

September 17, 2018

Mr. Mark Schwartz
Arlington County Manager
2100 Clarendon Boulevard
Arlington, Virginia 22201
Via e-mail: mschwartz@arlingtonva.us

Committee Members

Eric Goldstein, Chair
Chris Yarie, Vice Chair
Pamela Van Hine, Recording Secretary
John Armstrong
Ian Blackwell
Jim Feaster
Eric Goodman
Tom Kornis
Leeann Sinpatanasakul
Andrea Walker

Dear Mr. Schwartz:

The Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC) is writing to you to encourage the County to submit a strong response to the US Army's [Draft Environmental Assessment](#) for the Arlington National Cemetery Southern Expansion and Associated Roadway Alignment.

The PAC agrees with some, but not all, of the preferred alternative plans described in the draft Environmental Assessment (EA):

- We applaud that the proposal will provide a continuous, albeit relatively narrow, 6 foot sidewalk on the south side of the realigned Columbia Pike.
- We appreciate that the bike-ped passageways east of Joyce will connect more easily and safely to the Pentagon area trails, although we request that the north side passageway be 15 feet wide. These new connections will provide "long-term benefits from connecting bike/pedestrian trails to regional bike/pedestrian trail network."
- We are grateful that trees will be planted and streetlights will be added to the landscape zone on both sides of Columbia Pike, making a currently miserable walk much more pleasant. We recommend adding benches as well - it's a long, steep hill to climb, and benches could make the area more secure.
- We are glad that a new traffic and pedestrian signal will be installed to allow people to cross Columbia Pike safely between the Air Force Memorial/new entrance to Cemetery and the south side of the Pike and parking facility. We recommend adding a flashing warning light over the hill when the traffic light is on because the sight line is inadequate.
- We believe that the proposed T-shaped intersection at Joyce and Columbia Pike will make this intersection safer for vehicular traffic. However, we hope that pedestrians receive adequate safety consideration in signal timing, including consideration of dedicated phases for pedestrian crossing.

We do not, however, accept that the proposed shared 10 foot sidewalk on the north side of Columbia Pike is adequate or safe for either cyclists or pedestrians. The proposal, particularly in combination with the closing of Southgate Road, creates significant safety issues for pedestrians. These issues will only worsen over time as the level of bike and pedestrian traffic increases. Instead, separate dedicated bike facilities (protected bike lanes) should be built, or the mixed use pathway should be widened to a minimum of 15 feet.

Under the guidelines in the EA, this proposal will result in “the threshold of significance for traffic and transportation impacts” being “exceeded” due to both a degradation of safety; and severing an existing major route for bicycles or pedestrians (3.10.2, p. 3-43).

The EA plan proposes to close most of Southgate Road, which is both an official Arlington County bike route and the preferred route for most cyclists and many pedestrians heading up and down the hill. The report makes no mention of the impact of the loss of Southgate Road to cyclists and pedestrians – which severs “an existing major route for bicycles or pedestrians”.

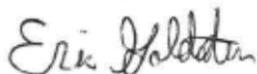
A 10 foot sidewalk is not an adequate facility for this section of road to accommodate the current level of pedestrians and cyclists. Cyclists cannot ride safely on Columbia Pike because the traffic is too heavy, buses constantly pull in and out of the travel lane, sight lines are not adequate, and the hill is too steep. Yet the proposed 10 foot wide sidewalk for use of both cyclists and pedestrians is too narrow to accommodate even the current volume of pedestrian and cyclist traffic that uses either Southgate Road or Columbia Pike. Passing pedestrians safely will be a major challenge for cyclists going up and down the hill, and many pedestrians will feel threatened and vulnerable, especially those who are frail or have disabilities. Cyclists racing down the 6% grade hill on the same narrow sidewalk will be a real hazard to pedestrians.

These problems will only worsen as the expected additional bike-ped traffic along Columbia Pike arrives. Because the current travel conditions for both cyclists and pedestrians up and down the Pike are so difficult, many cyclists and pedestrians rarely, if ever, travel on the Pike. But the potential increase for both commuting and recreational cyclists and pedestrians is significant. Provided with adequate new facilities, cyclists and pedestrians would be encouraged to navigate up and down the Pike to shopping and dining in Pentagon City and Crystal City, trails and parks, the Pike’s terrific eateries and events, and County meetings and facilities. Additionally, in the preferred alternative plan, the Army proposes to include a significant parking area, with public access on the south side of Columbia Pike, serving the cemetery, the Air Force Memorial, the Pentagon 9/11 memorial, and a new 9/11 memorial. With these changes there will be a dramatic increase in tourists traversing Columbia Pike on foot or by bike, adding significantly to the bike-ped traffic in the area.

Rebuilding this section of Columbia Pike is a once in a lifetime opportunity to rebuild a major County street that is safe and convenient for everyone and built according to Complete Street principles described for the project on the County [website](#). Separate protected bike lanes, such as in the alternative streetscape [proposal](#) from the Sustainable Mobility for Arlington County, would make both pedestrians and cyclists safer. Alternatively, making the north side pathway a minimum of 15 feet wide would 1) provide adequate space for cyclists and pedestrians, 2) require only 5 more feet of ROW, and 3) match the width of the appropriately majestic, yet welcoming sidewalks on either side of Memorial Drive.

Let's use this opportunity to build it right - safe, accessible, and pleasant for all users.

Sincerely,



Eric Goldstein
Chair, Pedestrian Advisory Committee