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County Manager Barbara Donnellan  
County Manager, Arlington County  
County Manager's Office  
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 302  
Arlington, VA 22201

March 10, 2015

Dear Ms. Donnellan,

The Arlington County Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) has recently reviewed the County Manager's FY 2016 Proposed Budget and would like to provide feedback on the proposed budget adjustments and cuts relevant to the BAC's charter. In short, we are concerned that some of the proposals threaten the safety of Arlington's streets, and - if adopted - would demonstrate a significant weakening of Arlington County's commitment to streets that are safe for all of its citizens.

We specifically would like to comment on the inclusion of the following possible reduction suggestion items:

- Pedestrian and Bike Safety: Reduce funding to Pay-As-You-Go capital - (book 29, web 43)
- Department of Environmental Services (DES): Eliminate one of two planner positions (Bike and Pedestrian Programs) - (book 25, web 39)

Either of these cuts would seriously damage the delivery of transportation services in Arlington. Furthermore, both would have serious negative consequences for public safety and health. Perhaps most relevant to the budget process - they make little fiscal sense over the long term.

The narrative provided by your office about the "service reductions," including the reduction in bicycle/pedestrian programs funded by the Decal Fee, indicates that these items "are not core to public safety or health." The representation that bicycle/pedestrian programs "are not core to public safety or health" gives the BAC concern that those responsible for this proposal do not have an adequate understanding of Arlington County's well-established approach to transportation.

The single change that has the largest positive impact on safety for people cycling is to have more people on bikes. The programs specifically funded by the Decal Fee (adopted by the County Board in 2010) - Capital Bikeshare and BikeArlington in particular - have been instrumental in getting more people on bikes in Arlington County, and generally making cycling more visible. Increased numbers and visibility have made cycling safer in the County. Safety would also be affected and impacted when opportunities for the development and maintenance of solid bicycle infrastructure is reduced. Specific safety and accessibility improvements in the Master Transportation Plan are funded by the Decal Fee. Specific to bicycling, initiatives such as "Complete Streets", Safe Routes to Schools, signage and wayfinding and other maintenance projects are fundamental to providing a safe environment. Furthermore, bicycling benefits health, as has been cited in numerous reports and studies. It's also a

healthy activity specifically included in Arlington's own FitArlington program, initiated by Walter Tejada in 2013.

The County should work to improve the safety of all people in Arlington, regardless of which transportation mode they are using. For the County Manager's office to state that financial support for these programs is "not core to public safety and health" discounts both the safety of people on bikes and the clear health benefits to the community.

Additionally, the Decal Fee revenue frees up other County transportation funding that is regularly used as a critical source of matching funds for Federal grants. By cutting that funding, the County would risk leaving a significant amount of money on the table due to an inability to match state and Federal grants. Such actions would be fiscally irresponsible.

The reduction of planning staff will also have a significant impact on the identification, development and planning of appropriate transportation infrastructure within Arlington. In addition, it will reduce the ability to provide timely and effective feedback on numerous Master Transportation Plan projects around the county. Multiple projects such as the Arlington Boulevard trail, the Hoffman-Boston Connector, on-street bicycle routes (some requiring signage and signal upgrades), and the development of a safe network of on-street bicycle routes will all be affected.

Moreover, the planning staff has been crucial in finding and securing state and Federal grants that fund bicycle and pedestrian projects. Their work allows Arlington County to find supplementary sources of funding for these projects. To cut such work would mean more of the funding for these transportation projects would fall directly on Arlington taxpayers.

The number of people traveling on bikes is skyrocketing in the County. Programs such Phoenix Bikes, Kidical Mass Arlington, and BikeArlington, are successfully reaching out to youth, families and people new to bicycling. Arlington Public Schools has launched a successful Safe Routes to Schools Program with a full-time coordinator and is relying increasingly on bicycling as part of its growing transportation demand management considerations.

Automated counters around Arlington show that the number of bike trips is growing, even in days of rain, snow or other adverse weather conditions. The Capital Bikeshare system has grown to 75 stations in the county. Capital Bikeshare data for 2014 is still in the process of being compiled, but in 2013 nearly 188,000 miles were logged on bikeshare bikes in Arlington County alone. Capital Bikeshare performance metrics show that between January 2014 and November 2014, almost 188,000 trips on bikeshare originated at an Arlington County station. This data does not include trips from citizens using their own bikes for transportation, commuting, or recreation.

These encouraging trends are consistent with Arlington's goals of being a world leader in progressive transportation policy. The positive efforts and steps to improve transportation options for citizens on bikes have been very encouraging. In fact, in 2015, Arlington County received an advocacy award from the Washington Area Bicyclist Association for initiating snow clearing from trails. Arlington County has now been cited as a leading example of the ability to implement trail clearing as a model to encourage other jurisdictions to do the same. If funding is not available to provide appropriate DES staffing, expansion and maintenance of the Capital Bikeshare system, education and support through Bike

Arlington initiatives, and the development of safe and accessible infrastructure - thousands of citizens who have come to rely upon this safe and reliable cycling network within the county will be negatively impacted. Even more importantly, it sends the signal that the County is no longer striving to move forward as a leader in urban planning and design, but is instead retreating.

Businesses have consistently looked for walkable and bikeable communities when considering where to locate. Arlington County touts its smart transportation network when looking to attract businesses to the County. Reducing or abandoning such smart transportation strategies would make attracting businesses to Arlington more difficult.

The BAC is working with the Pedestrian Advisory Committee, as these proposed cuts affects people on bikes as well as people on foot. We look forward to providing feedback and testimony as part of the formal budget process on these issues and on other budgetary needs of the cycling community. In the meantime, we strongly advise the County Manager and the County Board to reject the proposed cuts to pay-as-you-go funding and DES staffing and to keep funding for this important part of the transportation network intact.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'GMB', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Gillian M. Burgess

Chair, Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee