

## Written Testimony of Gillian Burgess, Chair, Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee

Before the County Board, March 18, 2015

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. As the Chair of the Bicycle Advisory Committee, I focus my remarks on the budget as it relates primarily to programs that impact people while they are biking, but also people while they are walking, because such programs so often overlap.

Walkable/bikeable neighborhoods are the soul of Arlington. Communities are made great when people get around on two feet and on two wheels. The County must invest in improvements to make walking and biking easier and safer to allow those communities to prosper. Unfortunately, the County Manager's proposed budget goes back on Arlington's longstanding, explicit commitment to safe streets for everyone. The proposed service reductions go directly against the County Board's instructions to maintain Arlington's commitment to fund services for the health and safety of the community and to invest in keeping Arlington competitive.

Not only should the County NOT implement the cuts proposed by the County Manager, but the County should invest in better bicycle and pedestrian planning, expanded snow clearing and maintenance on our trails, and a replacement for the vital link in the transportation network that we are losing with the new access restrictions at Fort Myer.

As you all well know, more people biking is a good thing for Arlington County. More people biking means more support for local businesses.<sup>1</sup> More people biking means a better sense of community.<sup>2</sup> More

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., "Cities and businesses discover that cycling pays," Carolyn Szczepanski, available at <https://urbanful.org/2015/03/02/cities-and-businesses-discover-that-cycling-pays/>; "Report: Bike Lanes, Pedestrian Plazas Good for Businesses," Ted Mann, *Wall Street Journal*, available at <http://blogs.wsj.com/metropolis/2012/10/24/report-bike-lanes-pedestrian-plazas-good-for-businesses/>; "Why Bicyclists Are Better Customers Than Drivers for Local Business," Tanya Snyder, available at <http://usa.streetsblog.org/2012/03/23/why-bicyclists-are-better-customers-than-drivers-for-local-business/>; "Three charts that show how bikes became great for local economies," Michael Anderson, available at <http://www.peopleforbikes.org/blog/entry/three-infographics-that-show-how-urban-economies-are-shifting-bikeward>; "The Complete Business Case for Converting Street Parking Into Bike Lanes," Eric Jaffe, available at <http://www.citylab.com/cityfixer/2015/03/the-complete-business-case-for-converting-street-parking-into-bike-lanes/387595/>.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., "The Economic Benefits of Complete Streets," available at [http://vibrantneo.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/VibrantNEO\\_EconomicBenefitsofCompleteStreets.pdf](http://vibrantneo.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/VibrantNEO_EconomicBenefitsofCompleteStreets.pdf); "Bike Safety Also Helps Drivers," Gillian Burgess, available at <http://www.arlnow.com/2015/02/19/progressive-voice-bike-safety-also-helps-drivers/>; "New Research Finds that Homeowners and City Planners Should 'Hit the Trail' When Considering Property Values," Dawn Fuller, available at <http://www.uc.edu/news/NR.aspx?id=14300>.

people biking means safer neighborhoods.<sup>3</sup> More people biking means improved public health.<sup>4</sup> More people biking means a cleaner environment.<sup>5</sup> More people biking means direct fiscal savings for Arlington County, due to decreased congestion, demand for auto parking and need for road maintenance.<sup>6</sup>

Research shows that while a third of Americans rode a bike last year, up to 60% would like to ride their bikes more, but are concerned for their safety.<sup>7</sup> Smart investments are needed to get more of these “interested but concerned” people riding bikes:<sup>8</sup> investment in safer infrastructure, like protected bike lanes, separated trails, signalized crossings; investment in wayfinding signage along safe routes; investment in access, such as Capital Bikeshare; investment in evaluation, in which Arlington is a leader; investment in encouragement, such as support for BikeArlington, especially its outreach to families and

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<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., “A Resident’s Guide for Creating Safer Communities for Walking and Biking,” Federal Highways Administration, available at [http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped\\_bike/ped\\_cmunity/ped\\_walkguide/residents\\_guide2014\\_final.pdf](http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/ped_cmunity/ped_walkguide/residents_guide2014_final.pdf); CTC - Safety in numbers: Halving the risks of cycling.

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., “Physical Activity and the Intertwine: A Public Health Method of Reducing Obesity and Healthcare Costs,” Beil, K., 201, available at <http://bikeportland.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/IntertwinePAObesityAssessment.pdf>; Hertel, O., et al., 2008 - A proper choice of route significantly reduces air pollution exposure—A study on bicycle and bus trips in urban streets, *Science of the Total Environment*, 389, 58-70; Kaur, S., et al., 2006 - Exposure visualisation of ultrafine particle counts in a transport microenvironment, *Atmospheric Environment*, 40, 386-398; Marshall, J., and E. Behrentz, 2005 - Vehicle self-pollution intake fraction: Children's exposure to school bus emissions, *Environmental Science and Technology*, 39, 2559-2563; Hamer, M., and Y. Chida, 2007 - Active commuting and cardiovascular risk: A meta-analytic review, *Preventive Medicine*, 46, 9-13; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008 - 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans; Luoto, R., et al., 2000 - The effect of physical activity on breast cancer risk: A cohort study of 30,548 women, *European Journal of Epidemiology*, 16, 973-80; Hu, G., et al., 2002 - Commuting, leisure-time physical activity, and cardiovascular risk factors in China, *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*, 34, 234-8; Bassett, Jr., et al., 2008 - Walking, cycling, and obesity rates in Europe, North America, and Australia, *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, 5, 795-814; Fox and Corbin, 1999 - in *Green Exercise: Complementary roles of nature, exercise and diet in physical and emotional well-being and implications for public health policy*, CES Occasional Paper 2003-1, University of Essex; Gordon-Larsen, P., et al., 2009 - Active commuting and cardiovascular disease risk, *Archives of Internal Medicine*, 169, 1216-1223; Paffenbarger, R., et al., 1986., and Department for Transport, 2007 - in “Safety in numbers in England,” CTC.

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., “Impact of Changes in Transportation and Commuting Behaviors During the 1996 Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta on Air Quality and Childhood Asthma”, M. Friedman, et al, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, available at <http://jama.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=193572>.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., “Auto Costs Versus Bike Costs,” available at <http://www.phred.org/~alex/kenkifer/www.kenkifer.com/bikepages/advocacy/autocost.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., “Four Types of Cyclists,” Roger Geller, available at <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation/44597?a=237507>.

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., “Here’s What Keeps People From Riding a Bike,” Michael Anderson, available at <http://greatergreaterwashington.org/post/26101/heres-what-keeps-people-from-riding-a-bike/>.

non-English speaking communities; investment in fair enforcement, which ACPD is still working on; investment for school transportation, which is one area that APS could see major savings as it grows.<sup>9</sup>

Arlington has been slowly making investments in all of these areas. Yet, the proposed cuts threaten to slash these investments. In particular, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety portion of the decal fee (Pay-as-you-go) funding was already reduced by over a third (\$400,000) in the FY2015 budget. To completely eliminate this program would go back on Arlington's explicit commitment to maintaining the core service of providing a safe and efficient transportation network.

As I explained in the BAC's letter to the County Manager dated March 10, 2015 (attached), these cuts would make people who currently bike in Arlington less safe. For example, by cutting the planning staff in half, new roadway projects will be designed without adequate consideration for pedestrians and cyclists.

Moreover, these cuts make no fiscal sense. The decal fee funding is used for matching funds for Federal grants, so cutting the funding would leave that money on the table. Even more wasteful, cutting the planning staff would mean losing the man power to apply for these grants, as well as the ability to find projects that could improve biking and walking infrastructure at no additional cost. The best on-street bicycle infrastructure in the County at this moment are the protected bike lanes in Pentagon City, which, due to the work of our excellent bike/ped planners, were installed during already-scheduled repaving and restriping projects, at no additional cost.

Aside from rejecting these cuts, the County should further invest the bicycle program, by at least reinstating the \$400,000 that was cut from the last budget. We live and bike at a time when increasing numbers of people are getting around by bike, and when the image of the "average cyclist" is changing. There are more women biking, more families biking, more kids biking to school. Arlington Public Schools has a full time Safe Routes to Schools coordinator, and Kidical Mass Arlington has been very successful organizing monthly bike rides for families throughout the County.

The state of the art of bike planning has also changed. For these reasons, the Transportation Commission recommended, and the BAC endorsed, that the County update the Bicycle Element of the Master Transportation Plan this year. The County should fund that update in this budget round.

After this long, cold winter, Arlington has already started winning awards for its snow clearing program. But that program primarily benefited the cyclists of North Arlington. The County should budget to expand this program to benefit the entire County, as well as budget to adequately maintain our trails given the increased ridership.

Finally, an important link in the transportation network between North and South Arlington is being lost because of new access restrictions at Fort Myer. Once the new policy takes effect, cyclists travelling between Pentagon and Crystal Cities and central Arlington will be forced to bike on Columbia Pike – a terrifying road that is currently under construction and incredibly dangerous. This new policy was sprung

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<sup>9</sup> See, Arlington Public Schools, Multimodal Transportation and Student Safety Special Committee, "Final Report to School Board, available at <http://www.apsva.us/cms/lib2/VA01000586/Centricity/Domain/161/MMTSSSC%20Final%20Report%20Report%20to%20SB%20-%20June%202014.pdf>.

on all of us with little warning or public input, but we need to budget for finding a safe alternative to the route that will be lost.

We are at this juncture in part because of a failure of process: the County Manager failed to consult with the bicycle and pedestrian advisory committees on the budget generally or on the proposed cuts specifically, ignoring the dedication and knowledge of the citizens who volunteer their time to advise the County on bicycle and pedestrian issues. Moreover, it is my understanding that the Manager failed to consult with Transportation Department staff about the proposed cuts, which I find to be an insult not only to their position, but to their nationally-recognized expertise on these issues.

But this failure of process need not result in a failure of policy. You, the County Board, have the power to reject these cuts, and to make sure that proper funds are allocated to continue Arlington County's progress in becoming a great place to bike, a great place to walk and a great place to live.