

#### 3/6/2022

#### Loudoun County Board of Supervisors

#### Koran T. Saines

Vice Chairman, Supervisor - Sterling District

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As residents of Cardinal Glen for nearly 30 years, we wanted to express our great concern for the July 2021 Route 7 Study / Proposal to remove the fully functional traffic light on the Cardinal Glen side of Sterling Blvd and Route 7. This traffic light offers residents the **only** **safe** passageway in and out of our neighborhood, and this is the only entrance into the Baha'i Center, serving over 600 members. The theme we have been hearing is that these changes are needed to make Route 7 safer to drive with a secondary goal of improving traffic flow. However, the new traffic patterns induced by these changes with likely make Route 7 more dangerous and have only a minor impact to overall traffic flow on Route 7.

The proposal removes the Cardinal Glen side of the traffic light, which is currently triggered only when a vehicle is present. The proposal leaves vehicles with a “right turn in, right turn out” **only** entry/exit from the neighborhood, without the protection of a light or, depending on the final design, a merge lane. Every vehicle, *for every single outing or daily routine trip*, exiting the neighborhood will be forced to make an aggressive right turn, navigating near non-stop traffic on Route 7. Drivers, *of all ages and experience*, leaving the neighborhood that need to go eastbound on Route 7 will need to head west and quickly merge across 3-4 lanes of traffic (again, depending on final design changes) to the leftmost lane and make a U-turn at Potomac View. The Potomac View intersection is already overloaded (in all directions) and known for its high number of accidents. Adding a significant number of U-turns, combined with cars merging into higher speed traffic will likely increase the number of collisions rather than reduce them. This will negatively affect not just people entering and exiting Cardinal Glen but all traffic on Route 7 in Sterling.

Furthermore, without a signal functioning with a left turn into Cardinal Glen or a straight thru passage from Sterling Blvd, drivers will be forced to U-turn at Augusta Drive when traveling from the west or south. There are already many vehicles that utilize the Cardinal Glen signal to U-turn, such as vehicles from Pacifica Senior Living Center. During peak hours, the left turn signal at both Augusta and Cardinal Glen are often backed up. This is especially true at the Augusta light if there is an after-school event at either the Middle or High School. The traffic sources comprising the load onto the Augusta left turn light will effectively be more than doubled creating a great potential that it will back up into the moving lanes of Route 7. Shifting these vehicles to an often already crowded left turn lane will be unsafe and unproductive.

We also cite concerns over the response time of emergency vehicles, which often come from Sterling Boulevard. Without a signal to stop westbound Route 7 traffic, emergency responders will face dangerous conditions in crossing Route 7 or delays while they wait to U-turn at Augusta.

Finally, we believe that whatever time savings are created by eliminating the Cardinal Glen straight thru and left turn lights (which are only triggered when someone is present) will be offset by additional time needed to allow only two lanes turn left from Sterling Blvd instead of the three lanes that currently exist. 15-20 years ago, this light was redone to allow three lanes to turn left instead of two. This change appears to undo this previous improvement based on the only picture the county has provided of what this new intersection might look like however as mentioned previously, the design is not finalized. But there’s not a lot of room to build a new T intersection, provide Cardinal Glen with a new merge lane, maintain 3 lanes turning left (from Sterling Blvd) and provide the new walkways/bike paths along the north side of Route 7 currently being built.

We respectfully request a reconsideration of your recent proposal. It appears to prioritize commuter traffic over local Sterling traffic although the benefit to commuters is unclear. This proposal sets a dangerous precedent in a rapidly growing county and seems to have been developed with very little input from people that will be most negatively impacted by it or without real consideration to other more costly, feasible alternatives such as connecting Cardinal Glen to adjacent residential community roadways or using Algonkian Parkway as a Route 7 bypass and transitioning the existing Route 7 stretch through Sterling as “Route 7 business”. A Route 7 bypass around Sterling, like was done around downtown Leesburg, is truly the only **long-term** fix for local residents and businesses as well as commuters passing through Sterling. We are greatly concerned about the risks that our neighborhood is being asked to take daily in order to save a couple minutes of someone else’s commute. The removal of this traffic light is strongly opposed due to concerns about safety, emergency personnel access, and dropping home values due to unsafe/inconvenient access.

Thank you in advance for your time and your support of keeping Route 7 and the Loudoun County residents safe.

Sincerely,

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