



March 8, 2023

The Honorable Don Beyer
United States Representative, VA-08
1119 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Beyer,

I am writing on behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) and its more than 7,000 members across the Washington metropolitan area to express our full support for Arlington County's request for design funding for the Arlington Boulevard Trail via this year's Congressionally Directed Spending program.

For fifty years, WABA has worked to transform the capital region by improving the conditions for people who bike. Our work to advocate for dedicated bike infrastructure, pass laws that promote safe roadway behavior, and provide education programming for all road-users has resulted in a drastically different cultural and political approach to biking for transportation. Biking can and should be an equitable, safe, low-cost, time-saving, and sustainable way to navigate our region for all residents and visitors.

We see and treat multi-use trails as the strongest thread connecting people, regardless of their mode, to their built and natural environments. Trails are often the first and safest option people choose to gain access to the outdoors and commune with friends and family. Good trails are more than a transportation corridor, they're a hub for community.

Arlington Boulevard (Route 50) is a multi-lane 'stroad' running east/west through Arlington and Fairfax Counties and is one of the area's most important commercial and transportation corridors. At present, the corridor features a patchwork of sidewalks and narrow shared-use paths comprising the Arlington Boulevard Trail; unfortunately, the significant gaps in the deteriorated facilities makes the trail an unreliable and underutilized route for active transportation and recreation.

A rehabilitated and complete Arlington Boulevard Trail would greatly expand walkability and access to the numerous neighborhoods, schools, and businesses that line the corridor and reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and associated carbon emissions. For these reasons, the Arlington Boulevard Trail is a top priority for WABA, the Capital Trails Coalition, and the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (our region's Metropolitan Planning Organization). We are therefore eager to support Arlington County's multifaceted efforts to make this trail vision a reality.

A comprehensive County study identified the segment of the Arlington Boulevard Trail between South George Mason Drive and South Glebe Road, adjacent to the National Guard Bureau and National Foreign Affairs Training Center (NFATC), as one of the most critical, unsafe, and constrained. The existing facility is a narrow 5' sidewalk with no buffer between trail users and adjacent vehicles traveling at speed on Route 50. Such proximity to high-speed vehicles results in frequent obstruction by debris and generally makes for an uninviting facility.

The County is looking to prioritize improvements and recently released draft design concepts for this area that propose an improved, protected trail adjacent to the NFATC complex. The recommendations include improved crossings and the installation of a wider 10' multi-use, 'all ages and abilities' trail that meets the County's standards for width, buffer, and physical separation from the roadway. In total, the proposed design would greatly improve bicycle and pedestrian safety and access and will help kickstart the reimagining of Arlington Boulevard writ large as a welcoming, people-centered corridor.

We have so far been encouraged by the overall design and community engagement process, and commend Arlington County for prioritizing segments in most need of safety improvements over easier-to-build projects. We therefore urge you to meet Arlington County's request for Congressionally Directed Spending for design funding to advance this pivotal project.

Sincerely,



Kevin O'Brien
Virginia Organizer, Washington Area Bicyclist Association