 2, having received no response, we contacted VDOT, and on April 4 we received a brief note telling us that nothing would be changed.

On April 9, we met with Vice-Mayor Cleveland and Councilman Euille, the two Council representatives to the Neighborhood Task Force, and Rich Baier and his staff, and discussed the subject in some detail. All present agreed that Porto Vecchio and Hunting Towers should appear this morning to express our concerns and to ask for Council support. I am here to represent Porto Vecchio residents and Ms. Dentzer will do the same for Hunting Towers. Again, thank you for your consideration.

VDOT PROPOSED TEMPORARY TRAFFIC PATTERNS



Problems: PV & HT ACCESS TOO CLOSE
& NO TRAFFIC LIGHT MAKES
ACCIDENTS LIKELY

Requests to City Council:

- Use permit process to stop VDOT work on temporary entrance, ask VDOT to move temporary entrance 50 feet further north, and add traffic light control.