



April 3, 2024

Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22201

Re: Arlington County FY2025 Proposed Budget

Dear Chairwoman Garvey, Vice Chairman Karantonis, and Members de Ferranti, Coffey, and Cunningham:

I am writing on behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) and our more than 5,000 members across Northern Virginia and the Washington metropolitan area to offer comments on Arlington County's FY2025 Proposed Budget.

For more than 50 years, WABA has worked with jurisdictions 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 for all road-users has resulted in a drastically different cultural and political approach to biking. Biking can and should be an equitable, safe, low-cost, time-saving, and sustainable way to navigate our region for all residents and visitors.

Arlington County residents and Board Members have, in large part, embraced this people-centered vision for how we move through and about the County, supporting critical investments in active transportation, complete streets, and roadway safety. As a result, Arlington has made tremendous strides and earned accolades for its work, including achieving Gold-level status as a Bicycle Friendly Community in 2023 from the League of American Bicyclists and being named one of only five "Walk Friendly" Platinum communities nationwide in 2022 from the University of North Carolina's Highway Safety Research Center. We would also call out the great work of the County's Vision Zero team in beginning to cut through red tape to more consistently deliver timely and meaningful safety improvements.

But we cannot rest on our laurels. Too many Arlington streets continue to prioritize vehicle speed, throughput, and storage at the expense of people on foot, bicycle, or taking transit. The results: continued car-dominance in terms of mode share and an intractable upward trend in severe or fatal crashes disproportionately impacting bicyclists and pedestrians. These issues won't be

solved overnight or with one budget. But we implore the County Board to hold its course towards a better, safer, more walkable and bikeable future and to boldly lean into that future with decisiveness whenever opportunities arise.

Below we highlight elements in the proposed FY2025 budget critically important to maintaining the County's progress towards its strategic transportation goals including Vision Zero, as well as areas the County should reconsider or consider anew with these same goals in mind.

KEEP: Steady Transportation Staffing Supporting Consistent Project Delivery

Consistent staffing is critical for Arlington County to continue delivering new infrastructure projects and maintaining existing infrastructure in a timely and efficient manner. Avoiding staffing swings as Arlington purports to do with this budget will also ensure the County continues to invest in its in-house transportation planning and management expertise. We therefore greatly appreciate transportation-related staffing levels remaining unchanged, subsequently leading to no major anticipated impacts on capital project timelines. While we would, of course, welcome additional staff that might expedite delivery of bicycle and pedestrian improvements, we also acknowledge the complex and uncertain economic climate. A level transportation budget is a win in such an environment.

KEEP: Increased Parking Enforcement

We celebrate the inclusion of 4 additional FTEs focused on parking enforcement. More robust enforcement captures more revenue for the County and will complement the performance parking pilot project. More importantly, better enforcement will hopefully discourage and reduce bad parking behaviors such as parking in bike lanes, crosswalks, in front of bus stops, and in loading zones. These driver behaviors see chaos for people biking, trying to cross the street, or reach the bus door and are a glaring impediment to more people choosing non-car travel modes. Parking enforcement is a win-win.

RECONSIDER: Increased Investment in Public EV Charging Infrastructure

The one program we would suggest revisiting is the continued investment in Arlington's EV program. While we applaud the County's commitment to zero-emission vehicles, we think the funds specifically dedicated to public EV charging infrastructure would be better spent elsewhere. There is no shortage of chargers, with the Department of Energy's Alternative Fuels Data Center showing no fewer than 197 in Arlington. Rather than subsidizing infrastructure exclusively used by those wealthy enough to afford an electric car (average price: \$53,469 in 2023), we think Arlington could more effectively incentivize zero-emission transit through an e-bike rebate program and should fund a study or pilot program in FY25.

CONSIDER: Increased Funding for Street Safety Improvements (SSI) Program

While some Arlington roads will likely require major future overhauls to reach ‘complete street’ status and achieve safety for all users, many would be substantially improved with smaller ‘quick-build’ treatments that are the focus of the Street Safety Improvements (SSI) Program. This program has been an impactful and cost-effective way to marshal a variety of funding sources to deliver safety improvements to residents – readily-visible things like additional curb cuts, repainted crosswalks, better lighting, and installation of pedestrian flashing beacons. More and more consistent funding would allow the program to deliver more projects to more people more quickly.

CONSIDER: Increased Funding for BikeArlington and WalkArlington

Lastly, we encourage the County Board to increase funding to support BikeArlington and WalkArlington, two of the most widely known and respected programs within Arlington County Commuter Services (ACCS) that have been decimated by reduced and inconsistent funding over the last few years. Encouraging more people to walk and ride requires infrastructure investment *and also* the kind of programming BikeArlington and WalkArlington put on to make it fun and accessible for everyone. More funding for BikeArlington means things like more learn-to-ride classes, means more people on bikes, means fewer cars on the roads – an easy win-win.

Budgets reflect our priorities and values, and we are encouraged by what we see reflected in this FY25 proposal. With the few low-cost adjustments outlined above, Arlington County can go even further to promote safe and complete streets, and the County Board should ensure it does so in its final budget. Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to continuing to build a transportation future in Arlington County where walking, biking, and rolling are the best ways to get around.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth Kiker', written in a cursive style.

Elizabeth Kiker | Executive Director
Washington Area Bicyclist Association
and
Arlington County Resident