

May 4, 2017

Mark Schwartz
2100 Clarendon Boulevard
Arlington, Virginia 22201
Arlington County Manager
Via email: mschwartz@arlingtonva.us

Committee Members
Pamela Van Hine, Chair
Eric Goldstein, Vice Chair
Ellen Armbruster
John Armstrong
Rosemary Ciotti
Jim Feaster
Eric Goodman
Dennis Jaffe
Tom Kornis
Christine Ng
Collin Weber

Dear Mr. Schwartz:

RE: Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC) Response to the 2017 National Foreign Affairs Training Center (NFATC) Master Plan Update Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

The Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC) is again writing to you to encourage the County to submit a strong response to the Environmental Assessment ([EA](#)) and Finding of No Significant Impact ([FONSI](#)) of the National Foreign Affairs Training Center (NFATC) Master Plan Update.

We also strongly encourage County staff to continue working closely with relevant DOS and GSA staff to find transportation solutions that work for everyone, as recommended in the March 21, 2017 National Capital Planning Commission ([NCPC](#)) Report. We strongly encourage negotiators to include a plan for the development of the proposed trail connecting Quincy to Oakland, a critical missing link in the County bicycle network, as well as an alternative to the soon-to-be closed NFATC on campus trail.

We continue to support the recommendations in our two prior letters, sent [August 12](#), 2016, and [January 12](#), 2017. In addition, after reviewing the 2017 NFATC EA and FONSI and attending the April 17, 2017 walking tour of the NFATC that focused on trail connectivity, the PAC offers the following additional recommendations:

We applaud the NFATC decision to plan to reopen the tunnel under George Mason Drive for public pedestrian access from the sidewalk. We remain concerned, however, that the EA does not specifically mention making this tunnel ADA-compatible or cyclist-friendly. Transit users, cyclists, and pedestrians of all abilities should be able to use this tunnel to cross George Mason Drive safely.

We are very disappointed that the NFATC EA will remove the existing 2,096 foot publicly accessible trail on the south side of the NFATC campus, as this has been a critical link in County trail connectivity for both pedestrians and cyclists for many years. According to the EA, the NFATC is closing this publicly accessible trail because of security requirements and the proposed location of the expanded child care center. Further, the EA proposes that closing the trail is “not considered a severe or significant change” and that “alternative routes are readily accessible that allow for neighborhood connectivity.”

The PAC strongly disagrees that alternative routes are currently readily accessible – or acceptable – for cyclists and pedestrians of all abilities. The proposed alternative route (see Table 6 and Figure 14, p. 36 of EA) adds approximately 1/3 mile each way for pedestrians – up, over, and down a very steep hill, over narrow sidewalks in poor condition with many curb cuts and, in some cases, missing sidewalk segments. This route is a challenge for many pedestrians, and may be impassible for those with disabilities. Going around the NFATC facility on the sidewalk on the north side, right next to the Arlington Boulevard access roads, is also not currently a feasible alternative, as described in our August 12 letter.

One proposed alternative to the NFATC trail is through Alcovia Heights Park. However, reconstructing the existing unimproved trail through Alcovia Heights Park to bring it up to federal trail standards will be a significant expense and will have community and environmental repercussions.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments and for your continuing support of walkability in Arlington County.

Sincerely,

Pamela Van Hine
Chair
Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC)

cc: Arlington County Board; Pedestrian Advisory Committee staff and members; Dennis Leach, Director of Transportation; Chris Slatt, Chair, Transportation Commission; Gillian Burgess, Chair, Bicycle Advisory Commission; John Carten, Chair, Transit Advisory Committee; William Staderman, Chair, Disability Advisory Commission; Danielle Arigoni, Alcovia Heights; Brian Stout, Arlington County