

CLIMATE CHANGE, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION
C/o Department of Environmental Services
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 705
Arlington, VA 22201

June 22, 2021

Honorable Matt de Ferranti, Chair
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

RE: Proposed FY 2022 – FY 2024 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

Dear Chair de Ferranti,

The Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission (C2E2) with input from the Energy Committee (EC), has reviewed the proposed [CIP for FY 2022 – FY 2024](#). We believe the CIP insufficiently aligns core investments to our built environment with the Community Energy Plan (CEP) and other sustainability goals. Such an alignment is a critical and necessary element of an all-of-government approach to addressing climate change and other environmental challenges. In that regard, we appreciate the Manager’s Message on Energy within the CIP, highlighting some of the CEP co-benefits that are embedded in projects already. However, the CIP must incorporate CEP and other environmental goals and their benefits more explicitly into our capital planning – for example, lower costs from higher efficiency systems, resiliency during a crisis, racial equity and other quality of life benefits to Arlingtonians. Along those lines, we strongly recommend the following:

- 1) Reassess CIP projects that, as currently planned, appear to insufficiently (if at all) address greater energy efficient, clean energy, or electric-vehicle options and thereby likely actively undermine core CEP goals, to include:
 - a) The Career Center and the ART bus maintenance facility development;
 - b) County and APS facilities HVAC replacements;
 - c) Replacement of ART fleet vehicles and equipment;
 - d) Multiple parking sites (including the Shirlington Bus Station expansion).
- 2) Fill current CIP gaps, important as we resume 10-year CIP structures, to include:
 - a) A well-developed plan for large scale EV charging station investments;
 - b) Funding to acquire property for expanding the County’s parks and open spaces;
 - c) Increasing investment to build a more robust multi-modal transportation network.
- 3) Make clear that all CIP projects going forward are obligated as a default to:
 - a) Incorporate electrification and eliminate all onsite fossil fuel consumption;
 - b) Select materials with the lowest lifecycle carbon footprint;
 - c) Use outdoor lighting that is Dark Sky Compliant;
 - d) Incorporate native plants.

The CIP language could and should be significantly stronger with regard to CEP goals. The current draft does not instill confidence that investment decisions will prioritize these long-term goals. The document states that “AIRE works with programs across the County to ensure that capital projects *consider* the 2019 CEP, the newly adopted Sustainability Policy, and include relevant energy improvements where feasible” (emphasis added).” Moreover, we find it challenging to assess the CIP’s adherence to County Board-mandated climate change and other sustainability goals in the absence of projects’ concrete details relevant to these goals.

The Board should insist on clarification on how or whether proposed investments will advance the County’s goals for carbon neutrality, biophilia, zero waste, and other sustainability goals. For example, to what extent will these investments improve energy efficiency, shift away from fossil fuels through electrification of building systems and transportation, reduce flooding risks, and protect natural resources? Furthermore, for future CIPs the Board should require descriptions of the impact proposed investments will have on reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHGe) and other sustainability goals. A robust roadmap for CEP implementation, expected to be adopted later this year, should identify key targets, investments, and timelines necessary to guide investment decisions for the CIP.

Because of planned CIP investments’ long-term implications, absent prioritized sustainability consideration, we are concerned that many CIP projects may undermine the goals of the CEP.

- The Career Center and the ART bus maintenance facility planning will move forward but the CIP gives no indication that either will be built to zero carbon or zero energy standards by maximizing energy efficiency and using all-electric systems. Once built, any shortfalls will undermine the County’s ability to achieve its carbon neutrality goal.
- Multiple planned County and APS HVAC replacements offer an opportunity to replace natural gas with energy efficient electric systems but County’s solicitation for these upgrades¹ only address better air quality. In fact, the Manager’s Message on Energy states that the Water Pollution Control Plant’s HVAC efficiency upgrades “are designed for optimal efficiency and robust reductions in *electrical or gas usage*.” We have similar concerns with HVAC replacements at Fire Stations 2 and 5, and the Detention Center.
- The CIP calls for spending \$13.66 million and \$10.59 million in FY22 and FY24, respectively, for ART fleet and equipment replacement. With no plan yet to transition the fleet to all-electric, such expenditures will lock in place use of CNG for decades and should be deferred. Furthermore, the ART Operations and Maintenance Facility’s design should fully align with a transition to zero emission vehicles.
- The CIP is silent regarding any plans, studies, preparations, or investments related to adding EV infrastructure to other properties that also are receiving CIP funding including the Ballston Parking Garage; 1425 N. Quincy project², Bluemont Park Complex parking lot, Court Square West parking lot repairs, and Shirlington Bus Station Expansion.

¹ 21-DES-ITB-477 – “Provision of Labor, Materials, and Equipment for Upgrades to the Preliminary Treatment Process at the Water Pollution Control Plant Phase 9B.”

² See 21-DES-ITB-617, “For the Provision of Construction Services for 1425 N. Quincy – Building Renovation and Storage for Arlington County Emergency Vehicles.”

While we recognize that the proposed FY-22-24 CIP was developed as a bridge as the County recovers from the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the CIP includes a number of gaps that should be addressed next year as the County returns to a 10-year planning cycle.

- While the County has been making progress on creating the charging infrastructure needed to support a transition to an all-electric vehicle fleet, a well-developed plan for large scale investments for EV charging stations for next year's CIP is crucial, including at joint County-Arlington Public Schools locations where school buses and other vehicles (such as S. Taylor St.) are stored. Failure to plan for investment over the coming years will leave Arlington in a poor position to fully capitalize on available federal funding for EV charging stations under RAISE grants or the possible federal infrastructure bill.
- The current CIP does not set aside any funding for acquisition of property to expand the County's parks and open spaces as called for in the Public Spaces Master Plan. Without funding set aside, Arlington will not be in a position to purchase property as it becomes available.
- A boost in investments will be necessary to build a community that can rely on robust public transportation and safely connected pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure to cut emissions from transportation by reducing reliance on individually owned vehicles. The [blueprint for the CIP](#) drafted by Sustainable Mobility for Arlington offers a number of proposals for moving in this direction through investment in Vision Zero, safer and more connected pedestrian and bike networks, and speeding up transit.

The FY22-24 CIP includes numerous necessary investments to improve Arlington's aging stormwater system and mitigate the risks of flooding, especially in light of increasing intensity of storms. The CIP does not offer any details on the expected results and benefits of these projects for ensuring a flood resilient Arlington or how natural solutions are being combined with engineering solutions to capture and infiltrate rain water. Several projects, including the retention vault at Cardinal School and the Ballston Pond Watershed Retrofit, require considerable amounts of concrete as do the various road and bridge projects. Cement production is a key contributor to CO2 emissions but various options are available to substantially reduce these emissions. The CIP is silent on whether these projects will seek lower carbon solutions.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the discussion on the CIP and for your continued efforts towards preparing Arlington County today for the significant environmental challenges it faces now and in the future.

Sincerely,



Joan McIntyre

Chair, Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission

Cc: Mr. Mark Schwartz, County Manager