

Arlington County Bicycle Advisory Committee Meeting Notes

Virtual / Online Meeting

Monday, June 1, 2026, 7:00 – 9:00 PM, TEAMS platform

Attendance

BAC members: Cynthia Palmer (Chair), Aaron Schuetz, Mike Hanna, Eric Goodman, Andrew Martin, Dana Bres (Vice Chair), Ryan Traher, David Ansell, Steve Offutt, Gillian Burgess, Eliot Forster-Benson

DES staff: Elwyn Gonzalez, Brian Shelton

Others: Kevin Treakle (Arlington Public Schools), Randy Swart, Hamilton Humes, Mary Dallao (BikeArlington), Carla Julian (VPRA), Bryon Breese (Long Bridge Partners), Naomi Klein (VPRA), Meredith Judy (VPRA)

Welcome and Introductions

- Elwyn opened the meeting and passed facilitation to Chair Cynthia Palmer.
- Cynthia introduced an opening discussion question on air pollution and active transportation, tied to upcoming testimony opposing vehicle emissions rollbacks.

Key themes identified by meeting attendees:

- Air pollution generally does not deter biking but affects route choice for users to avoid busy roads with more gas-powered motor vehicles (preference for trails and local streets with less vehicular traffic).
- Strong aversion to routes which carry diesel trucks, buses, and construction vehicles
 - Older vehicles with poor emissions
- Trails (particularly the Custis, Mt. Vernon, and W&OD) viewed as lower-exposure alternatives for getting around.
- Wildfire smoke from Canada in the summer of 2024 cited as a rare but severe event, which created hazardous conditions.
- Some members mentioned that they use face masks on Code Red days, shift their travel times to the morning instead of the afternoon depending on ozone levels, and/or switch to e-bikes or transit when conditions worsen.
- Equity concerns raised:
 - Poor air quality disproportionately impacts people with fewer transportation choices, especially children and low-income families.

Arlington Public Schools (APS) Vehicle and School Transportation Safety

Kevin Treakle, a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Specialist with APS, lead a discussion about recent upgrades made to APS vehicles, such as school buses.

- New APS electric vehicles feature modern safety features including technologies for lane assist, motion sensors on side mirrors, and emergency braking. All new buses that are purchased moving forward will have the latest safety features.
- Older fleet vehicles (including most school buses currently in-use) lack modern external safety features.
- APS currently has:
 - Two electric school buses, with a possible third on order
 - 120+ total buses, mostly diesel
- Driver behavior monitoring devices are in-use to track speeding, harsh braking, and idling but so far, do not monitor distractions (phone use, etc.).
- APS has not yet prioritized safety features for vehicles as they pertain to individuals outside of buses.

The discussion then shifted to the mode split of students getting to school. Members raised concerns about existing school drop-off/pick-up behaviors related to County mode shift goals:

- Private car congestion around schools is seen as the primary safety risk, not traveling buses.
- Parents in direct communication with APS staff cite unsafe conditions near schools as reason for driving their kids to campuses.
- BAC members disagreed with APS's stance that school travel mode is driven purely by "parental choice."
- Suggested policy changes made by BAC members:
 - Proven strategies exist to encourage mode shift to walking and biking through programs such as Safe Routes to School, Vision Zero, and Transportation Resources for Arlington County.
 - Clear goals to reduce pickups and drop-offs from private cars:
 - Better data collection and metrics
 - Engineering fixes (bollards, closures, restricted access)
 - Education and enforcement beyond messaging
- Perceived equity concerns - children without driving options are most affected.

APS Responses:

- Transportation coordinators exist at each school but are not a formally organized group.
- TDM plans are not currently being developed for all schools.
- Kevin to follow up with the Committee on:
 - APS safety feature priorities for school buses
 - Potential retrofits of APS vehicles and timelines
 - Specific school safety issues (e.g., Escuela Key).

Master Transportation Plan (MTP) – Bicycle Performance Metrics

Brian, a transportation planner in DES, presented the annual overview of performance metrics identified in the Master Transportation Plan (MTP) Bike Element and outlined latest progress made with data collected from DES and other County departments. Highlights included:

- Bicycle crashes: Increased from 39 (2024) to 49 (2025) incidents; with 9 crashes being severe, mostly occurring at intersections.
- Low-stress bike network: 63% complete (target was 75% by 2025).
- Households within 1/4 mile of the low-stress bike network: 83%.
- Bike commute mode share: Staff is awaiting data from the 2025 American Community Survey.
- APS bike-to-school counts: Not conducted in 2025.
- Trail counts: Generally flat compared to last year, using a 5-year rolling average.
- Bike share: +20% ridership overall; +43% e-bike usage.

Members raised concerns associated with:

- Current metrics count partial or one-direction bikeway facilities as being “complete”, which creates the perception that these masks gaps in the network.
- Data sources (ACS, school tallies, etc.) are viewed as being insufficient or inconsistent.
- The perceived risk of losing valuable bike-specific metrics in the new framework as part of the Arlington’s Transportation Future effort which is reforming the MTP.

Draft MTP Progress Tracking Framework:

- Shifting from annual reporting to 5-year reporting.
- Two categories:
 - Progress Measures (what was built/delivered)
 - Progress Indicators related to outcomes: safety, mode share, access, etc.
- Strong emphasis on Vision Zero goals, equity, and system performance.
- Public comment period for the draft document will be opening next month.

Long Bridge Project – Bicycle and Pedestrian Connectivity

Staff from the VPRA and the Long Bridge Partners project team provided an overview of the new railroad bridge currently under construction and shared trail connections that will tie into the new parallel bicycle and pedestrian bridge over the Potomac:

- New 16-foot-wide bike/pedestrian bridge will be parallel to the future Long Bridge.

- Direct, ADA-accessible connections to Long Bridge Park and the Mt. Vernon Trail on the Virginia side of the River, and to East Potomac Park/Ohio Drive SW on the DC side.
- Eliminates reliance on the existing I-395 shared use path.

Construction Impacts and Mitigation:

- Construction will be occurring through 2030.
- A temporary relocation of the Mt. Vernon Trail route near Gravelly Point expected to begin by mid-June.
- Short-term test pile work may cause brief stoppages to trail traffic.
- Daily inspections and trail maintenance throughout construction.

Discussion and comments from BAC members:

- “Prepare to dismount” signage perceived as creating barriers for riders with mobility limitations.
- The detour alignment at Gravelly Point viewed as being indirect and unsafe.
- Request for project team to explore a Gravelly Point bypass along the George Washington Memorial Parkway.
- Request for maintenance of traffic plans to be made publicly available (latest plans approved by the National Park Service (NPS)).

VPRA Commitments:

- Take the Gravelly Point bypass concept back to NPS and design team.
- Provide NPS contact info to the Committee.
- Encourage use of project hotline for real-time issues.
- Continue regular BAC engagement throughout construction phases.

Other Business and Announcements

- BikeArlington Updates:
 - Bike to Work Day (May 15):
 - 1,774 Arlington registrations (near record).
 - Largest pit stops were held in Roslyn, Ballston, and National Landing.
 - Adult bike education classes are ongoing with a trail ride planned for June 13.
- Upcoming events:
 - Mid-County Infrastructure Open House (June 2nd at Alice West Fleet Elementary School)
 - Wilson Boulevard Streetscape Project town hall (June 4th, to be held virtually)

Chair Palmer adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:12 PM.