



August 14, 2026

Honorable Matt de Ferranti, Chair
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Re: Feedback on the Draft Multimodal Transportation Plan

Dear Chair de Ferranti:

EcoAction Arlington, the Sierra Club's Potomac River Group, and the Arlington Hub of the Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions have been actively monitoring progress in the development of the updated Master Transportation Plan (MTP) and participating in public engagement opportunities throughout the process. The full version of the draft plan consolidates all the elements that have been discussed so far and allows us the opportunity to assess how the updated plan will advance Arlington's efforts to address the climate crisis and meet its goal for carbon neutrality by 2050. Our comments below highlight our overarching assessment, concerns, and recommendations that we think can help make the plan a stronger roadmap for our transportation future. Our more specific comments on the draft are included in an appendix.

We applaud the staff's impressive work and meaningful progress in developing a comprehensive draft MTP inclusive of policies, strategies, transportation network guidance, and curb lane priorities. In particular, the assessment of the Modal Priority Networks, street typologies, and curb uses, and proposed prioritization are thorough and sound. These elements together offer a roadmap to guide decision making and address tradeoffs in allocating limited right-of-way space for transportation.

However, the plan makes no mention of how it will advance the County's climate commitments and goal for carbon neutrality, even though transportation accounts for 36 percent of the County's greenhouse gas emissions. We believe the MTP should include robust policies and strategies to meet County climate goals. If planning to achieve these goals is determined to be outside the scope of this MTP, the document should clearly defer to the Climate Action Plan and related documents to guide the County in this area.

We also recommend that the vision and goals section be expanded to describe how the proposed policies, strategies, and right-of-way guidance will collectively provide a transportation system that will allow everyone, particularly our most vulnerable populations, to get to "where they want to go, when they need to be there, with desirable choices beyond using a car." More convenient and accessible transit, safer and more

connected pedestrian and bike infrastructure, and a range of other multi-modal options will support mode shift away from use of single occupancy vehicles. In turn, we should expect to see reduced vehicle miles travelled (VMT) and related reduction in GHG emissions and congestion. The result will be cleaner air, greener streetscapes, and overall improvements in quality of life, especially for vulnerable populations that are currently disadvantaged by our still largely car-centric transportation infrastructure with driving accounting for approximately 62 percent of weekday trips in Arlington.

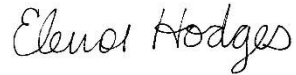
In addition, we offer the following high-level recommendations to further strengthen the draft MTP's proposed policies and strategies as well as accompanying implementation actions and measures to advance its vision and goals.

- ***Add or bolster strategies to advance a convenient and connected transit system.*** The Equity Analysis highlighted that current transit services fall short in meeting the needs of residents in both high and low vulnerability areas, citing limited north-south routes and relatively few high frequency transit routes with direct service to County services and facilities, and by extension other popular destinations in Arlington and elsewhere in the region. Strategies that clearly address these challenges such as more north-south routes, increased frequency along key corridors, enhanced connection with regional transit, provision of on-demand, flexible transit services such as microtransit for areas and times when fixed route services are under-used or unavailable, and cooperation with other transit providers such as APS and STAR to leverage existing transit resources to meet transportation needs of students, the disabled, and elderly.
- ***Support broader efforts to reduce the GHG emissions within transportation systems to meet the County's climate goals for transportation.*** A significant mode shift will contribute but not fully meet the County's carbon neutrality goal. Therefore, the MTP should embrace the shift to electric or other zero-emissions vehicles and the reduction of embodied carbon in infrastructure projects.
- ***Clearly identify those 10 or so priority policies or strategies that will be most important in meeting the plan's vision and goals.*** It is not possible to read this draft and understand which are the most important policies/priorities that Arlington County WILL follow or prioritize in implementation. Given the complexity of the plan with its 22 policies, each supported by numerous strategies and extensive network guidance, key actions are buried. Highlighting the most important in the Executive Summary and Implementation section will help ensure that implementation is focused on those actions that will have the biggest impact.
- ***Include more ambitious metrics.*** The MTP deserves ambitious metrics that drive transformative progress.

We believe these changes will ensure the rigor and vision of the final Multimodal Transportation Plan as well as the broader trajectory of Arlington's transportation future for the next 30 years. This will position Arlington as a model for equitable, people-centered, and climate-aligned mobility -- one that communities everywhere can look to as an example.

Thank you for the opportunity to convey our views concerning this very important plan update. We stand ready to work with the County to make this successful.

Sincerely,



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Leader, Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions, Arlington Hub

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Chair, Sierra Club - Potomac River Group

Cc: Mark Schwartz, County Manager
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APPENDIX

General feedback

In reading through this complex and lengthy plan, we came away with the impression that a number of the policies and accompanying strategies were vague and at times redundant. For example, Policy I reads “Couple infrastructure investments with transportation demand management to minimize single-occupancy vehicle trips,” which seems to be a restating of a key objective of the plan. The description is similarly high level and vague. The strategies, on the other hand, relate more narrowly to transportation demand management (TDM). Strategies under the modal network sections in many cases appeared to be among the most important and strongest in the plan. We offer some additional examples in our comments below.

We recommend that the plan be carefully reviewed and streamlined before the final draft is presented to the County Board to ensure that all elements work together to provide an impactful roadmap to meeting the vision and goals. Each policy should be distinct with measurable outcomes and additive to other policies, and strategies actionable. Our recommendation (in the above letter) is to add a description between the vision and goals and the policies, strategies, and network guidance sections would provide the framework for **how** these elements will fit together.

Sustainability elements

Policy L: Maintain safe, accessible, and convenient transportation options during temporary disruptions such as construction and planned events.

A lack of reliability and being able to trust that the transportation network will deliver you safely to your destination is a key barrier to shifting travel to sustainable modes like walking, biking, and scooting. Road construction and other temporary measures regularly disrupt pedestrian and micromobility networks in a way that other modes rarely see. Sometimes no detours, often unsafe detours, regularly long inconvenient detours that add significant travel time are regular occurrences for people trying to walk, bike, and scoot to work, school, or for day-to-day needs. The strategies in Policy L are critically important for overcoming this mode shift barrier to move more trips to low and no-carbon modes.

While we strongly support Strategy 4 for explicitly stating that any required detours must be safe, accessible, and direct, and minimizing the duration of those closures, overall, the proposed strategies fall far short of what we need and can be strengthened by:

- ***Establishing clear priorities for the Maintenance or Traffic (MOT) development and execution***, similar to how we have made our priorities clear on Curb Space Hierarchy so that if space is needed for construction activities, the order of facility closure should be

something like: 1) parking lanes 2) automotive travel lanes beyond one in each direction 3) bike / micromobility facilities 4) sidewalks.

- ***Strengthen Strategy 3 to expand not just organization capacity to inspect MOT plans for compliance but the County's ability to provide real penalties for non-compliance, especially for repeat offenders.***

POLICY M: Reduce transportation greenhouse gas emissions to achieve carbon neutrality with a focus on shifting trips to high-quality multimodal transportation options and by supporting low- and no-emission vehicle infrastructure.

The first part of this policy reflects numerous policies and strategies within the plan to improve multimodal transportation options and is redundant to the policy. The policy should acknowledge that additional measures other than mode shifts are required to meet the County's carbon neutrality goal. We recommend that the policy be redrafted to focus on reducing the GHG emissions resulting from investments and operations of the transportation system. Our proposed language for this policy is "***Reduce transportation greenhouse gas emissions to achieve carbon neutrality by supporting the transition to zero emissions vehicles and reducing overall lifecycle emissions in investment projects and operations.***" The policy description should be rewritten to reflect this shift in focus.

Recommended changes to the draft strategies under this policy include:

- **Strategy 1:** This strategy essentially duplicates Policy I on Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs and should be deleted.
- **Strategy 2:** We recommend dropping reference to low- emissions vehicles. Fully electric mobility options such as e-bikes, e-scooters, and EVs that can be made available to meet last mile and occasional car share arrangements are mature technologies and should be encouraged. Once the electric grid has shifted to renewable energy sources, zero carbon emissions will be fully realized for such vehicles.
- **Strategy 4:** This strategy starts with a vague call to continue to invest in transit and ends with the implication that shifting to low- or zero-emissions transit vehicles might be undermining efforts to expand transit service. Battery electric buses save considerably on fuel and maintenance, offsetting upfront costs, and funding sources for investments are different from longer term costs for operation and maintenance. *We recommend rewriting Strategy 4 to read "**Invest in the transition to zero emissions transit vehicles and charging infrastructure to support a 100 percent zero-emissions fleet for Arlington and regional transit authorities providing transit services in Arlington.**"*
- **Strategy 5:** This strategy addresses actions to disincentivize reliance on SOVs and does not directly reduce GHG emissions. We recommend that it be moved to *Policy I related to TDM.*
- **Strategy 6** This strategy would be stronger with an explicit reference to equity. We recommend ***adding "Prioritize identification and deployment of right-of-way***

charging in areas with the highest concentration of households lacking access to off-street parking, and report on the distribution of installed infrastructure by housing type.” Without this language, we risk building charging infrastructure that serves people with garages and leaves others behind.

- **New strategy on reducing embodied carbon.** GHG emissions from building the infrastructure itself: roads, bridges, bike lanes, and the materials and construction behind them are real, substantial, and near-term. We recommend a strategy that calls for conducting a lifecycle carbon assessment for all major infrastructure projects and prioritizing the use of lower-carbon materials.
- **New strategy to incentivize zero emission vehicles** – ***“Explore creation of zero emissions zones where appropriate, in high density areas by either banning or charging a fee for gas-powered vehicles, to encourage use of zero emissions vehicles.***
- **New strategy to advance EV charging infrastructure**, especially in multi-family and commercial buildings. Lack of charging infrastructure is a barrier to adoption of electric vehicles but retrofitting existing buildings can be a challenge for owners. We recommend a strategy to develop programs that provide technical assistance and financial incentives to assist businesses and multifamily buildings to add charging infrastructure.

Policy N – Integrate biophilic principles, street trees, and green infrastructure into the planning, design, and operations of the transportation system.

The first three strategies simply repeat the policy statement and provide no further guidance. Furthermore, Strategy 4 is redundant with Policy K, Strategy 5, dealing with resiliency. We therefore suggest deleting the first four strategies and replacing them with the following alternative strategies:

- ***“Prioritize planting of canopy trees where feasible along all arterial networks to maximize tree canopy coverage, reduce urban heat island impact, manage stormwater, and reduce air pollution.”***
- ***“Incorporate best practices to ensure adequate planting space and soil volume and proper maintenance for healthy trees and other plantings.”***
- ***“Select native tree and plant species that have been proven to thrive in harsh street environments and can tolerate salt and air pollution along heavily travelled roads.”***
- ***“Adhere to International Dark Sky standards for all street lighting to reduce light pollution, which is harmful to insects, birds and other wildlife as well as human health and often wastes energy.”***

Measuring Progress

With any plan outcome is closely tied to what is measured and we recommend a number of adjustments and additions to improve the County's ability to track progress on meeting the vision and goals.

- **Elevate the GHG emissions metric.** The plan tracks transportation greenhouse gas emissions only as an "indicator" with a desired trend of "decrease," not as a benchmark with a number and a date. The carbon neutral by 2050 target lives in the Community Energy Plan and is only referenced here.
- **Strengthen Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) metric** by measuring in absolute value not simply per capita to meet a vision to move more people with less traffic and making it a measurable target with a timeline. Recent data already demonstrate that the County can reduce daily traffic volumes despite a growing population.
- **Delete or revise watershed retrofits completed (per MS4 permit).** There are more relevant metrics to measure sustainability in this plan.
- We recommend adding the following:
 - **Access to convenient transit measured as a percentage of households with access to transit within 10 minutes** (not just within ¼ mile from bus stop) and a measure of percentage of the population able to get to key destinations within Arlington within a reasonable time (1.5 more than driving).
 - **Tree canopy coverage along arterial corridors** as a percent of coverage along the right of way with a target of continuous tree canopy coverage along these corridors.
 - **Number of cars per household** as a measure of declining reliance on cars.
 - **Percentage of vehicles that are EVs or other zero emissions** broken down by transit, county fleet, commercial and residents to track progress in reducing the GHG emissions and other associated pollutants for vehicles on the road.

Near-term Actions

We recommend adding the following near-term actions:

- Assemble baseline benchmark and indicator measures and integrate into relevant County planning documents, including budget and CIP.
- Integrate relevant policies and strategies into the process for updating the Transit Strategy, which is set to begin next year.