

Neighborhood Complete Streets Commission – Charter (DRAFT)

Adopted by the County Board on July 24, 2014; DRAFT recommended revisions approved by the NCSC January 2020

Introduction

The Neighborhood Complete Streets Commission (NCSC) is created as an advisory body by the County Board of Arlington County, Virginia. The NCSC will advise the Board with respect to the adoption, implementation and review of the Neighborhood Complete Streets (NCS) Program. Neighborhood Principal and Neighborhood Minor streets as defined in the 2011 Streets Element of the Master Transportation Plan (MTP) will be eligible under the NCS Program.

Mission

The NCSC will advise the County Board on transforming Arlington’s neighborhood streets to the Complete Streets model, described in, and consistent with, the MTP Streets Element. The NCS Program is intended to (1) make streets safe for all users of all ages and abilities, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and other users¹ and (2) preserve or enhance neighborhood character and desired community attributes.²

Governing Documents

The Master Transportation Plan, including the MTP Goals and Policies adopted November 13, 2007, as amended from time to time; the MTP Streets Element, adopted February 2, 2011, as amended from time to time; the Pedestrian Element and Bicycle Element, both adopted July 19, 2008, as amended; the Transit Element, adopted July 13, 2009, as amended from time to time; and the Parking and Curb Space Management Element, adopted November 14, 2009, as amended from time to time.

Functions and Scope

The NCSC shall carry out the following functions:

1. Provide advice and input to the County Board and County Staff with respect to developing the NCS Program processes to be adopted by the County Board, including project selection criteria, project prioritization, public outreach, opportunity for public participation, and public traffic safety education.
2. Provide advice to County Staff in connection with implementing the NCS Program processes approved by the Board, including calls for new projects, and ongoing advice regarding developing and implementing NCS projects.
3. Participate with County Staff in administrating the ranking system used by the NCS program to prioritize neighborhood complete streets proposals.
4. Make funding recommendations to the County Board regarding proposed NCS Projects.
5. Participate with County Staff in developing neighborhood traffic safety education programs.
6. Recommends new policies and strategies to the County Board based on NCS Program experience and evolving best practices in other jurisdictions. Advises the Board on Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) priorities and on other relevant policies.

Membership

The NCSC shall be comprised of up to fifteen (15) members who shall be appointed by the County Board to serve at the pleasure of the County Board:

- 5 to 9 members – At-Large
 - 2 members – representing the Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Commission
 - 1 member – representing the Transportation Commission
 - 1 member – representing the Bicycle Advisory Committee
 - 1 member – representing the Pedestrian Advisory Committee
 - Additional members from other relevant advisory groups (e.g., the Urban Forestry Commission)
- Members will be appointed for three-year terms, and with reappointment, shall be permitted to serve no more than nine (9) consecutive years. Each NCSC member must submit Economic Statement of Interest forms, consistent with policy of requiring disclosure by advisory group members making funding recommendations.

¹ “As public funding and private redevelopment provide opportunities, those streets should be upgraded to provide essential street functions such as safe and convenient access for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, emergency vehicles, and proper storm water management.” MTP Streets Element, p. 32.

² “Preservation or enhancement of neighborhood character and desired community attributes should also be primary considerations in developing street projects.” MTP Streets Element, p. 27.

A member of the Commission who fails to attend three (3) Commission meetings in a single year without providing advance notice to the Commission Chair, or staff, of a legitimate reason for the absence may be asked to resign his or her remaining term on the Commission. The Commission Chair, after consultation with the County Board liaison, shall notify the member if such an action is warranted.

Chair and Committees

A Chair shall be designated by the County Board. The Commission will choose the Vice Chair. The NCSC may create committees, as necessary, to accomplish specific Commission missions and the Chair shall appoint committee leadership. Committee membership may include persons who are not on the Commission. Members are expected to perform their duties and responsibilities relating to the NCS Program. The Commission will self-monitor its activities and progress in fulfilling this mission.

Staff liaison

The County Manager shall appoint a member of the Staff from the Department of Environmental Services, Division of Transportation to serve as Staff liaison to the NCSC. Other County Staff, including employees of the Arlington Public Schools, will assist the NCSC as circumstances warrant.

Meetings

All meetings of the NCSC will be conducted in accordance with applicable laws, including Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and any state level equivalents. All NCSC meetings shall be open to the public. A quorum for meetings of the full NCSC will consist of at least 51% of the NCSC membership, excluding vacant seats. Minutes will be taken and all minutes will be available for public review. The full NCSC shall meet at least once in each calendar quarter.

The Commission has adopted a Policy for Electronic Participation in Neighborhood Complete Streets Commission Meetings which is located on the [Arlington County website](#).

Reporting to the Board

Review of the implementation and evaluation sections of the approved NCS projects, and recommend changes in the NCS Program will be shared with the Board Liaison as appropriate.

Update of this Charter

From time to time, The NCSC shall review this charter to assure that it meets current needs. Any requests for changes must be processed through the Board Liaison.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMPLETE STREETS PROGRAM GUIDE

DRAFT proposed for update by the Arlington County Board July 18, 2020

INTRODUCTION

This Neighborhood Complete Streets (“NCS”) Program Guide describes the implementation of Arlington’s “Complete Streets” policy in Arlington’s residential neighborhoods. The NCS program overall and this Program Guide rely on guidance from a handful of important County documents:

- The County’s Master Transportation Plan (MTP), especially the MTP “Goals and Policies” element adopted November 13, 2007 and updated February 25, 2017,¹ which emphasizes “Complete Streets” as a central objective of the MTP; and the MTP Streets Element adopted February 12, 2011 and amended October 15, 2016.²
- A Six-Step Public Engagement Guide for Capital Projects adopted January 31, 2018.³

What is a Complete Street and what does it look like? There is no single definition or description for a Complete Street. Each is designed to fit its particular community’s needs. The MTP Goals and Policies element states that Arlington should strive to “Design and operate a comprehensive network of Arlington’s local and arterial streets to enable safe access by all user groups including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit vehicles and users, and motorists of all ages and abilities, allowing these users to access a full range of daily activities.”⁴ According to the National Complete Streets Coalition, a Complete Street “may include: sidewalks, bike lanes (or wide paved shoulders), special bus lanes, comfortable and accessible public transportation stops, frequent and safe crossing opportunities, median islands, accessible pedestrian signals, curb extensions, narrower travel lanes, roundabouts, and more.”⁵

¹ Master Transportation Plan, Goals and Policies Summary, <https://projects.arlingtonva.us/plans-studies/transportation/master-transportation-plan/>.

² Master Transportation Plan Streets Element, <https://arlingtonva.s3.dualstack.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2017/04/October-2016-Amended-Streets-Element.pdf>.

³ A Six-Step Public Engagement Guide for Capital Projects, https://www.arlingtonva.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/PublicEngagementGuide_020518.pdf.

⁴ Master Transportation Plan, Goals and Policies Summary, at page 5.

⁵ National Complete Streets Coalition. <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/program/national-complete-streets-coalition/publications/what-are-complete-streets/>.

CHAPTER 1: PROGRAM GOALS AND CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMISSION

The NCS Program Goals are derived from the MTP Streets Element:

- Construct and manage streets to be Complete Streets. Streets should be safe and comfortable for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, motorists and other users.
- Provide safe and convenient access for all users, of all abilities, on all streets.
- Minimize rates of injuries and accidents for each mode of transportation with a goal that transit riders, pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists feel safe and comfortable at all times when traveling in Arlington.
- Improved access, safety and livability in residential areas.
- Support compliance with traffic laws while minimizing reliance on police resources.
- Address residential traffic problems in a fair, consistent and comprehensive manner through application of uniform objective criteria.

Only Neighborhood Principal and Neighborhood Minor streets as defined in the MTP Streets Element are eligible under the NCS Program.⁶

The County Board, under the “Neighborhood Complete Streets Commission – Charter,” established a citizen advisory group, the Neighborhood Complete Streets Commission (NCSC) to help provide direction and support for the program along with County staff.

The NCSC carries out the following functions:

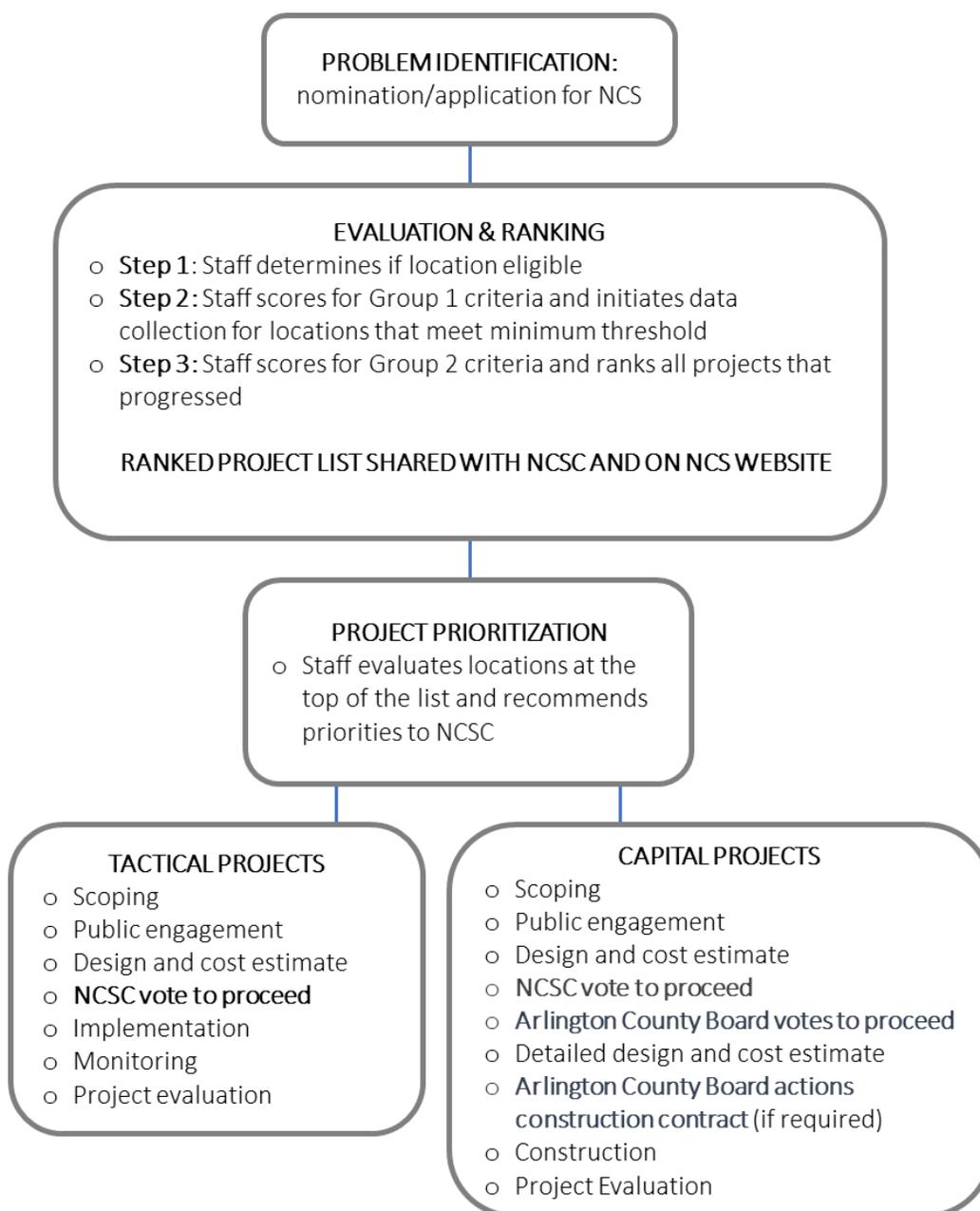
- Provides advice and input to the County Board and County Staff with respect to developing the NCS Program processes to be adopted by the County Board, including project selection criteria, project prioritization, public outreach to encourage engagement, and public traffic safety education.
- Provides advice to County Staff in connection with implementing the NCS Program processes approved by the Board, including calls for new projects, and ongoing advice regarding developing and implementing NCS projects.
- Participates with County Staff in administering the ranking system used by the NCS program to prioritize potential neighborhood complete streets projects.
- Makes funding recommendations to the County Board regarding proposed NCS Projects.
- Participates with County Staff in developing neighborhood traffic safety education programs.
- Recommends new policies and strategies to the County Board based on NCS Program experience and evolving best practices in other jurisdictions. Advises the Board on Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) priorities and on other relevant policies.

The NCS Program implementation is coordinated with other County programs to accomplish the objectives of the MTP. The NCSC receives guidance from the County Board through a Board liaison and via the project approval and funding process.

⁶ See “Master Transportation Plan Map” with street typologies: <https://projects.arlingtonva.us/plans-studies/transportation/master-transportation-plan/>.

CHAPTER 2: NEIGHBORHOOD COMPLETE STREETS PROCESS

The NCS Program process anticipates that projects will vary considerably in complexity, cost, and scope. Consequently, the specific process for development of each project will be tailored to the circumstances of that project. This Chapter sets forth in general terms the steps that projects will follow. The principal objectives of the process are to ensure that (1) safety issues have primacy; (2) evaluations and project rankings are based on objective criteria; (3) verifiable factual information supports all projects; (4) affected stakeholders are made aware of potential projects and have an opportunity to provide input during project development; and (5) NCS resources are distributed throughout the County through the use of a problem-severity ranking system. The following flowchart lays out the general process that projects nominated for the NCS will follow. See below for a narrative description of the steps.



Project Initiation

The first step in the process will be to identify and evaluate neighborhood street sections for program eligibility, and to assign those streets a ranking score to help determine the priority in which they will be selected for project development. The NCSC, working with County Staff, has established specific, objective criteria and a point system for determining eligibility for the program and for assessing eligible streets for project development and funding. These criteria and points are set forth in Appendix A to this Program Guide.

Requests for evaluation of a particular neighborhood street for the Complete Streets Program can be initiated in a variety of ways. Residents, community organizations or Board- or Manager-appointed advisory groups may request a street evaluation. County Staff could initiate a project request based on, for example, the anticipated impact of construction of a new school. Finally, County Staff will occasionally issue public calls for potential project locations.

Project Prioritization

All nominations will be investigated by staff for eligibility to the NCS program. If applicable, staff will adapt a preliminary project area and scope in order to rank all eligible projects. The list of potential projects will be periodically updated and posted on the County's website.

Project scopes will vary. A project could involve one or a few contiguous blocks of a street. Alternatively, a project could be limited to a single intersection with poor sightlines, unsafe pedestrian crossing areas or continual problems with stop sign compliance.

A numerical scoring system has been developed to prioritize Complete Streets requests for development. Each street for which a request has been submitted will be evaluated and scored by County Staff. The assigned score will affect the order of priority in which the street will be considered for project development and funding.

Projects will also be prioritized based on scope and potential costs. There will be two tracks or types of projects:

1. Capital Projects – these are projects with a more expansive scope, higher projected costs, and require more intensive interventions. Capital Projects will likely be required in instances where a street is missing sidewalks on both sides, where the sidewalk is incomplete or obstructed or in other instances with serious safety and accessibility issues.
2. Tactical Projects – these are projects that are relatively limited in scope, lower cost and can be completed quickly. If a project has a limited geographic scope and there is a clear safety or accessibility issue that can be solved quickly through low intensity measures, it will likely be recommended in the Tactical Project track. This track may also be used to try new methods, materials, and approaches to street improvements.

Staff will review projects on the numerically scored list and make recommendations to the NCSC about prioritization of projects and which track the projects belong in based on the availability of capital funding and Staff resources. The NCSC will then approve specific projects to move forward on either the Tactical or Capital tracks.

Note that while Tactical Projects will generally involve lower intensity interventions, completion of a Tactical Project does not mean that a street will be removed from consideration for more intense measures. In other words, if safety and accessibility problems continue after the initial Tactical Project is completed or more permanent fixtures are appropriate, the street may remain in consideration for a Capital Project.

Project Development

NCS Staff will coordinate project development in consultation with appropriate County Staff from other affected County programs, including emergency responders. The NCSC will monitor ongoing project status, and some individual NCSC members will participate in the community engagement process. Policy guidance in adopted County plans, including the Master Transportation Plan and Neighborhood Conservation plans, will be considered along with the physical characteristics of the neighborhood when designing the projects.

In developing projects, the NCS Program will coordinate when appropriate with complementary programs, such as the Safe Routes to School program, BIKE Arlington, WALK Arlington, Arlington Transit, etc.

NCS staff will also develop projects with an eye to addressing concerns raised by the community in nominating the project as well as design considerations such as sightlines, street lighting, etc.

Community Engagement

Community engagement at appropriate points during an NCS project will be integral to the success of specific NCS projects and the overall program. As with the scoping and prioritization process, the community engagement process will be context and project specific.

County staff will use the board approved document “A Six-Step Public Engagement Guide for Capital Projects” as a guideline to develop and execute community engagement around relevant projects. As the public engagement guide notes: “Arlington completes hundreds of projects -- small and large -- in any given year. Recognizing that there is no one-size-fits-all approach, this guide is intended to help align the level of public engagement based on characteristics, benefits and potential impacts of each project. Not every project will have a 6-step engagement process. While all County projects are important, there will always be some routine tasks that the County will complete at its discretion while practicing an efficient use of time and resources.”⁷

Project Funding

The activity level of the NCS Program will inevitably depend on the level of funding. The NCS Program is currently funded with capital funding support through a combination of Pay-Go and Bond funding for capital improvements, as well as budgeted funds for program administration.

The project funding process will vary based on project track. Because Tactical Projects are lower cost and require less intense interventions, once these Projects are developed to approximately 30% design, the NCSC will vote on whether to move forward with them.

⁷ 6 Step Guide, at page 3.

Once Capital Projects are developed to approximately 30% design, the NCSC will hold a funding session to formally vote on NCS project recommendations to the County Board. These funding sessions (like all NCSC meetings) will be open to the public and the public will be permitted to speak with respect to their project, subject to the general rules applicable to speaking at a public meeting. In making a formal recommendation to the County Board to fund a Capital Project, the NCSC will consider the results and feedback from the project's public engagement process, including positions taken by neighborhood civic associations and individual street users, among others, either written or presented directly during the funding session. The support or opposition of any given individual or organization will not, however, govern the NCSC's decision whether to recommend a project to the Board.

The NCSC will vote on whether to recommend funding a Capital Project to the County Board. Ultimately, only the County Board can take action on funding Capital Project execution.

Project Implementation

If the Board approved funding for a proposed Capital Project, project implementation will move forward. Likewise, if the NCSC votes to move forward on a Tactical Project, implementation will move forward. Either way, the NCSC will monitor the progress Staff's implementation of NCS projects and actual versus projected project costs.

Project Evaluation

Before-and-after studies are important for building a base of evidence for the effectiveness of the Complete Streets Program, allowing the County to target investment in Complete Streets projects based on effectiveness.

Within two years after project implementation (on either the Tactical or Capital Project tracks), staff will evaluate each project, solicit community feedback, and make a recommendation to the NCSC about the status of the project and any recommended next steps. In general, performance measures/evaluation criteria should be closely tied to planning goals and measure a relevant aspect of system performance.

APPENDIX A: NEIGHBORHOOD COMPLETE STREETS PROJECT RANKING GUIDELINES

NCS Project Evaluation Sheet

Group I	
A. Sidewalk Conditions	
No complete sidewalks (12)	
OR Narrow or obstructed (6)	
Missing curb ramps (2)	
B. Traffic Hazards/Safety	
Reported crash past 48 months (4 points per crash, max 8)	
Crash with Physical Injury (additional 4-6 points per crash, max 12)	
Minimum total Group I A + B (minimum 8 points)	0
C. Speed & Volume	
Speeding Problem (8)	
Traffic Volumes above 1,000 per day (4)	
Traffic Volumes between 500 and 1,000 (2)	
Total Group I A+B+C: (minimum 12 points)	0

Group II	
A. Pedestrian attractors	
3/4 mile to Metrorail (4)	
1/2 mile to ES; 3/4 mile to MS/HS (4 points per school, max 12)	
School bus stop (2)	
1/4 mile to bus stop (1-3)	
1/2 mile to shopping/office (1-3)	
1/2 mile to civic building (3)	
within 500' of a park (3)	
B. Mapped Bike Routes	
Designated on bike map (3)	
Connects with trail (3)	
Connects to bike route (1)	
CaBi station w/in 1/4 mile (2)	
C. Land Use/GLUP	
Commercial/mixed use (5)	
37+ dwelling units (5)	
16-36 dwelling units (4)	
11-15 dwelling units (3)	
Total Group II A+B+C	0
OVERALL TOTAL	0

RECOMMENDED NEIGHBORHOOD COMPLETE STREETS PROJECT RANKING GUIDELINES
Original Guidelines approved by the Arlington County Board on January 28, 2016

I. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

A. Sidewalk Conditions:

1. No complete sidewalks on either side of street (12 points)
OR
2. A complete sidewalk on one side of street, but with an inadequate width or obstructed sidewalk on either side of the street based on the guidelines adopted in the MTP Streets Element (6 points)
3. A complete sidewalk on at least one side of street, but no curb ramp(s) (2 points)

B. Traffic Hazards & Safety:

1. Reported crash(es)¹ within the past 48 months (4 points per crash, maximum 8 points)
2. Reported crash(es) include physical injury (additional 4 to 6 points per crash with injury based on severity, maximum 12 points)

Score of Group I A + B=

Minimum score required to progress to criterion C = 8 points

C. Speed & Volume:

1. Existence of a speeding problem as defined below (8 points)
2. Street traffic volumes above 1,000 ADT (4 points)
3. Street traffic volumes between 500 and 1,000 ADT (2 points)

Score of Group I A + B + C=

Minimum score required to qualify for the NCS program = 12 points

II. ADDITIONAL STREET UTILIZATION CRITERIA (to be applied to projects that meet the minimum Eligibility Criteria)

A. Pedestrian Attractors/Generators and Connectivity

1. Within three-quarters of a mile of Metrorail station (4 points)
2. Within one-half mile of elementary school, and three-quarters of a mile of secondary schools (4 points per school, maximum 12 points)
3. School bus stop on the street segment (2 points)
4. Within one-quarter mile of a transit bus stop (ART or Metrobus) (up to 3 points based on utilization)
5. Within one half-mile of private/commercial shopping or office development (1-3 points based on intensity of development)

¹ "Crashes" include automobile collisions with bicycles or pedestrians.

6. Within one half-mile of a civic building (post office, library, community center, hospital etc.) (3 points)
7. Within 500' of a public park (3 points)

B. Mapped Bicycle Route

1. Street designated as an on-street bicycle route (blue line) or bike lane/sharrows (black line) on the Arlington Bikeway Map (3 points)
2. Street section intersects with or connects to a multi-use trail (3 points)
3. Street section intersects with an on-street bicycle route or bike lane/sharrows designated on the Arlington Bikeway Map (1 point)
4. Capital Bikeshare Station within one-quarter mile (2 points)

C. Land Use / GLUP Designation

1. Commercial / mixed use (5 points)
2. 37 to 72 dwelling units per acre (5 points)
3. 16 to 36 dwelling units per acre (4 points)
4. 11 to 15 dwelling units per acre (3 points)

Score of Group II A + B + C =

Total Score Group I + Group II =

Notes:

Any project that was not approved through the Neighborhood Conservation (NC) program process or was withdrawn therefrom is disqualified for consideration by the Neighborhood Complete Streets Commission (NCSC) for four years after the date of such disapproval or withdrawal. For this purpose, any project disqualified from consideration by the NCSC must contain at least 50% of the scope (as defined in dollars) of the disapproved or withdrawn NC project.

The County staff, NCSC and the County Board shall welcome and give due consideration to a public survey, postcard ballot, petition or other written manifestation of community sentiment, including, in particular, from those individuals who reside closest to the various proposed elements of the project.

A "speeding problem" exists when the 85th percentile speed on the affected street/s meet or exceed 5 mph over the posted speed limit for at least a period of 24 hours or another appropriate time period determined by Staff. In other words, more than 15 percent of the drivers on the street travel more than 5 mph over the posted speed limit. Vertical traffic calming measures may be considered when 85th percentile speeds meet or exceed 7 miles per hour over the posted speed limit.

DRAFT 7.08.2020

NCS Project Evaluation Sheet

Group I	
A. Sidewalk Conditions	
No complete sidewalks (12)	
OR Narrow or obstructed (6)	
Missing curb ramps (2)	
B. Traffic Hazards/Safety	
Reported crash past 48 months (4 points per crash, max 8)	
Crash with Physical Injury (additional 4-6 points per crash, max 12)	
Minimum total Group I A + B (minimum 8 points)	0
C. Speed & Volume	
Speeding Problem (8)	
Traffic Volumes above 1,000 per day (4)	
Traffic Volumes between 500 and 1,000 (2)	
Total Group I A+B+C: (minimum 12 points)	0

Group II	
A. Pedestrian attractors	
3/4 mile to Metrorail (4)	
1/2 mile to ES; 3/4 mile to MS/HS (4 points per school, max 12)	
School bus stop (2)	
1/4 mile to bus stop (1-3)	
1/2 mile to shopping/office (1-3)	
1/2 mile to civic building (3)	
within 500' of a park (3)	
B. Mapped Bike Routes	
Designated on bike map (3)	
Connects with trail (3)	
Connects to bike route (1)	
CaBi station w/in 1/4 mile (2)	
C. Land Use/GLUP	
Commercial/mixed use (5)	
37+ dwelling units (5)	
16-36 dwelling units (4)	
11-15 dwelling units (3)	
Total Group II A+B+C	0
OVERALL TOTAL	0

Notes:

Minimum Group I Score Required to Qualify for NCS Program = 12 points

Crashes include automobile collisions with bicycles or pedestrians