

Candidate Name (Affiliation): **Dalia Palchik (D)**

District: **Providence**

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# 1. Improving Public Transit

Public transit is the backbone of a sustainable, equitable transportation system and a thriving economy, and Fairfax County has admirable plans to expand its bus rapid transit (BRT) network to ensure fast, frequent, and reliable service for residents. While public transit ridership on some systems has been hit by the pandemic with reduced commute trips due to increased teleworking, transit remains key for essential workers, and for supporting compact, walkable communities.

Do you support increased funding for public transit to address budget shortfalls and make improvements to better serve riders?

**Candidate's Response:** **Yes**

What is your experience riding public transit? What ideas do you have to improve public transit in Fairfax County?

**Candidate's Response:**

**I began riding transit as a child in Buenos Aires, rode transit growing up in Fairfax (when heading downtown), and rode it exclusively while I lived in DC. Since moving back to Fairfax, I bought my first condo close to the INOVA bus stop in order to be able to ride the bus around the county and to the Metro for work. It was on one of those trips when I first decided to run for office.**

**We need to make sure that public transit reaches our most vulnerable populations. I am proud to be chairing the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission as we look at three separate bus transformation projects in the region, as well as the future of the Route 7 Bus Rapid Transit, and fare options for children, families, and all riders. We are in the midst of a \$700m shortfall for WMATA, and our work in the next year will help cement future commitments to Metro moving forward. We also need to look into increasing trip frequency that would attract and retain more riders. We need to ensure that public transit is and continues to be a reliable option for the community, and the economic engine of our state and region.**

## 2. Active Transportation Funding

The ActiveFairfax Transportation Plan – the County’s most significant overhaul of its bicycle, pedestrian, and trails plans – is expected to be finalized this year. The plan’s recommendations address critical safety needs for residents who already walk and bike and also make improvements to allow more residents to walk and bike conveniently and safely for daily needs. Realizing the Plan’s vision will require substantial, dedicated, and consistent funding.

Would you support Fairfax committing dedicated annual funding to support the ActiveFairfax Transportation Plan, even if that meant potentially delaying road expansion and interchange projects?

**Candidate’s Response:** [\[No response provided\]](#)

What is your personal experience dealing with or advocating for pedestrian or bicyclist safety issues?

**Candidate’s Response:**

[I would be hesitant to support delaying road expansion and interchange projects to fund the ActiveFairfax Transportation Plan but I am willing to consider each project on a case-by-case basis, as well as ensuring additional grants and set aside funds for these projects. Each project is unique and has its own pros and cons, and I would prefer to examine each individually. We have embarked on a comprehensive study of Gallows Road, and I believe the same needs to be done for Route 29 to ensure we are providing for the multimodal needs of our community in years to come.](#)

[I have and will continue to advocate for investments in multimodal transportation, and pedestrian and bicyclist safety. A connected community can help reduce the cost of transportation for our residents. I have been working with the Virginia Department of Transportation on a few safety improvements in the Providence district including the Blake Lane corridor, which is currently undergoing a Road Safety Audit, and the Shreve corridor. I will continue to work with all stakeholders and advocate for improvements at the local, state, and federal levels on these issues.](#)

## 3. Low-Stress Bike Network

Fairfax County has committed to reducing the amount people have to drive and associated transportation-related carbon emissions. The County’s climate plan calls for meeting a goal of

30% non-auto commuting trips by 2030. To make this shift, the County will need robust, accessible alternatives and bicycling is an ideal, low-cost, carbon-free alternative. But that mode shift requires dedicated infrastructure including an expanded network of trails and comfortable, protected, low-stress bicycle facilities – not just painted bike lanes or sharrows – to make bicycling meaningfully safer, more appealing, and more accessible and often requires roadway redesign that reduces parking and/or vehicle lanes.

Compared to the current prioritization, do you think greater priority should be given to the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians in the County’s roadway designs?

**Candidate’s Response: Yes**

How would you ensure that people of all ages and abilities have robust active transportation access to and along the County’s major and most important thoroughfares and connecting streets?

**Candidate’s Response:**

**We have some great projects coming online this year, including the I-66 Trail, and the Route 50 walkways in Providence District. In addition, we are currently embarking on the Gallows Road study, and I believe a study is also needed of Route 29 in Providence in order to ensure safer access to pedestrians and cyclists, many of whom do not own cars. We need to continue our commitment, but it will also be critical to secure State and Federal level funds for the installations of necessary safety improvements, as well as approvals and funds for protected bike lanes.**

**I am open to looking at different options and having productive discussions to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to engage in active transportation. We have a long ways to go but also have the most dedicated and active support I have seen in my thirty years of living in the county.**

## 4. Safe Streets for All

On May 10, 2022, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors unanimously endorsed the Safe Streets for All Program, a comprehensive initiative to address systemic transportation safety issues for people walking, biking, taking transit, and driving. Included in the recommendations is a call for roadway infrastructure changes to slow traffic on our community’s streets. Unfortunately, the County has not yet dedicated staff or funding to begin executing the program. At the same time, Fairfax County experienced a troubling uptick in traffic-related pedestrian fatalities in 2022.

Do you support the full implementation of the Safe Streets for All Program in Fairfax County, including changes to roadway design guidelines and an expanded automated speed enforcement program?

**Candidate's Response:** **Yes**

What proven traffic safety improvement policies, programs, and/or technologies would you like to see implemented in your district and throughout the County? Given the lack of clarity around who has the legal and budgetary authority to make roadway safety improvements stemming from state ownership of County roads, what steps would you propose to ensure that these roadway safety improvements are implemented?

**Candidate's Response:**

**This needs to continue to be a joint effort as this is a partnership between VDOT [Virginia Department of Transportation] and FCDOT [Fairfax County Department of Transportation]. The county recently launched the Speed Camera Pilot program with the goals of improving safety, reducing accidents and injuries, and improving driving behavior. Currently, there are speed cameras in eight locations, and cameras are to be installed in two more locations soon. These required authority from the General Assembly, and as we implement this and other measures, we need to continue to advocate to expand safety improvements and funding streams.**

**While the state is responsible for most roads, the County takes the necessary steps to make sure roads are safe for all residents. I would be happy to work with interested partners to ask for state support in addressing safety issues.**

## 5. Safe Routes to School

Trips to and from schools are among the best opportunities to reduce car trips in Fairfax County. A robust Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program can play a critical role in encouraging more families to walk and bicycle to school, which has been shown to increase confidence and sense of independence among children while also reducing pickup/dropoff vehicle congestion and associated carbon emissions. Unfortunately, the County's SRTS program includes just one dedicated staff position for a public school system that serves 185,000 students.

Would you support expanding the Safe Routes to School program, including additional staff capacity, to get more kids to walk and bike to school?

**Candidate's Response:** **Yes**

What other policies or budget items will you pursue to upgrade transportation infrastructure so kids can safely walk and bike to school?

**Candidate's Response:**

I look forward to continuing to work with the new Safe Routes to School team to get their thoughts and feedback on program areas that might need improvement or support. As experts, they would be the best partner in determining policies that can help improve safety for kids. In addition, we need to ensure that funding through local and state budgets continues to target safety improvements. I also believe we need to have our police and safety teams review and provide process improvements for our Crossing Guard program.