



Bicycle Advisory Committee and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

December 12, 2022

Mr. Mark Schwartz
Arlington County Manager
Via e-mail: mschwartz@arlingtonva.us

RE: VDOT Route 1 Multimodal Feasibility Phase 2 study

Dear Mr. Schwartz:

As Chairs of the Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) and the Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC), we are writing to you today regarding the evolving plans for the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Route 1 Multimodal Improvements Study. We begin our letter with praise for VDOT's added safety features, and this is followed by a discussion of bicyclist and pedestrian safety concerns that deserve careful attention in updates of this study.

We are pleased that VDOT has now proposed several safety features in their current at-grade Route 1 plans that are proven methods to improve safety, especially for people walking and biking:

- 25 mph maximum speed limit on this section of Route 1: According to [VDOT data](#), 94% of pedestrians survive a 25 mph crash; only 65% survive at 40 mph. We encourage implementing and enforcing 25 mph speed limits immediately. Speeding on Route 1 has increased during Covid, as shown in VDOT data.
- A [Barnes Dance signalization](#) for the intersection of Route 1 and 18th Street, which gives pedestrians sufficient time to cross 18th & Route 1 without conflict with drivers, and makes the crossing safer for bicycle-riders as well.
- Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPIs) at all Route 1 intersections, which give pedestrians and bicyclists a head start crossing Route 1 and a greater chance of being seen by turning drivers. We are urging VDOT to lengthen the amount of time allocated for these LPIs given that people will have to cross many lanes of traffic.
- No Right on Red throughout the project area, which reduces crashes between drivers and pedestrians/bicyclists.
- Expanding the scope of the project to include the 23rd St intersection and intersections of I-395-Route 1-Route 110.
 - 23rd St & Route 1: The current intersection is a frequent site for both vehicular and pedestrian crashes. The proposed VDOT reconfiguration of the intersection of Route 1 and 23rd Street will likely reduce the number of crashes between vehicles and vulnerable road users.
 - I-395/Route 1/Route 110 interchanges and ramps: We are thrilled that VDOT plans to reconfigure the intersections and ramps between I-395, Route 1, and Route 110. These plans will increase bike-ped safety and increase bike-ped connectivity within and beyond the National Landing area. The VDOT plan provides an opportunity for a new connection for 10th Street that links Army-Navy Drive to Long Bridge Drive, creating a more direct route for bicycle riders and pedestrians, as well as a new relief valve for Route 1 intersections further south. The VDOT proposal safely slows and directs exiting I-395 traffic to new intersections with Route 1/Route 110, so drivers will begin their trip on Route 1 at a much lower speed. This new proposed 10th Street roadway must be thoroughly integrated into Arlington County plans for the "landing" of the new Long Bridge bicycle and pedestrian bridge, which will surely be a major transportation route from the District into Arlington County. The new 10th Street provides the opportunity to add protected bike lanes to continue the low-stress bike network on the north end of National Landing.

We remain concerned, however, about several major VDOT Route 1 plans: the design of the Right of Way (ROW - the building-to-building distance) on Route 1, the design and features along 18th Street, and the lack of a Transportation Demand Management plan.

Right of Way (ROW) on Route 1: Prioritize “pedestrian zone” planning to create an urban boulevard

The current plan for the ROW streetscape on Route 1 stipulates a 140’ maximum total building-to-building width, with seven 11’ wide travel lanes, a 10’ wide median, and several feet for curbs and gutters. Initial VDOT plans offset street trees at least six feet from the curb, leaving only 17.5’ for everything else. But VDOT is reconsidering their tree requirement, potentially leaving 23.5’ for the “behind the curb” space for clear zone sidewalks, bike lanes, and landscaping zones for trees. This limited width does not provide sufficient space to create and activate an actual urban boulevard, instead perpetuating a car-centric arterial highway. Furthermore, none of the four streetscape options offered by VDOT adequately meet the minimum space needs for safe, comfortable, low-stress places for people to bike and walk.

Arlington County is proud to promote a car-free and safe, Vision Zero environment for people of all races, ages, and abilities. But to encourage people to ride, walk, and take transit instead of driving, the County and VDOT need to design the Route 1 infrastructure to provide safe, accessible, convenient, attractive, and comfortable facilities. In addition, transit also needs to be affordable and reliable. In our [September 23, 2021 letter](#) to you, we noted that the VDOT approach to designing ROW was based upon the wrong priorities, and we strongly recommended starting by determining what space is needed “behind the curb” in the “pedestrian zone” before determining what the total ROW needs to be and how to create it. We stand by our process recommendations outlined in our 2021 letter.

ROW recommendations: We recommend 10’ minimum clear zone sidewalks, 7’ minimum landscaping zones (6’ for soil and plants, 1’ for edging), 6’ minimum bike lanes, and 2’ minimum buffer between the bike lane and the clear zone sidewalk. These minimum width requirements total a 25’ minimum width, excluding additional ROW for curb/gutter, shy zones, and cafe zones, still more than the 23.5’ VDOT allotments. We ask that you encourage staff to work with VDOT to either modify their travel lane widths or to otherwise find the space. The Route 1 project is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to build what we need, not settle for a poorly designed car-centric space that no one will want to visit.

18th Street: Design the 18th Street Corridor and at-Grade Intersection with Route 1 to be safe and feel safe!

Barnes Dance signalization: We are excited that VDOT has agreed to include Barnes Dance signalization at 18th & Route 1, but we are dismayed that VDOT indicated that the proposed total signal cycle length is 150 seconds. That cycle time is comparable to the amount of time that a pedestrian would currently be able to safely walk from Eads to the Crystal City Metro station. Because of the delays at the at-grade Route 1, pedestrians and bicyclists will attempt to bolt across Route 1 if their wait times are too long. Drivers will bolt through yellow lights as they are turning red. We encourage you to direct County staff to continue to work with VDOT to reduce the total signal cycle length, prioritize time for bike-ped safe crossings, and develop a plan for traffic enforcement to maximize safety.

The proposed streetscape design for 18th Street does not provide safe, comfortable, low stress places to walk or ride a bike. It includes 2 lanes each way and a left turn lane as the street approaches the intersections at Eads and at Bell. Consistent with the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) guidance and the Bicycle Element of the Master Transportation Plan, 18th Street requires protected bike lanes that will help keep bicycle riders and pedestrians safe. The Livability 22202 Route 1 Working Group has proposed creating a 3-lane wide street on 18th, similar to the 3-lane configurations on S. Eads. We strongly recommend that you encourage VDOT to study the implications of this proposed three-lane alternative. Eliminating 2 travel lanes provides an additional 22’ of ROW that can be used to create the protected bike lanes and reduce the distance that people walking and biking along Route 1 must cross to cross 18th Street. The additional space could also accommodate the bike-ped Dutch underpass, as described in PIM 1 of Phase 2, and other amenities, such as wider sidewalks and landscaping zones.

People walking and biking need crossings that are safe and feel safe for everyone. Because a Dutch underpass separates bike-peds from Route 1 traffic, it removes the chance of getting hit by a car while crossing. Also, people walking and biking who use the Dutch underpass to cross Route 1 may cross more quickly than crossing at-grade with a lengthy signalization cycle. Some of our members strongly support keeping the Dutch underpass in the VDOT plans. We encourage VDOT to continue to work with the County, the County committees and commissions, and the community to design the optimum crossing that is safe and feels safe for everyone.

Transportation Demand Management (TDM): Promised, needed, not delivered

We are concerned that VDOT still does not have a TDM plan that reduces traffic volume in National Landing to a safer level. VDOT states that current Route 1 traffic levels have stabilized to a relatively safe level, and that they can continue Route 1 design plans while developing their TDM plan, and yet they refuse to entertain proposed safer street designs *citing traffic volumes as why they are unworkable*. Reduced traffic volumes are important so that we can remove the slip lane proposed for 20th St, eliminate the “through bike lane” proposed for 15th Street which sandwiches kids and adults biking between two lanes of cars, add protected bike lanes to 18th Street and 23rd Street, lengthen the LPIs for pedestrians and bicycle riders well beyond VDOT’s proposal of 5 seconds, and shorten the proposed long, anti-urban traffic signal cycle lengths. We encourage VDOT to work closely with County staff to complete a TDM plan that meets safety goals. Continuing high traffic volumes on Route 1 and neighborhood streets increase crash risks for bicycle riders and pedestrians.

25,000 vehicles per day (vpd): The [2021 Schneider article](#) cites several risk factors for pedestrian fatalities on major roads in the United States. High-risk factors include multi-lane highways, wide lane widths, speeds greater than 30mph, and traffic volume greater than 25,000 vpd (vehicles per day). Although VDOT is now recommending lowering the speed on Route 1 to 25 mph, they are keeping 7 11’-wide lanes at 15th and 6 11’-wide lanes at 18th. VDOT seems to support the current Route 1 vpd traffic levels as an acceptable goal, even though their data show more than 25,000 vpd. VDOT 2022 vpd data shared at the BAC-PAC meeting (slide 15) was 39,700 average weekday vpd between 15th & 23rd and 54,300 vpd between I-395 and 15th. These traffic volumes, vastly higher than the recommended 25,000 vpd, need to be brought much closer to 25,000 vpd for pedestrian and bicyclist safety.

Allowing VDOT to eliminate discussion of and planning for TDM (which had been a cornerstone of the initial concept) based on the assertion that the pandemic traffic volume reductions are permanent should not be entertained without significant, comprehensive study and review. If the VDOT strategy is permitted, they will essentially abdicate to Arlington County the responsibility for planning and implementing a TDM program.

We recommend that VDOT develop a TDM program for Route 1 that covers a broad regional DMV commuting area and promotes regional cooperation to create a successful regional transportation network with many alternatives to driving. The TDM plan should be developed collaboratively with the County, relevant Virginia jurisdictions, and regional partners. In addition to encouraging biking and walking, we need to develop a wide regional network of transit and commuter train options that are safe, affordable, convenient, comfortable, accessible, and reliable alternatives to driving.

Thank you for considering our input. We would be happy to discuss our concerns and recommended solutions with you and your staff.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Palmer
Bicycle Advisory Committee Chair

Elizabeth Gallagher
Pedestrian Advisory Committee Chair