



WASHINGTON AREA BICYCLIST ASSOCIATION

2599 ONTARIO RD NW | WASHINGTON, DC 20009 | (202) 518-0524 | WABA.ORG

TESTIMONY OF THE WASHINGTON AREA BICYCLIST ASSOCIATION ON THE BETHESDA DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

October 19, 2016

Members of the Council,

My name is Joseph Allen. As Chair of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association's Action Committee for Montgomery County, I am pleased to offer testimony in support of the Bethesda Downtown Master Plan.

The plan proposes a vision for a Bethesda where biking and walking are safe, convenient, and popular transportation choices. It embraces the reality that a dense downtown is ideal for biking, and that people of all ages will leave their car at home if we build safe places to bike and walk. This plan will help cement Bethesda as a vibrant, active, and accessible downtown community.

I want to call out a few pieces for the Council's attention:

- On Arlington Road, the plan calls for a "road diet" to reduce the number of travel lanes from four to three. A road diet would reduce speeding, simplify frenzied car movements, and still accommodate today's car volumes. Arlington Road should be a safe street for everyone who uses it, and with this change it can be.
- A road diet on Arlington Road also opens up valuable space for other uses. The plan recommends installing either a buffered or protected bike lane to link the western side of the bicycle network. While these alternatives can fit into the same footprint, note that a protected bike lane's vertical barriers will attract far more and younger riders. We urge that the plan recommend only a protected bike lane for Arlington Road.
- We fully support the plan's protected bike lanes on Woodmont Avenue and Bradley Boulevard, new trail segments and access, new bike lanes and two way street conversions. All will make Bethesda's streets safer and more approachable for people biking and walking.

Under this master plan, the bicycle network is set to expand and set a new standard for quality. Yet without an aggressive implementation mechanism, the county will miss too many opportunities for getting more people on bikes and changing commuter habits. In the next five years, the Purple Line will begin service and offer tens of thousands of Bethesda residents and workers the opportunity to rethink their commutes. Marriott International will move its headquarters, and over 3,500 employees, to Bethesda to take advantage of the connectivity that it offers. If the bicycle network is in place, many will find commuting by bike the preferred option. If not, the shift from car commutes to a more sustainable choices may be much less pronounced.

We urge the Council to adopt the Bethesda Downtown Master Plan. We also ask that the Council consider the tools it has, like the Bicycle Pedestrian Priority Area program, to ensure quick implementation of this transportation network.

Thank you

Joseph Allen

Chair, Action Committee for Montgomery County

Washington Area Bicyclist Association