

November 18, 2015

M. Valerie Mosley
Capital Projects Manager
Arlington County Division of Transportation
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 900
Arlington, VA 22201

Committee Members
Dennis Jaffe, Chair
Pam VanHine, Vice Chair
Ellen Armbruster
Rosemary Ciotti
Jim Feaster
Eric Goodman
Tom Kornis
Eric Goldstein
Christine Ng
John Armstrong
Dan Foster
Collin Weber

Sent via email to: MVMosley@ArlingtonVA.US
RE: Improvements at South Walter Reed Drive/Arlington Mill Drive Intersection

Dear Ms. Mosley:

The Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC) appreciates the time and effort that County staff have expended on this project and the outreach they have conducted, soliciting from relevant Arlington County advisory bodies and community organizations their opinions on proposed changes at this intersection. In this letter, we are responding to your request for comments by November 18.

The PAC would like to receive the baseline pedestrian and cycling data that recently was gathered, but has not yet been shared with us.

Most members of the PAC generally would prefer to not see a slip lane incorporated into the redesign of an intersection. However, we do believe that staff have demonstrated that the geometry of this intersection appears to require a slip lane for large County vehicles. Accordingly, the PAC's focus is on ensure that the slip lane is as safe as possible for all pedestrians -- and cyclists -- who cross it.

The PAC believes that the ultimate objective for the redesign of this intersection is to better balance the competing needs of drivers, pedestrians and cyclists at this intersection. The PAC generally supports the recently proposed changes to the intersection, the slip lane and crosswalks, including significantly enlarging the safety island, raising the slip lane height, moving the slip lane downstream to help make drivers and pedestrians/cyclists more visible to each other and to give drivers an additional juncture beyond the slip lane to stop before making the turn, and adding lights and signage to alert drivers to the presence of pedestrians and/or cyclists seeking to cross the slip lane.

The PAC strongly recommends that staff continue to monitor all traffic through this intersection before and after completion of the project, to help ensure that the intersection is safe and to identify and flag any problems with using the intersection. We request that staff share with the PAC, BAC and neighborhood leaders/representatives, results of that monitoring as well as any significant modifications that may come under consideration.

County staff previously have mentioned that additional training and enforcement specific to the County operated vehicles that use the slip lane could be implemented, if warranted. We expect the County to prioritize evaluating this need.

PAC members were polled on their preferences for signage and lighting for the slip lane. The general consensus was for either option 1 or 2, combined with option 5, the traffic light. Whether the R10-15 yield sign has an LED border depends upon how close it is to the traffic light and how far it is from the slip lane. From our perspective, the goal is to have both a flashing light – to alert drivers of the need to stop ahead – and signage to indicate to drivers that they need to be alert for pedestrians and cyclists, not just other cars. The PAC supports installing the traffic light, option 5. We remain concerned that drivers may not actually stop for a flashing yellow light. If staff monitoring traffic through the slip lane shows that drivers are not stopping, the PAC believes it may well be necessary to reset the light to flashing red or to incorporate it into the timed rotation with the rest of the intersection. The signage configuration is a priority concern for the PAC. We ask that once staff has decided upon a combination of signage they intend to implement, they share it with the PAC for feedback. We repeatedly have been told of the timely importance of the County's proceeding with the geometrical design of the project, and that signage can be subsequently figured out. It is important that we have the opportunity to provide comment on this area.

PAC members also raised the following concerns and recommendations to the proposed plans:

- Provide additional street lighting for all of the intersection
- For either option 1 or 2 (R10-15): To make the sign easier for drivers to read, delete the “turning vehicles” text, as it is both redundant and a distraction to drivers
- Move the rose bushes on AMD: With the relocation of the slip lane, they block views
- Include activated audible message for blind pedestrians who cross the slip lane
- Include caution sign on safety island to encourage pedestrians and cyclists to look to their right before crossing
- Consider markings at intersection of shared bike lane at SB WRD & WB Four Mile Run Trail. As cyclists and pedestrians proceed in opposite directions, they may be in conflict
- Consider how to accommodate both drivers and pedestrians crossing AMD from Windgate II: Moving the bus stop further east may encourage more pedestrians to cross mid-block and the elimination of one of the left turn lanes on AMD may create more pedestrian-vehicle conflicts when drivers turn left from Windgate II near the existing mid-block crosswalk.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity extended to the PAC to participate in reviewing this project. Please let us know if there are any ways we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,



Dennis Jaffe

Chair, Arlington Pedestrian Advisory Committee

cc: David Goodman, Pedestrian Advisory Committee, Bicycling Advisory Committee, Ed Hiltz/Shirlington-Fairlington NCAC Representative