

January 30, 2020

Mr. Mark Schwartz

Via e-mail: mschwartz@arlingtonva.us

Dear Mr. Schwartz:

Arlington County is an attractive place to do business. With the arrival of HQ2 and associated businesses, we expect significant development activity particularly in our commercial corridors. Without smart management, this increase in construction could make our streets more dangerous, particularly for people walking and biking.

At a joint meeting on October 7, 2019, the Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC) discussed how the County manages transportation access for people walking and biking through active construction areas. The BAC and PAC have individually met with County staff to discuss this topic over the past 2 years.

Arlington County has an expressed policy to encourage walking and biking and discourage the use of single occupancy vehicles. This can not be accomplished unless citizens are assured safe and reliable routes to and from home, work and other activities. Many of our BAC and PAC committee members personally experienced numerous occasions of being forced into unsafe, unexpected conditions due to poorly planned and implemented maintenance of transit (MOT) around construction sites. We also note that the recent adoption of Vision Zero prioritizes safety for all users of the streetscape.

We see an opportunity for Arlington County to establish clear policies on maintaining safe passage for people walking and biking during construction activities. Setting out policies in advance would result in plans that more fully protect and accommodate the needs of bikes and pedestrians and relieve the burden on County staff that review the plans for transportation during construction ("Maintenance of Transportation" or "MOT" plans). Setting community expectations ahead of time will also enable the community to plan accordingly and will regularize the complaint process. Finally, clear direction will make investigating problems during construction more efficient, making better use of valuable staff time.

The group discussed concerns and developed recommendations related to: (1) Development of MOT plans; (2) Communications to the public at construction sites; (3) Enforcement and issue resolution during construction.

Development of MOT plans

- Scope:
 - County and private development projects should follow MOT guidelines.
 - Emergency projects that extend beyond [2] business days should follow the full MOT guidelines. In the interim, efforts must be taken to protect and facilitate

pedestrian and bicycle traffic. Standard treatments that apply to all MOTs should be well established such that they can apply even to emergency projects.

- In areas experiencing multiple simultaneous nearby projects, holistic area MOTs should be developed to facilitate safe transit throughout the area.
- **Musts**
 - Any necessary pedestrian and bike detours must be accessible, safe, and easy to follow and must have the same level of comfort as the facility being closed.
 - Closure of travel lanes and parking lanes must be considered before sidewalk closures.
 - Pedestrian call buttons must remain accessible to all pedestrians - including those with disabilities.
- **Shoulds**
 - Closed sidewalks should be replaced by protected on-street pedestrian areas on the same side of the street to avoid forcing pedestrians to unnecessarily cross the roadway.
 - Access to protected bike lanes should be prioritized.
 - Consider temporary street lights, temporary stop signs and signals and adjusted traffic signal timing to give cyclists and pedestrians safe priority through detours and to ensure safety.

Communications to the public at construction sites

- **Signage at all construction sites:**
 - Information about how to report violations of and issues with MOTs.
 - Clear indication of which phase of the MOT the project is in and what the approved plan is for that phase.
 - Relevant contact information for project staff.
 - Information about how to find full MOTs online.
 - Information on how long closures are expected to last.
- **Information available online:**
 - Information about how to report violations of and issues with MOTs.
 - MOTs with project schedules should be posted - This transparency and access for citizens to be able to review the MOTs will public understanding. Approved MOTs could be posted on project web pages.
 - Easy to understand and accessible information on which sidewalks and lanes are currently closed.
- **Detour signage:**
 - Advertised in advance of the closure, with correct dates, so that cyclists and pedestrians can change their route easily and comfortably follow the detour.
 - Detour wayfinding signs need to provide clear, simple, and precise instructions, with maps, as appropriate.
 - Signage itself must not block the sidewalk.
 - Place signs far enough in advance to be useful, e.g. at the previous marked pedestrian crossing for closed sidewalks, and with ample merge time for closed bike lanes.
 - If a temporary detour pathway is for shared use, clearly mark it for both bikes and pedestrians and provide warning to both groups.

- Drivers also need posted warnings if cyclists will be merging into and sharing the travel lane during construction.
- Any identified errors in detour signage must be corrected within 1 day.

Enforcement and issues during construction.

- Develop a clear and efficient reporting system for violations of MOTs.
- Develop expectations for how long staff has to respond to a report of a violation or issue with an MOT.
- Develop expectations for how long companies have to remedy violations of MOTs.
- Encourage members of the public and County staff to report problems they observe.
- Road surfaces should be maintained for safe bicycle traffic (relatively smooth paving, free of debris) unless a safe detour is provided.
- Examine potential code changes that would enhance staff's authority to enforce MOTs up to and including fines and stop-work orders.
- Develop a clear process to reevaluate approved MOTs during construction when actual use shows people cannot travel around the construction safely.
- Determine appropriate staffing to respond to safety concerns with increased construction.
- Consider past compliance issues when evaluating bids for work on County projects.

We look forward to working with you on this important topic.

Thank you for your time and your service.

/s

Gillian Burgess

Chair, Bicycle Advisory Committee

/s

Eric Goldstein

Chair, Pedestrian Advisory Committee