

Candidate Name (Affiliation): **Albert Vega (D)**

District: **Springfield**

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: **My personal experience and stories shared with me is that public transit time is too long compared to driving a car. I would propose changes to how our routes are determined. Using a form of machine learning to optimize routes with an increased quantity of vehicles and a greater variety of vehicle sizes can improve transportation time. Creating more bus routes, an additional VRE station, and extending the WMATA Orange line to a redeveloped, mixed-use community in the Fair Oak Mall area could significantly improve public transit in the Springfield District.**

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: **Yes**

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

Candidate's Response: **I love cycling and would love to work on the core issue of comfort while cycling. Dedicated paths are great, but there is still a need for improvement in this area. Maintenance/upkeep and widening paths with clear signage and markings can help cyclists and pedestrians to exist safely simultaneously. We also need to expand the network of paths around the county. Some roads are supposed to be shared with cyclists, but I would not feel safe on most of these roads. If dedicated paths are not feasible, I would like to improve the overall awareness of cyclists. Awareness can occur at many levels, one during driver education and the other at events highlighting cycling and pedestrian activities. I would advocate for a "Tour de Springfield," where people can cycle around the community visiting local businesses and seeing the sights.**

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: **I would start with aggressively coordinating with VDOT to move through the backlog of identified transportation priorities in our District. One project that comes to my mind is creating pedestrian pathways on both sides of the Fairfax County Parkway. The additional path would ease pedestrian traffic and allow bicyclists to navigate the parkway better. I would also support better modernizing our bus route maps to make them more user-friendly and improve our mobile apps to provide our residents with better up-to-date information about our bus system. Lastly, I applaud the Board for allowing those aged 12 and under to ride the bus for free with a parent. However, this policy does not go far enough. I would support making our bus system free to all our residents under the age of 18 to encourage them to use our public transportation systems, especially once they become members of the workforce.**

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: **I would advocate for installing speed cameras in locations other than construction and school zones. In the Springfield District, there is a notorious road (Lee Chapel Road) with a history of speeding accidents that will be an excellent candidate for speed cameras. The fear of receiving a speeding ticket is a sufficient deterrent that makes drivers slow down and will save lives. Other traffic safety improvement technologies I would like to consider include red light cameras, rectangular**

rapid flashing beacons, and better signage/signals during low visibility events (Fog, rain, snow).

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: **Two items come to my mind regarding upgrading our transportation infrastructure for our children's commute to school. First, I would like to provide more resources and increase the number of crossing guards at our schools. This is a proactive measure that we should approve as soon as possible and not wait until we have a pedestrian traffic incident involving one of our students. I would work closely with our school board on adding more crossing guards and explore possible additional funding. The second idea I have is creating more secure bike racks at our public schools to encourage commuting by bike.**