



July 1, 2026

The Honorable Matt de Ferranti
Chair, Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

RE: FY2027-2036 Capital Improvement Plan

Dear Chair de Ferranti and County Board Members:

Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions, EcoAction Arlington, and the Sierra Club's Potomac River Group are pleased that the proposed Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for FY2027-2036 continues to prioritize investments that advance the County's climate and other environmental goals. The plan provides for sustained investment in energy efficiency, rooftop solar, EV charging infrastructure for both County operations and public access, and energy resiliency. In addition, as a result of the County's initial experience with battery electric buses, the anticipated cost of the transition has been substantially reduced with an expected 1:1 replacement rate. We also greatly appreciate the expanded investment in invasive management and habitat restoration to ensure that all of Arlington's natural areas are under invasive management by FY2033 as well as the sustained investments in stormwater infrastructure and safer streets for bikers and pedestrians.

Nevertheless, we believe that the CIP misses an opportunity to accelerate efforts to save energy, electrify, and build greater energy resilience to County operations and offer the following recommendations for a more holistic approach to advancing climate goals through its investments over the coming decade.

Adhere to County Board's Electrification Guidance

Our organizations are concerned that the proposed CIP does not adhere fully with the County Board's 2022 guidance that "The default policy of the County is to use high efficiency electric heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, hot water systems, and appliances, in County owned facilities, when existing building systems planned for replacement or part of new facility construction projects, where use of such systems is feasible." There are now highly efficient heat pump solutions, including geothermal, that can meet virtually all of the County's facility requirements. The future is electric powered by clean, inexpensive renewable energy and County investments should ensure that our facilities are prepared.

We urge the County Board to update its 2022 guidance and direct the County Manager to provide more details on how the County is phasing out use of fossil fuels in its facilities through electrification. Any decision to opt for a fossil fuel system should identify all options considered, offer strong technical justifications, provide full life cycle costs, clearly state assumptions, and be presented to the Board for approval. This information should be included in the annual summary called for in the original guidance describing the HVAC systems approaches made on all projects during the previous fiscal year as well as a one year look-ahead for projects in design that include significant HVAC replacement.

Accelerate Energy Efficiency and Resiliency Efforts

We recommend that the County look for opportunities to accelerate decarbonization efforts by integrating plans for rooftop solar, energy efficiency improvements and energy resiliency planning and development into other ongoing projects.

- The CIP mentions the potential for using energy savings performance contracts (ESPCs) but with little elaboration. Identifying several older facilities that could benefit from a more holistic approach to energy improvements through an enhanced building envelope, rooftop repair, and replacement of HVAC and other systems under ESPCs could accelerate efforts to reduce energy use and GHG emissions with lower upfront costs and greater impact.
- Ongoing plans to replace aging roofs could prioritize facilities most suitable for rooftop solar to accelerate plans for power purchase agreements (PPAs) with the aim of maximizing solar energy production on County facilities.
- The CIP includes several projects and programs such as the Alternative Emergency Communications Center and the Critical Systems Infrastructure Program that would be good opportunities to consider battery storage for primary backup power. The County can also coordinate with APS projects to identify potential resiliency hub sites that could integrate rooftop solar and battery storage to maintain operations during a power outage. Integration of battery storage with the County's emergency and resiliency planning would have the added advantage of having a valuable resource to participate in demand response programs or Dominion's virtual power plant pilot.

Provide Greater Transparency on Climate Action

We are disappointed that the proposed CIP does not include details on how the proposed projects, individually as well as collectively advance the County's climate and environmental goals. ***We recommend that the County Board provide guidance to the County Manager to develop a plan for addressing how the CIP communicates the County's progress in meeting climate and other environmental goals by June 2027.***

- Adding brief impact statements for each project would address how the project advances the County's stated climate, environmental and other goals. The statement would note, for example, how the project impacts GHG emissions, helps with the phase out of fossil fuels, reduces energy use and cost, lowers VMT, expands tree canopy coverage, advances environmental justice, and meets other climate and environmental goals. Such statements could also be used to convey how these projects advance other key County goals.

- The County should create a publicly available dashboard with the energy profile of all of the County-owned buildings that would include energy use intensity, carbon emissions, and type and age of various systems, similar to what APS has for its schools. The information would provide an energy baseline for County buildings, offer insight on where investments could make the biggest impact and align with necessary investments to keep buildings in a good state of repair, and make it easy to track progress on decarbonization.

Finally, we commend the County Manager's proposal to explore various, non-bond financial options to expand the availability of affordable housing in Arlington. We urge the County to advance a concept of affordability that includes energy efficient and fossil fuel free housing that would reduce overall housing costs and provide resiliency in the event of extreme weather and power outages. The initiative should also seek to protect and improve existing market-rate affordable housing to prevent further erosion of affordable housing in Arlington while preserving the embodied resources of our existing housing stock.

Sincerely,

Elenor Hodges
Executive Director, EcoAction Arlington

Julie Rosenberg
Leader, Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions, Arlington Hub

Dean Amel, Chair
Sierra Club - Potomac River Group

cc: Mark Schwartz, Arlington County Manager
Jennifer Fioretti, Assistant County Manager for Climate Action
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