



Public Comment Provided on May 9, 2024 at the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority's FY2024-2029 Six Year Program Public Hearing

Good evening members of the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority. Thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight. My name is Kevin O'Brien and I am testifying on behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) and its more than 5,000 members across Northern Virginia and the Washington metropolitan area to once again recommend that the NVRTA prioritize bicycle, pedestrian, and multimodal-focused projects for Six-Year Program funding.

Our North Star, for over fifty years, has been that bicycling can and should be an equitable, safe, low-cost, time-saving, and sustainable way to navigate our communities for all.

We testified to this body back in January and commended the important role that NVRTA has played in transforming the bikeability of our region, now considered among the nation's best. We noted with enthusiasm the more than \$5 billion the region has invested in transportation improvements including funding for transit and complete streets projects. But we also noted the continued focus on road widenings and interchange expansions – over 60% of dollars according to our friends at the Coalition for Smarter Growth – that fuels ongoing auto-dependent sprawl and induced demand that exacerbates the epidemic of road violence affecting our region and the nation (among many other negative externalities).

We encouraged NVRTA to recommit to modal shift and investment in transportation alternatives that focus on effectively moving people rather than cars, on expanding transit capacity and pedestrian spaces and bikeways rather than vehicle lane miles. Thankfully, member jurisdictions have, to major degree, heeded this clarion call and submitted an improved mix of projects for

your consideration that *lead* with bike, pedestrian, and transit rather than tacking those elements onto road projects.

To wit, we are excited by Alexandria's push to remedy its high-crash intersections (#029). We think Arlington's CC2DCA bicycle and pedestrian bridge will be highly effective in reducing congestion into and out of the busy airport campus (#023). Fairfax County's Braddock Road multimodal improvements project will finally enable real transportation alternatives along the corridor (#136). And Prince William's Route 234 project at I-95 will help bridge the divides our car-centric infrastructure has wrought in our communities (#041). These and other similar projects should be first in line for SYP funds.

Still, a number of the submitted projects remain majorly car-focused, reflecting a continued, stubborn commitment to the status quo and the outdated notion that more travel lanes is the only solution to vehicle congestion. We should not – cannot – continue to spend our limited transportation dollars on projects that we *know* won't solve our transportation problems or bring us closer to our road safety and carbon emission reduction goals. Instead, let's use this Six-Year Program to definitely and finally acknowledge that the future of transportation in our region lies in making it easier and more convenient to navigate within and between communities on foot, by bike, and by transit *without* adding more lanes. The economic vitality and liveability of our region, and of the planet, depends on it.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight, and we look forward to continuing to work with you towards a safer, more sustainable, and more liveable Northern Virginia.