
South Irving Street Neighborhood Complete Streets Project – Community Engagement Summary

Project Background

The Neighborhood Complete Streets (NCS) program received an application for safety improvements on South Irving Street from 6th to 7th Streets South, to improve the comfort and safety of pedestrians walking on this block of street in the Arlington Heights neighborhood. This is a pedestrian route to and from the Career Center, Arlington Montessori School, Fleet Elementary School and Thomas Jefferson Middle School and Community Center. The application was scored and ranked on objective criteria, with consideration to the history of crashes with injuries, vehicle speeds, proximity to public facilities, nearby amenities and transit options along the Columbia Pike corridor.

Project Goals

This project seeks to improve safety and access by installing a continuous sidewalk on the west side of South Irving Street, accessible curb ramps at the intersections of 6th and 7th Streets South, maintaining streetlights and on-street parking while working within the existing constraints in the right of way. All proposed work would be located in the public right of way and be funded from past funding to the NCS program in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

Public Engagement:

Following an NCS public application and evaluation period in 2017, County staff began working on a design concept which was shared with the Arlington Heights Civic Association in late 2019. Staff also hosted a public project feedback meeting, a block meeting with owners of adjoining properties, a project webpage, and online survey at the time. Later engagement with stakeholders internal to the County revealed a conflict about street width requiring a redesign of the project. The onset of the Covid 19 global pandemic in early 2020 resulted in this project being paused until staff could return to finding a design solution that balanced the goals of the Master Transportation Plan and the Fire Code, with regard to street width.

In 2022, Staff updated the project webpage to include the revised design, a recorded presentation of the design, and a revised online survey, which was open for two weeks. Staff presented the revised concept design to the Arlington Heights Civic Association in February and hosted a second block meeting with property owners in March of 2022. Participants in recent project engagement efforts were asked to review information about the project background and goals, existing conditions, and to provide feedback on the concept design and answer questions about their experiences. In total, there were 69 respondents to the online engagement form.

What We Heard:

Overall, feedback indicated support for the proposed improvements shown in the concept plan. Participants in the engagement process identified the existing conditions that create safety concerns for those walking/rolling and biking through the project area. In response to the proposed concept design, a majority of respondents indicated they would feel a higher level of safety while walking/rolling or biking through the area. Additionally, written comments were received as part of the questionnaire. The key takeaways from the written comments are summarized below.

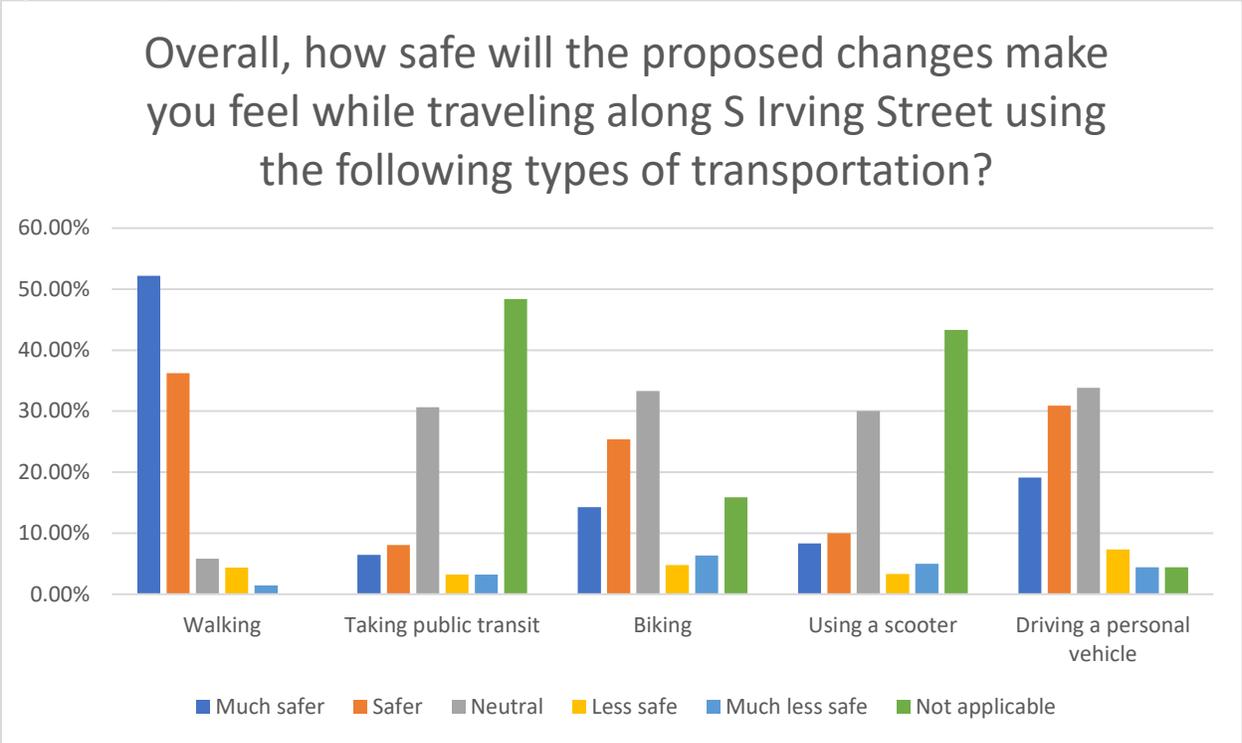
Survey Responses

- Survey respondents reside in Arlington (98.55%), with some who work in Arlington (14.49%)
- The majority of survey respondents shared that they walk (91.30%) or drive a personal vehicle (86.96%) around Arlington, while others ride a bicycle (46.38%), take transit (24.64%) or scooter (10.14%).

Figure 1: Safety - Proposed Conditions



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- 88.4% who indicated that they walk around Arlington, indicated that the proposed changes would make them feel “safer” or “much safer.”
- 50% who indicated that they drive a personal vehicle indicated that the proposed changes would make them feel “safer” or “much safer,” with 33.82% “neutral” and only 11.76% answering “less safe” or “much less safe.”

Written Comments

Through the online engagement form, 43 written comments were received related to the proposed changes. Additional comments were received at public meetings or via emails sent directly to Staff. Common themes associated with the written comments included:

- *Support for Sidewalks* – Narrative comments were very supportive of the goal of providing a continuous sidewalk on this block. The vast majority of the comments stated strong support, overall, with focused comments about specific elements of the revised design.
- *Curb Ramps at 6th Street South* – Concern was expressed about the selection of curb ramps at the northeast, southeast and southwest corners of the intersection, where only one shared curb ramp is proposed for crossing both 6th and Irving Streets. The consolidated curb ramps at these three corners are proposed due to lack of available right of way that would be needed to facilitate two separate curb ramps at each these three corners.
- *All Way Stop at 7th Street South* – Multiple requests for the design to include an all way stop at the intersection with 7th Street South were received. The intersection does not qualify for an All Way Stop, though this can be revisited after the completion of the Career Center expansion to see if travel patterns have materially changed.
- *Pedestrian Experience Crossing at 7th Street South* – Multiple participants expressed concern about the pedestrian crossing across 7th Street South, including crossing distance, visibility, and sight lines. Staff investigated revising the design to include larger curb extensions to improve the visibility of pedestrians and reduce the pedestrian crossing distance. Curb extensions are not possible due to the analysis of changes to stormwater flow that would be created by curb extensions, and incompatibility with the stormwater infrastructure in the area. The design was revised to increase the visibility of the pedestrian crossings across 7th Street South with a “zebra” style striping, and to provide a similar profile to a curb extension with paint/striping. There is an option to include bollards at a later date if warranted.
- *Previous/2019 Design* – Some survey participants expressed preference for the previous design and indicated support for removal of on-street parking to achieve the inclusion of a utility strip. The previous design did not meet the guidance of the Fire Code regarding street width. The current design offers greater clear width in the travel way within the existing constraints (utility poles, topography) on the block. Parking utilization on this block and in the area was also considered during the design of the revised concept. Staff recommend advancing the revised concept proposed in 2022.

Next Steps

With public support for the overall project, Staff will work to address the concerns that were shared throughout the engagement process into the next stages of the design. A final concept plan for the project will be shared on the project web page and presented for consideration of the Neighborhood Complete Streets Commission at a public Funding Hearing in April 2022. If the Commission votes to recommend the project, it will be advanced to the Arlington County Board for approval. At that point, the project would begin detailed design and implementation.

More Information

• Project page: <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Projects/Project-Types/Transportation-Projects/South-Irving-Street-NCS-Project>

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