

Testimony by Dennis Jaffe
Chairman, Arlington Pedestrian Advisory Committee
Arlington County Board
March 24, 2015

Arlington's Bicycle and Pedestrian program has actively and strategically helped to ensure that people have safer and more convenient options to get from Point A to Point B without having to rely on single occupancy motor vehicles. There are many needs not getting met. It's up to the community to make a stronger case to meet those unmet needs. But Arlington has been a nationally-reputed pioneer in promoting and effectuating safer and more convenient travel by foot and by bicycle.

Implementing the proposed contingency cuts would: damage the county's reputation; reduce government responsiveness and efficiency; cause taxpayers' money to be spent less wisely; negatively affect people's health and safety; increase traffic congestion and pollution and worsen parking problems; make our county less appealing for people to move here or continue living here and for businesses and large employers to locate here; and increase costs of road repair. The cuts are short-sighted.

The County Manager's Budget Message states under Impact of Reduction that the loss of the Decal Fee revenue would adversely affect neighborhood street safety and accessibility improvements projects. The Manager reported, "There are few funding sources that provide the flexibility to fund safety and accessibility improvements in these corridors. These improvements are eligible under several grant programs, allowing the County to use a modest amount of funding to leverage external funding for these neighborhood safety activities."

The Manager also stated that reducing program staff "Reduces the capacity to develop and secure state and federal transportation grant funds for pedestrian and bicycle safety projects." Approving the cuts would hurt taxpayers.

Staff included on the contingency reductions list, is part of a two-person team that has secured almost \$5 million in state and federal grants for 13 projects in eight years. These grants cover between 50% and 80% of the cost of capital construction projects that help pedestrians and cyclists, stretching and leveraging local funding, allowing the County to do more with less, and saving the County's general fund for other initiatives.

The Manager wrote, “Many of the projects supported by the Decal Fee are matched with state Revenue Sharing and federal Transportation Alternatives grants. If the Decal funding is no longer used for Transportation Capital, these projects and associated grants will have to be cancelled, or other matching funds would have to be identified. This means that 13 residential arterial safety projects would be delayed or cancelled, touching every part of Arlington County.”

When development or improvement projects are being considered, bicycle and pedestrian program staff are there to help ensure that walking and bicycling are kept as priorities. They do outreach to neighborhood groups. Reducing that would be a mistake.

More people walking and bicycling equals increase in safety. Cuts would result in luring people off the car-free diet that the County has been promoting.

The stated intent for the vehicle decal increase five years ago was to fund Complete Streets and Capital Bikeshare – for improvement of crosswalks, sidewalks, bike lanes, signage and pedestrian refuge. The public has a right to expect that government honor its word. Appropriating the funds elsewhere is a break of faith with vehicle owners and with the public at large.

Staff is already overloaded. Reducing staff will reduce government responsiveness and increase public cynicism.

The U.S. Secretary of Transportation has launched a new initiative, challenging local governments across America to invest more in pedestrian and bicyclist safety. The U.S. Department of Transportation will make available more resources to increase pedestrian and bicyclist safety. Will Arlington continue to be on the front lines of improving quality of life by reducing traffic, increasing people’s health, strengthening our community’s economic vitality – or will Arlington move to the sidelines while other counties and cities rise to U.S. Transportation Secretary Foxx’s challenge with forward-thinking leadership?

Arlington has a history of moving in the right direction in making bicycling and walking safer. Let’s continue doing so.

Thank you.

Arlington County Bicycle and Pedestrian program staff recent accomplishments include:

- Bike/ped staff were responsible for getting a protected cycletrack integrated into the recently approved Marymount project along state-controlled Fairfax Drive in Ballston. Bike/ped staff designed the preliminary plans for the cycletrack and continue to work with the project's developers to refine the final design.
- Bike/ped staff recently started a project to install pedestrian safety improvements at a number of critical intersections throughout the County. The project, funded in part through the bicycle and pedestrian program's capital funds, is evaluating more than 30 locations for beacons and signals that will improve crossing safety.
- Bike/ped staff have designed and managed the new bike and pedestrian wayfinding signs along Arlington's park trails and bike lanes. The system will soon be extended along the Four Mile Run and W&OD trails.
- Bike/ped staff were instrumental in developing the County's new trail snow clearing plan in collaboration with colleagues in the County's Water, Sewer, Streets bureau and Parks department.
- Bike/ped staff designed a solution to engineering challenges that would have interfered with a planned new bicycle and pedestrian bridge over Four Mile Run.
- Bike/ped staff worked with developers who were demolishing an old railroad bridge over Four Mile Run to improve access through their site. Bike/ped staff designed a set of stairs and a bike rail that were incorporated into a new switchback ramp connecting Potomac Yard to the Four Mile Run Trail.
- Bike/ped staff redesigned and rebuilt the mid-block raised crossing between Arlington Hospital and its healing garden across 16th Street. The crossing is now more visible to drivers and meets current ADA standards.
- Program staff helped Arlington become early sponsors of the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO). With Arlington's support, NACTO developed its *Urban Bikeway Design Guide*, and *Urban Street Design Guide*. These documents have proved so popular that both the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) endorsed their guidance and urged their wider adoption.
- Bike/ped staff developed and managed the County's current inventory of over 30 automated bicycle and pedestrian counters. This network of counters is now the most extensive data collection systems for bicycles and pedestrians in the country. Data collected from this system has helped secure grant funding for numerous capital projects that benefit cyclists and pedestrians and helps the County make better informed funding and design decisions.
- Bike/ped staff supported the development of the County's first protected bike lanes in Pentagon City and are actively planning for new ones in Rosslyn/Courthouse. Coordinating the timing of these projects with resurfacing plans allowed the County to implement them at virtually no additional cost.
- Bike/ped staff have applied for and secured almost \$5M in state and federal grants for 13 projects over the past eight years. This funding covers between 50% and 80% of the cost of capital construction projects that help pedestrians and cyclists. These awards stretch and leverage local funding and allow the County to do more with less, saving the County's general fund for other initiatives.

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Proposed contingency reductions include elimination of one of only two full-time dedicated bicycle and pedestrian support staff. This would severely limit Arlington's ability to advance many projects and initiatives that improve the quality of life in Arlington pedestrians and cyclists. Specifically:

- Staff would not be able to actively pursue new outside funding sources for capital and planning projects.
- Future intersection projects focusing on pedestrian crossing safety would be put on hold. Currently active projects would be delayed and subject to prioritization based on available funding.
- Design review for County-initiated and developer-initiated developments would be limited to ADA compliance review only.
- Work on bicycle and pedestrian capital projects would be limited to completing currently active, funded projects only.
- Wayfinding signage expansion would end at the completion of the current sections along the Four Mile Run and W&OD trails.
- Collaboration with Alexandria, Falls Church, National Park Service and District of Columbia transportation staff would be limited to inquiry responses only. There would be no capacity for proactive or cooperative efforts.
- Much needed updates and revisions to the seven year old bicycle and pedestrian elements of the Master Transportation Plan would be deferred indefinitely.
- Staff support for the Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC) and Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) would be limited. Both groups would revert from monthly to bi-monthly meetings.
- New bike lanes, green lanes, cycletracks and other bike infrastructure would not be developed concurrently with resurfacing projects. This would severely scale back their implementation and significantly increase their cost.
- Customer (ie: resident) support requests and other services to the general public would be significantly reduced.

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Planned Pedestrian Improvement Projects – Partial List – Would Be Delayed or Cancelled – County Manager’s Budget Message	Likely Affected Neighborhood Associations Corresponding to Non-Finalized Map
Military Rd between 38 th Street N & Nelly Custis Drive	Gulf Branch, Bellevue Forest, Donaldson Run
Pershing Drive between N. Barton and N. Piedmont Streets	Tryon Park and Ashton Heights
McKinley Rd between Wilson Blvd and I-66	Dominion Hills and Madison Manor
Carlin Springs Rd between Vermont and Edison Streets	Bluemont, Buckingham and Arlington Forest
Fillmore Street between Arlington Blvd and 5 th Street S.	Arlington Heights and Penrose
S. Courthouse Road between S. Uhle Street and Columbia Pike	Penrose
S. Walter Reed Drive between 6 th Street S. and Columbia Pike	Arlington Heights and Penrose
S. Walter Reed Drive between Arlington Mill Drive and Four Mile Run Drive	Douglas Park, Fairlington and Nauck
S. Arlington Ridge Road and S. Lynn Street	Arlington Ridge
S. Arlington Ridge Road and S. Lang Street	Arlington Ridge
Possible additional project	
Possible additional project	
Possible additional project	

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ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA Civic Associations

FY2015 - 2018
Proposed Decal Fee Projects

