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March 16, 2016

Mr. Mark Schwartz, Arlington County Manager
Ms. Libby Garvey, Arlington Board Chair
2100 Clarendon Blvd.
Arlington, Virginia 22201

Re: Neighborhood Complete Streets Program – Request for Program to be Funded in FY17

Dear Mr. Schwartz, Ms. Garvey and Arlington County Board Members:

We are writing on behalf of the Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC) to request that the County Manager and the County Board include in the FY17 budget the funding needed to implement the recently established Neighborhood Complete Streets (NCS) program.

Our January 21, 2016 [letter](#) commended the County Manager for his visionary thinking as he recommended to County Board members that they formally establish the NCS program. The PAC was, and is pleased that the County Board responded on January 28 by unanimously approving the NCS program. We look forward to NCS projects being implemented throughout Arlington, and to the community benefiting from them.

If the NCS program is implemented effectively, it would align with and serve to effectuate the Master Transportation Plan's (MTP) [Pedestrian Element](#) and the PAC's charter. The second of 27 directives in the current MTP calls for "complete streets" that are safe, convenient and accessible for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, motorists, and other users. The NCS program would enhance Arlington County's reputation as a pedestrian and bicycling friendly community. Specific NCS projects would be chosen and developed through *The Arlington Way* -- with significant input from the community.

In the County's January 28 [news release](#) detailing the Board's adoption of the Neighborhood Complete Streets Project Ranking Guidelines, Board Chair Libby Garvey's statement captured the very essence of the program's value for our community: "The goal of this program is to make neighborhood streets safe and accessible for all. Neighborhoods will identify projects to make streets safer, all stakeholders will have input into project design and which projects are put forward, and the projects will be considered for funding by the resident-led Neighborhood Complete Streets Commission and approved by the County Board."

Volunteers already have committed to assist with developing, reviewing and rating projects that aim to make neighborhood streets safer for users of all ages and abilities. The proposed FY17 budget includes funding for the design and construction of those anticipated projects.

The approved [NCS Program Guide](#) outlines these responsibilities to be undertaken by staff in consultation with the NCS Commission:

1. Administer the ranking system used to prioritize potential NCS projects.
2. Receive requests and complaints, and evaluate them for NCS Program consideration.
3. Communicate identified problems and preliminary range of potential project elements with stakeholders.
4. Consider viable mitigation alternatives and determine project limits and elements.
5. Determine final proposed project elements.
6. Define scope and process for stakeholders approval.
7. Hold public funding hearings.
8. Coordinate project development in consultation with appropriate County Staff from other affected County programs.
9. Submit recommendations to the County Board for funding and consideration.
10. Finalize project design and engineering.
11. Communicate with stakeholders during project construction.
12. Conduct post-implementation operational evaluation.

Our understanding is that there is only one transportation planner assigned to this program, and that employee already is responsible for managing other transportation projects and serving as staff liaison to the Transportation Commission, an advisory body comprised of citizen volunteers who depend on staff support.

A budget should reflect the values and priorities of our county government and our community. This new program adds substantial, new responsibilities for staff, yet the proposed budget does not correspond to the recently approved increase in workload. The budget ought to help fulfill the goals that the County has outlined for NCS.

The notion that staff simply can assume substantial, additional responsibilities without compromising already existing responsibilities or the launching or sustaining of this new program sounds too good to be true. The County Manager and Members of the Board deserve praise for having created the program. But creating the additional responsibilities without providing the resources to carry them out is a recipe for poor implementation of the program and for public disappointment in the performance of our County government. We don't want to see that happen.

The NCS website indicates that the [NCS program](#) is anticipated to kick off in the spring of 2016 with a formal request to the public for nominations of street projects meriting consideration. We are excited that the program *could* transform Arlington's neighborhood streets into complete streets and enhance the quality of life for all Arlingtonians by providing safer and more convenient access to schools, churches, transit, community resources, commercial sites, and parks and recreation.

As long as the budget appears to not reflect the values heralded in the County's January news release, it seems that the road to Complete Streets is being paved with good intentions -- and a lack of commitment to make them happen.

Our assessment is that for the NCS program to launch and be sustained successfully, it would require a full-time Principal Planner who would staff the NCS Commission and manage programs funded by NCS. Additional responsibilities would include working with the general citizenry on issues of safety and

accessibility on neighborhood streets and helping with projects generated through “safe routes to school” improvements.

We respectfully encourage the Manager and the Board to ensure that the FY17 budget includes funding to support one Principal Planner who would be responsible for implementing the NCS program approved just weeks ago.

Sincerely,

Dennis Jaffe

Dennis Jaffe

Chair

Pedestrian Advisory Committee

Pamela Van Hine

Pamela Van Hine

Vice Chair

Pedestrian Advisory Committee

Eric Goodman

Eric Goodman

Immediate Past Chair

Pedestrian Advisory Committee

Arlington Pedestrian Advisory Committee

Charter

The PAC will advise the County Manager on issues that impact the quality of pedestrian life in Arlington County, including, but not limited to: safety, health, access and mobility, maintenance and development, and the recognition of pedestrian activities as fundamental to a complete transportation system.”

Additionally, the PAC’s scope of issues includes implementation of the pedestrian and streets elements of the MTP, accessibility, Americans with Disabilities Act compliance, innovative or best practices, and promoting citizen advocacy for place-making and improved quality of public space.

cc: Members of Pedestrian Advisory Committee

Chair, Neighborhood Complete Streets Commission

Chair, Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee

Chair, Transportation Commission

Chair, Bicycle Advisory Committee

Chair, Transit Advisory Committee

Chair, Disability Advisory Commission

Richard Viola and David Goodman/Arlington Transportation Division