

# C2E2's Comments on the Draft MTP Vision and Goals

## Introduction

On behalf of the Climate Change, Energy, and Environment Commission (C2E2), we submit the following comments on Arlington County's Draft Master Transportation Plan (MTP) Vision and Goals. While we appreciate the considerable outreach, engagement, and research that went into developing this draft, we believe several key adjustments are needed to align the plan with the County's climate commitments and create a truly transformative transportation vision. We also recommend that the research and recommendations from the Carbon Neutral Transportation Plan be incorporated into development of the updated MTP.

## Overall Recommendations

The County Board's recently adopted *Climate Resolution* requires that climate action be prioritized in all County planning and decision-making. With transportation accounting for approximately 40 percent of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, ***the updated MTP should effectively serve as the Climate Action Plan for Transportation***. Based on this perspective, we offer the following overarching recommendations:

- Develop a more aspirational vision that clearly conveys the goal to move more people with less traffic while simultaneously reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Use people-centric language throughout the document, with sentences beginning with "people" or "everyone" rather than "transportation network" or "system" to maintain focus on the human experience.
- Ensure all goals are measurable with specific metrics for accountability and progress tracking.
- Consult with the County's Climate Policy officer to ensure alignment with established climate commitments if this has not already occurred.

## Vision Statement

We strongly recommend revising the Vision statement to include specific reference to reducing GHG emissions and explicitly conveying the goal of shifting away from personal vehicles. A suggested revision (bold italics is additional content):

*"Everyone can depend on a variety of transportation options to get them where they need to go, when they need to be there safely, comfortably, and seamlessly **without having to rely on their cars**. **By reducing traffic on Arlington's streets and shifting to electric vehicles when cars must be used, Arlington will achieve its goal for carbon neutrality in the transportation sector**. This transformation will improve quality of life, affordability, economic vitality, physical health and mental wellbeing, and sense of community."*

## Specific Goal Recommendations

### Safety and Comfort

While safety is critical for our transportation future, we recommend expanding this goal to include **Comfort**. Encouraging modal shift requires that alternate transportation options feel both safe and comfortable. Examples of comfort-enhancing features include:

- Wide, tree-lined sidewalks
- Protected bike lanes
- Traffic calming strategies
- Clean, well-maintained buses and bus stops

Progress can be measured through user satisfaction surveys, an increased modal share of non-car transportation, and a reduction in traffic-related injuries and fatalities.

### Equitable and Inclusive

We strongly support this goal as the cornerstone for the updated MTP. To enhance its effectiveness, we recommend clarifying how historical disparities have occurred and establishing a foundation to track progress:

*"Ensure that people of all backgrounds and abilities can meet their transportation needs through accessible and affordable transportation options, addressing the historical disparities created by car-centric development patterns that have placed disproportionate burdens on disabled and economically disadvantaged residents."*

Progress can be measured by increased transportation affordability (percentage of income spent on transportation), improved access to transit services in underserved neighborhoods, and reduced travel time disparities across demographic groups.

### Sustainable

We recommend strengthening this goal to better reflect the County's established climate commitments with specific, measurable outcomes:

*"Meet the transportation needs of all residents, commuters, and visitors with less traffic through mode shifts and electrification while reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving air quality, and enhancing natural resources."*

Success can be measured through annual reductions in transportation-related GHG emissions, increases in zero-emission vehicle adoption rates, expansion of tree canopy along transportation corridors, and improved air quality metrics in high-traffic areas.

## **Connected and Convenient**

We recommend expanding this goal to "Connected and **Convenient**" to better capture the essential quality of making multimodal transportation options easy to access. The revised goal should emphasize:

*"People will have access to a transportation network that is interconnected, dependable, **timely**, and **flexible**, adapting to varied needs throughout the day and week.*

*Success can be measured by transit frequency, multimodal connection points, reduced transfer wait times, miles of connected bike lanes, and implementation of 'transportation as a service' options that provide convenient alternatives to car ownership.*

## **Livable**

While we support the aspirations reflected in this goal, we recommend revising it to include measurable elements or dropping entirely given the overly broad nature of the goal as drafted or revised. The original draft goal seems to work best as part of the overall vision:

## **Transparent and Accountable**

To make this goal more actionable and measurable, we recommend:

*"Ensure that transportation decisions are made through open processes based on research, data analysis, and best practices from other jurisdictions, alternative options are considered and, as appropriate, piloted, and tradeoffs are linked to County goals and values."*

Success can be measured through public engagement metrics, regular reporting on transportation performance indicators, and evidence-based evaluation of implemented strategies against stated objectives.

Notably, in our proposed goals we suggested something similar under the title of Efficiency to reflect decisions related to transit services, size of transit vehicles, parking availability, and right-of-way use.

## **Conclusion**

The vision and goals for Arlington's MTP represent a critical opportunity to align our transportation system with our climate commitments while creating a more equitable, accessible, and enjoyable community. The recommendations above would strengthen the MTP's ability to guide Arlington toward a transportation future that meets the needs of all residents while addressing our urgent climate challenges.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide these recommendations and look forward to continued engagement as the MTP develops.