
North Fairfax Drive Neighborhood Complete Streets Project – Community Engagement Summary

Project Background

The Neighborhood Complete Streets (NCS) program received an application for safety improvements on North Fairfax Drive between Arlington Boulevard and North Barton Street, to improve the comfort and safety of pedestrians walking on this section of the street in the Clarendon-Courthouse neighborhood. This stretch of road is adjacent to the north frontage of Rocky Run Park and is within walking distance of the Courthouse Metro station. The application was scored and ranked on objective criteria, with consideration to the history of crashes, vehicle speeds, and the activity generators along the Wilson/Clarendon Boulevard corridor.

Project Goals

This project seeks to improve the safety and comfort of the pedestrian crossings across North Fairfax Drive by increasing the visibility of pedestrians, shortening the crossing distances, and bringing the crossings into conformance with County standards and best practices with respect to materials and design. Changes to the project area in recent years include significant renovation to Rocky Run Park that enclosed a portion of the park with a fence at one of the existing pedestrian crossings, and the inclusion of a new all way stop at the intersection of North Barton Street and North Fairfax Drive. These changes were considered in the design of the proposed improvements.

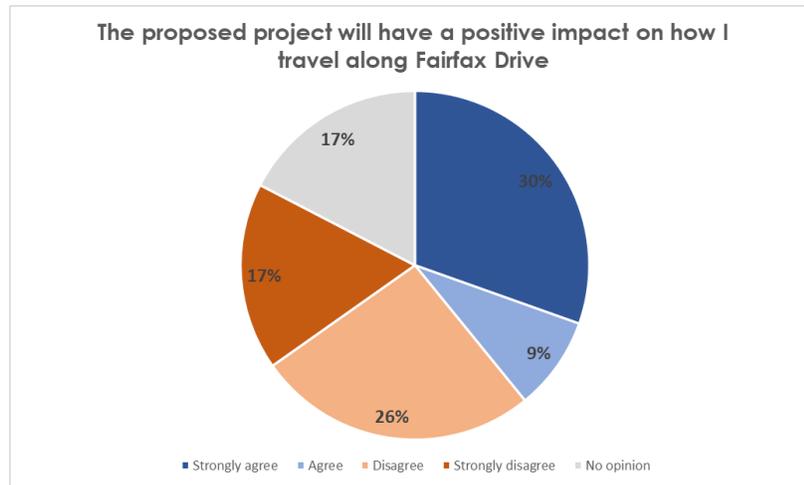
Public Engagement:

The improvements proposed followed receipt of an application, evaluation and ranking based on objective scoring criteria, and oversight of the Neighborhood Complete Streets Commission. The proposed design was shared on a project webpage that included a link to an online feedback tool . The webpage and survey were shared with the Clarendon-Courthouse Civic Association via the Civic Association President, and with the Innovation and Science Focus Elementary Schools via APS Staff and PTA contacts. The feedback tool was open for two weeks and received 23 responses. Additional feedback was shared with staff directly via email.

What We Heard:

Overall, feedback received indicated a mixed response to 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. When asked if the proposed project will have a positive impact on how people travel on North Fairfax Drive, neither the positive ("Strongly Agree" and "Agree"), nor the negative ("Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree") added up to a majority of responses. Conversely, the survey responses indicated the changes would make respondents feel safer across multiple travel modes.

Figure 1: Safety – Impact of Proposed Changes

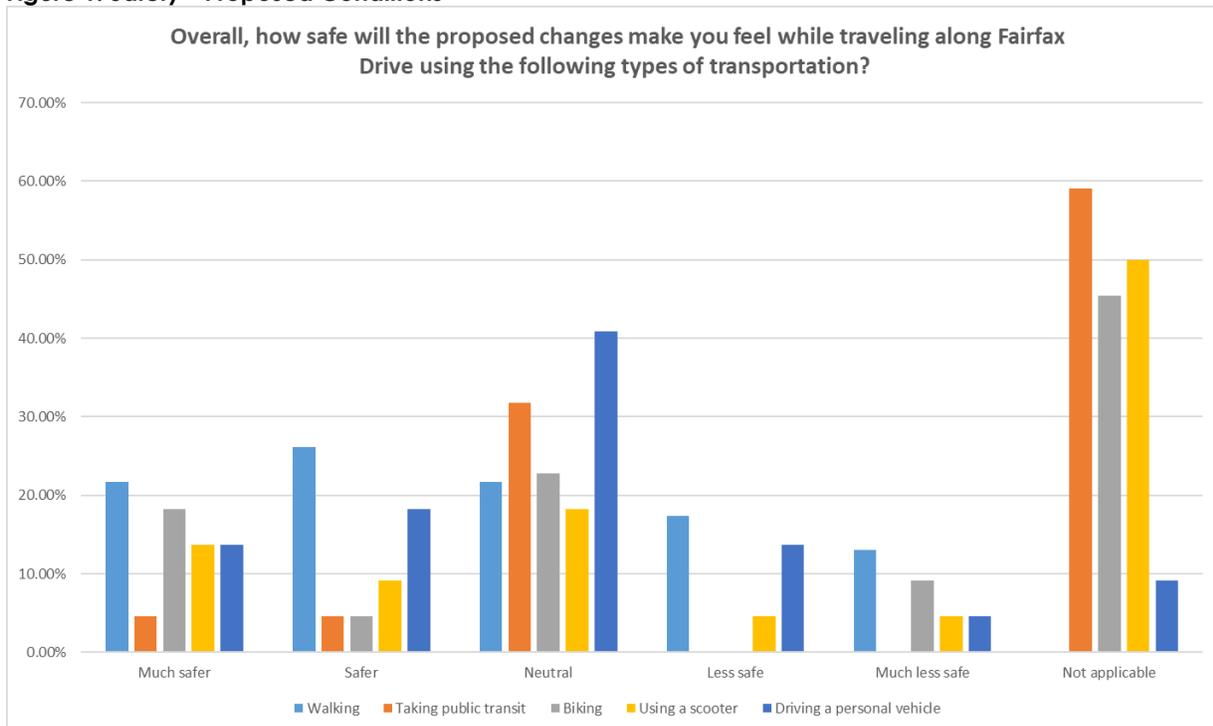


Written comments were also received as part of the questionnaire. These narrative responses help to give context to the overall split response, and provide additional context given the history of safety concerns and changes at the intersection of North Barton Street and North Fairfax Drive. The key takeaways from the written comments are summarized below.

Survey Responses

- Survey respondents reside in Arlington (95.65%), with some who work in Arlington (4.35%). 8.70% answered that they commute through Arlington.
- The majority of survey respondents shared that they walk (81.82%) or drive a personal vehicle (59.09%) around Arlington, while others ride a bicycle (22.73%), take transit (22.73%) or scooter (9.09%).

Figure 1: Safety - Proposed Conditions



- 47.83% who indicated that they walk around Arlington, indicated that the proposed changes would make them feel “safer” or “much safer.”

Written Comments

Through the online engagement form, 15 written comments were received related to the proposed changes. Additional comments were received via emails sent directly to Staff. Common themes associated with the written comments included:

- *Concern about removal of the western most mid-block crossing* – The majority of narrative comments expressed concern about removal of the mid-block crossing closest to the intersection with North Barton Street. The two crosswalks on Fairfax Drive east of the intersection of Fairfax Drive and North Barton Street are legacy crosswalks that were used to access Rocky Run Park before it was redeveloped, and at a time when the intersection of North Barton Street and North Fairfax Drive was not controlled with an All Way Stop. The Park now has steeper slopes and a fence preventing direct access using these crosswalks. Rocky Run Park is now accessible from N Barton St or further east along Fairfax Drive, where the fence opens. The project proposes to remove one of the three mid-block crosswalks for the following reasons:
 - It is safer for people walking to cross where people driving have a traffic control device, such as a stop sign: The existing crosswalk planned for removal is less than 100' away from the crosswalk at North Barton Street which is an All Way Stop controlled intersection;
 - The way N Fairfax Drive and N Barton Street intersect makes it difficult for people driving to see people in this crosswalk before they make their turn: The skew of the intersection geometry inhibits sight lines for northbound vehicles making a right turn onto North Fairfax Drive, which puts pedestrians crossing at this crossing at risk;
 - Turning Vehicle Analysis was performed and showed that larger vehicles making a right turn from northbound North Barton Street are not able to completely straighten out their vehicle until they have already crossed the existing crosswalk planned for removal.

Figure 3: Existing Conditions and Pathway Connections



- *Strong support for curb extensions and shortened crossing distance* – The majority of comments from survey participants and shared directly with Staff indicate support for the addition of curb extensions, high visibility paint and a shortened crossing distance. Comments indicated this to be a busy stretch of road with many modes of travel, and many types of travelers, including young children.
- *Choice of materials* – Some survey respondents expressed preference for the brick style appearance of the current pedestrian crossings, while also indicating that they liked the proposed high visibility crossing. This brick paving material does not meet current County standards, and is insufficient for visibility, particularly at nighttime. The revised concept seeks to match existing conditions near the sidewalk ramps where possible. This maintains more of the existing brick sidewalk on the north side, while providing the high visibility crossing in the roadway.
- *Concern about vehicle travel speeds* – Several respondents indicated concern about the travel speeds of vehicles driving on North Fairfax Drive. The current posted speed limit is 30 miles per hour. County Staff are pursuing reduction of this speed limit, but this change would require an act of the Arlington County Board.

Next Steps

With general public support for the overall goals of the project, Staff will work to revise the concept drawing and share on the project web page. The project concept will be presented for consideration of the Neighborhood Complete Streets Commission at a public Funding Hearing 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

- Review the project page: <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Projects/Project-Types/Transportation-Projects/N-Fairfax-Drive-Neighborhood-Complete-Streets-Project>
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