

January 15, 2019

Mr. Mark Schwartz
Arlington County Manager
Via e-mail: mschwartz@arlingtonva.us

RE: FY 2020 Arlington County Budget

Dear Mr. Schwartz:

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

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC) regarding our priorities for Arlington County's FY 2020 budget. While the PAC recognizes the county is facing another tough budget cycle, improving pedestrian safety throughout the county must remain one of Arlington's priorities. Ensuring pedestrians have safe and comfortable routes to wherever they're going is an essential part of what has made Arlington succeed as a transit-friendly walkable community. To that end, consistent with the guidelines in the Pedestrian Element of the Master Transportation Plan and our status as an AARP Age-Friendly Community, Arlington must continue to invest in both its physical pedestrian infrastructure and in the enforcement efforts needed to keep pedestrians of all ages and abilities safe.

Maintenance of Sidewalks and Streetlights

When sidewalks are connected, well-maintained, and take all of their users -- regardless of age and ability -- to interesting places, they bring out the best and most vibrant parts of the communities they run through. Given our increasing Metro obligations over the coming years -- and the need to safely and efficiently get pedestrians to and from Metrorail stations -- the county needs to continue to maintain and improve its sidewalk network, just like it does with its roadways.

To that end, just as the county maintains a street condition index, we should also keep an inventory of sidewalk condition, and ensure a minimum level of maintenance/state of good repair. The county could achieve the funding and implementation end of that via capital money, through better and more active code enforcement, or some combination of the two. Safe and connected sidewalks are not just a nicety -- they are, just as much as streets, a vital part of the county's transportation infrastructure, and should be treated as such.

Additionally, maintenance of streetlights is an important part of creating an inviting, safe, pedestrian environment. As it has done in previous budget cycles, the county must continue its commitment to sufficient funding of staff and capital expenditures to ensure that our streetlights remain operational. The county must also continue to take aggressive action to ensure Dominion Energy repairs its streetlights in a timely manner.

Lastly, the PAC continues to hear regularly from residents regarding the desire for new sidewalks and safer pedestrian crossings, whether to fill "missing links" or to provide safe paths to go to destinations such as schools, shopping, or transit. Whether provided through Neighborhood Conservation, Neighborhood Complete Streets, or another program, the county needs to allocate sufficient funding to continue to complete our sidewalk network.

Enforcement and Engagement

One of the results of Arlington's success has been the near-constant presence of large construction sites, especially along both Metro corridors and Columbia Pike. While these projects include management of traffic plans that should ensure safe and comfortable pedestrian paths are provided during sidewalk closures, the PAC has heard multiple complaints attesting those paths are often minimal or non-existent. Given the construction boom occurring -- and likely to grow in future

years -- Arlington County needs to ensure it has an adequate number of code enforcement personnel to ensure pedestrians of all abilities have safe alternatives to sidewalks around and near construction sites, whether through increased staffing or better cross-training of existing field staff to monitor right-of-way issues.

We also support continued funding of engagement efforts via WalkArlington. Through initiatives like Safe Routes to Schools; events like the Columbia Pike art walks; and other engagement efforts, they have been an invaluable partner in making Arlington a walkable -- and therefore vibrant -- community.

Design and Data Collection

Outside of the realm of active enforcement, improvements in pedestrian safety can be achieved both through passive design, such as narrower streets that cause drivers to slow down, or curbs that force drivers to make more careful turns. While Arlington is only 26 square miles in size, there is no amount of money that would allow the Arlington County Police Department (ACPD) to patrol every crosswalk and intersection in the county. Because of that, we have been heartened to hear county planners and ACPD have been collaborating on finding design-based solutions to pedestrian safety problem spots within the county, and hope to see those efforts -- and the projects arising from them -- supported and funded.

We understand that some projects for street improvements are held up do to a lack of traffic data. The current draft of the Streetlight Management Plan rejected standards based on pedestrian activity due to the lack of resources to obtain such data. No current comprehensive data is available on the status of sidewalk disrepair. Ensuring the county has sufficient funding to collect data to not only support existing projects and efforts -- like Neighborhood Complete Streets -- but also to continually be identifying unsafe street sections and corridors so they can be prioritized for redesign, needs to be a priority.

Vision Zero

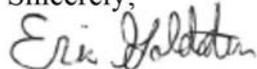
Finally, as noted in a letter sent to you last year, the PAC fully endorses the county engaging in a comprehensive process to evaluate the adoption of Vision Zero. While Arlington has made great strides in designing safer streets for users, there are still locations within the county where pedestrian-safe design has been sacrificed to allow for more efficient/faster automobile flow. We believe that a Vision Zero effort could be an integral part of placing pedestrian safety as the key pillar of street design and operations within Arlington, and recommend the county find funding to begin that effort in full.

Summary

By funding improvements to our sidewalks and streetlights, and implementation of more active and passive methods of enforcing pedestrian safety, Arlington can continue to build on the success brought on by being a walkable and transit-oriented community.

As always, we look forward to being a constructive partner with you, Arlington County staff, public committees and commissions, and all of Arlington's citizens to ensure this upcoming budget reflects Arlington's values as a walkable community.

Sincerely,



Eric Goldstein
Chair, Pedestrian Advisory Committee