



February 14, 2023

Eden Jemal  
Federal Highway Administration, USDOT  
22001 Loudoun County Parkway, Building E2, Suite 200  
Ashburn, VA 20147

Dear Eden Jemal,

I am writing on behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) and its more than 7,000 members across Arlington County and the Washington metropolitan area to express our full support for the Arlington Memorial Trail and to offer feedback on the two proposed alternatives.

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.

The Arlington Memorial Trail is a priority project by any measure. It is one of the Capital Trails Coalition's top 40 top priority projects selected from more than 180 trail segments due to its significance in filling a critical gap in the regional bicycle/pedestrian network. Its importance is also highlighted in the National Capital Trail Network, the visionary 1,400-mile trail network recently adopted by the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board, our region's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

The trail will provide a needed connection between the fast-growing Arlington neighborhoods and business districts of Pentagon City and Crystal City in the southern portion of the county with Rosslyn in the north. It also deepens the connections between Northern Virginia and the District of Columbia, offering a low-stress, off-road, people-friendly transportation alternative through one of the region's most notorious tangles of federal facilities and major highways, and one that has gotten appreciably more difficult to traverse in recent years. To wit:

- In 2015, residents lost the ability to travel through Fort Myer.
- In 2016, residents lost the ability to travel through Arlington National Cemetery.

- As of 2023, the ability to get from Columbia Pike to the Mount Vernon Trail and to the bridges leading into the District of Columbia without a major detour now requires entering the Pentagon Reservation, access to which is precariously at-will and revocable at any time.

The Arlington Memorial Trail offers a safer, direct, and more permanent alternative than any previous or existing route. We applaud Arlington County and the Federal Highway Administration for prioritizing its development and offer the following comments as the design process progresses.

### **Important Design Considerations for the Trail:**

1. Provide sufficient and consistent width and sight lines to prevent conflict between people walking and biking and to allow safe passing.
2. Provide significant separation between the trail and highways like Route 27 and Route 110 to limit trail users' exposure to vehicle emissions and noise pollution, and provide barriers to shield trail users from blinding headlight glare and from vehicles leaving the roadway.
3. Use a long-wheel-base bicycle like a long-tail, bakfiets, or bicycle pulling a trailer as the design vehicle for the trail geometry to ensure curves, intersections, curb cuts, and other features all work for these larger trail user vehicles, which are expected to increase in number.
4. Keep grade changes gradual to ensure the trail works for ALL trail users.
5. Provide a safe and direct crossing over Memorial Drive to facilitate connections from the Arlington Memorial Trail to the existing trail on the other side of Memorial Drive that would connect trail users to the US Marine Corp War Memorial and onward to Rosslyn and the Key Bridge.
6. Utilize dark-sky-compliant lighting that provides a consistent level of illumination for trail users.

### **Feedback on Presented Alternatives:**

Sheet 4: We strongly prefer how ALT 2 relocates a portion of the Cemetery Wall to allow a consistent width for the trail and separation from the trail and the crash barrier. The narrowed trail of ALT 1 further suffers from the placement of the crash barrier immediately adjacent to the trail surface which functionally narrows the trail further as trail users are loath to use the portion of the trail immediately adjacent to a vertical barrier.

Sheet 5: We strongly prefer how ALT 1 maintains better separation from Route 110. ALT 2's proximity to 110 would needlessly expose trail users to vehicle emissions and noise pollution from the highway as well as creating a less comfortable trail experience.

We thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on this critical infrastructure project and look forward to continued engagement in the months and years ahead.

Sincerely,  
Kevin O'Brien  
Virginia Organizer, Washington Area Bicyclist Association