

January 6, 2017

Mark Schwartz
Arlington County Manager
Via email: mschwartz@arlingtonva.us

RE: FY 2018 Arlington County Budget

Committee Members
Pamela Van Hine, Chair
Eric Goldstein, Vice Chair
Ellen Armbruster
John Armstrong
Rosemary Ciotti
Jim Feaster
Eric Goodman
Dennis Jaffe
Tom Korns
Christine Ng
Collin Weber

Dear Mr. Schwartz:

The Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC) is writing to express our priorities regarding the County's FY 2018 budget. We believe that by improving our sidewalks, streetlights, and pedestrian safety, the County can make our streets more safe and inviting for all pedestrians including the frail elderly and those with disabilities.

By making our streets safer and more inviting for pedestrians, we can increase pedestrian activity which can result in cost savings to the county.

- Making our pedestrian environment accessible to the frail elderly and those with disabilities can lead to a switch from paratransit to fixed-route transit. Fixed route programs, such as ART bus, is significantly less expensive for the county to operate than paratransit (approximately [\\$3/ride subsidy](#) vs. [\\$25-48/ride](#))¹. According to the FY17 proposed final budget (webpage 412), over 100,000 MetroAccess and STAR rides will be taken in the county this Fiscal year. Each of the initiatives discussed in this letter make the County's frail elderly residents and residents with disabilities more likely to be able to rely on the ART bus system and less likely to need to rely on paratransit.
- The percentage of Arlington residents who bike or walk to work [has been steady between 2007-2013](#). Making our pedestrian environment more inviting to all will increase its use which [increases the health of the community](#) and [decreases the](#) number of [car trips](#) taken in the County. Decreasing car [trips improves environmental quality](#) in Arlington as well. Improvements in community and environmental health and decreasing car trips [create cost saving](#) to both individuals and the community and can reduce the cost of maintaining a car-centric transportation system.

In particular, the PAC wants to call your attention to the following activities:

- In conjunction with the County's Bus Stop Accessibility Improvements program contained in the CIP, the County should explore whether the sidewalks surrounding the bus stops are sufficient and accessible, and improve the sidewalk surrounding bus-stops in conjunction with the program.
- The County should continue its efforts and funding to improve the reliability of the streetlights. This should include fully studying – during this coming fiscal year – the feasibility of taking responsibility for the streetlights currently under the control of Dominion Virginia Power (DVP).

¹ See also Dennis Leach's November 29 program at [Arlington Digital Destiny Program](#) Explore the Impact of the Digital Revolution on Mobility in Arlington.

- The County should accelerate funding for critical programs that increase pedestrian safety, including the High-Priority Pedestrian Safety Technology Project and police enforcement and monitoring activities at high-risk intersections.

Sidewalks

Making our sidewalk network robust and accessible to all needs to be a priority for the County. In the [CIP for 2017-26](#) the County has allocated funds to the Bus Stop Accessibility Improvements (p. E-40) program. This project is to design and construct bus stop accessibility improvements at bus stops throughout the County that currently do not meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.² All pedestrians, including the elderly and people with disabilities, must be able to get to these bus stops from their homes. The approved CIP for Bus Stop Accessibility Improvements includes sidewalks, ramps, and crosswalks – but for what distance from the bus stops? Funding should be identified to allow for these improvements to occur more quickly, and to insure that more residents are able to access the improved bus stops.

Streetlights

Well-lit streets are essential for safety and accessibility for all pedestrians – to increase pedestrian visibility to drivers, to help prevent street crime, and to help pedestrians avoid obstacles in their paths. Well-lit streets are simply more inviting to pedestrians and more likely to be used. We understand that currently a majority of the streetlights in the County are maintained by DVP. This situation has been cited by County staff as a hindrance to our ability to maintain all of streetlights in the County. The County needs to allocate sufficient funds to fully study the cost and ability of the County to take over maintenance of these streetlights.

Safety

On average, two pedestrians in Arlington are hit by a vehicle each week (not including those that go unreported). Creating an environment where all pedestrians are able to travel safely, including crossing key, often dangerous, intersections should be a county priority. To cross these intersections safely we believe in the importance of the following pedestrian safety programs by the County:

- The approved WALKArlington section of the CIP for 2017-26 includes some funding for the High-Priority Pedestrian Safety Technology Project that will address specific uncontrolled pedestrian crossings in Arlington that are perceived as dangerous. To improve efficiency, staff are integrating the new Hot Spot Mitigation Management project with the HPPSTP. The PAC supports making both of these projects a high priority activity of the Department of Transportation so that all pedestrians can cross all intersections safely. The FY 2018 budget should fully fund – and consider expanding the funding for these programs.
- We understand funding for the Arlington County Police Department to monitor rush hour traffic at the Lynn/Lee Highway Intersection was cut in the FY 2017 budget. While we understand [long-term engineering solutions](#) are in the pipeline, police presence here is critical until those efforts are completed in 2019. This funding should be restored. Arlington County police periodically conduct enforcement actions in areas where either

² According to a Washington Post article last year, 737 bus stops in Arlington County are not currently fully ADA-compatible. County data support that much work still needs to be done.

driver or pedestrian actions are risking lives. Funding for enforcement initiatives that protect pedestrians, especially those most vulnerable, including the elderly and those with disabilities, should be maintained or expanded.

By improving our sidewalk network and streetlight program and taking actions to increase pedestrian safety we can make a stronger, safer, more walkable pedestrian environment. These improvements will lead to increased pedestrian activity, decreased driving, and cost savings to the county. As an official [Gold-level Walk Friendly Community](#), it is important that we maintain our high-quality pedestrian environment.

We look forward to working with you, Arlington staff, relevant Arlington committees and commissions, and other Arlington citizens on these important pedestrian safety projects.

Sincerely,

Pamela Van Hine
Pedestrian Advisory Committee ([PAC](#)) Chair

Cc: PAC Members; Dennis Leach, Director of Transportation; William Staderman, Chair, Disability Advisory Commission; John Carten, Chair, Transit Advisory Committee; Mitchell Opalski, Chair, Commission on Aging; Kevin Sweeney, Chair, Neighborhood Complete Streets Commission