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9-12-09

Statement of Alex Luchenitser at September 12, 2009 City Council meeting during general discussion (Agenda Item #2), concerning I-395 HOT Lanes project.
(Note: It is possible that I may deviate from this prepared text when I give my statement.)

I am Alex Luchenitser, a Parkfairfax resident.

First, I would like to thank the Council for all the work it has done thus far on the HOT Lanes issue.

I fully agree with the prior speaker.

The HOT Lanes project not only threatens to devastate the historic Parkfairfax community and the Seminary Road area

- neighborhoods that contain schools and hospitals as well as private residences
- through disruptive construction and voluminous new traffic.

But the entire project is fundamentally flawed down to its very core:

- In a time of grave environmental crisis, the project will encourage people to drive their own vehicles instead of car-pooling.
- In a time of increased economic inequality, high tolls that only the wealthy can afford to pay will be charged for using the HOT Lanes, while lower-income drivers will be relegated to the congested regular lanes of 395.
- In a time of severe fiscal problems, the project will funnel toll payments not to the state government, but to a foreign corporation.
- And, in a region where the highway system is already hazardous, the project will reduce driver safety by crowding three lanes into a space designed for two.

The Council should therefore pass a resolution opposing the entire HOT Lanes project, and join Arlington County's lawsuit against the project.

- Participating in the lawsuit will send a message to the state and federal governments that Alexandria and Arlington are united in their opposition to the project.
- Joining the case will also be the only way for the Council to ensure that Alexandria's interests are fully represented in the litigation.
- And if the state becomes willing to settle, taking part in the case will provide Alexandria with a seat at the bargaining table.

- The City would then have an opportunity to negotiate a binding agreement with the state that would address the transportation challenges facing our region in a manner that makes environmental, social, and fiscal sense, hopefully with a focus on mass transit.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Council on this important issue.