



County of Fairfax, Virginia

To protect and enrich the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods and diverse communities of Fairfax County

March 21, 2020

Jeffrey C. McKay, Chairman
Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite 530
Fairfax, Virginia 22035

Trails, Sidewalks and Bikeways Committee

Kenneth Comer,
Chairman
(at large)

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(Dranesville)

Mark Tipton
(Fairfax County
Federation
of Citizens
Associations)

Dear Chairman McKay:

The Trails, Sidewalks and Bikeways Committee supports Supervisor Lusk's and Supervisor Alcorn's January 28th Board Matter, requesting that the Active Fairfax Transportation Plan address the County's current approach to funding pedestrian infrastructure improvements and options for using technology to address safety issues. The Board should feel a sense of urgency to address the recent spate of pedestrian fatalities on Route 1 and other parts of the County.

In the time since the Board of Supervisors discussed Supervisor Lusk and Supervisor Acorn's Board Matter on this topic at their January 28th meeting, four additional pedestrian fatalities have occurred throughout the County. So far in 2020, there have been eight pedestrian fatalities on Fairfax County roads, on track to double the number of pedestrian fatalities in 2019.

Three of the first four pedestrian fatalities in 2020 have occurred on or adjacent to U.S. Route 1, the Richmond Highway. On January 9th, a fifty-one-year-old woman was fatally struck by a motor vehicle while crossing South Kings Highway near the intersection with Route 1 in Penn Daw. A week later on January 16th, a 52-year-old man was fatally struck by a motor vehicle while crossing Route 1 near the intersection of Pohick Road near Fort Belvoir. On February 11th, a fifty-eight-year-old man was struck and killed crossing Richmond Highway near Giles Run Road south of Lorton. While Richmond Highway has taken the brunt of this year's pedestrian fatalities, it is not alone.

Many residents, especially in economically disadvantaged areas such as the Route 1 corridor, rely on buses, bicycles and walking to get around. Yet they have to navigate a highway where pedestrians and bicyclists were not even an afterthought in the mind of engineers that never had the foresight to think about how land uses would evolve in this corridor.

Over the past decade, the Board and FCDOT, working with VDOT initiated many pedestrian safety measures, but unfortunately, those focused mostly on sidewalks coupled with a few blinking warning lights, while not addressing the root of the problem—road design that creates significant conflict between high speed vehicles and the increasing numbers of pedestrians that need to access the bus, adjoining neighborhoods or commercial areas, or just to get home after being dropped off.

Comprehensive plan amendments like EMBARK and others around the County set the intention of creating walkable, bikeable communities and may help with the provision of bicycle lanes and wider sidewalks. But transportation recommendations as part of these plans often call for widening roads, like Route 1, that will make crossing them become even more daunting. Route 1, for example, will be widened significantly over the next five to eight years to accommodate both vehicular traffic and the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). The design while providing for new sidewalks, shared use pathways and bicycle lanes parallel to Route 1, but will have limited opportunities for people biking and walking to cross an even wider road.

In a **Pedestrian Safety Action Plan**, published in May 2018, VDOT identified the Richmond Highway in Fairfax County as one of nineteen "priority corridors" and provided a toolbox of potential pedestrian safety countermeasures that could be used to increase pedestrian safety.

(http://www.virginiadot.org/business/resources/VDOT_PSAP_Report_052118_with_Appendix_A_B_C.pdf)

The Trails, Sidewalks and Bikeways Committee applauds the Board Matter motion and supports the VDOT effort to address these urgent safety issues, but more needs to be done. The recommendation from the 2018

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VDOT Pedestrian Safety Action Plan and other best practices can be implemented now in the Route 1 Corridor as well as other priority crash corridors in the County. These measures will help increase pedestrian safety by increasing the visibility of pedestrians and reducing pedestrian-vehicular conflicts between turning traffic and pedestrian crosswalks

1. Reduce and enforce the speed limit on Richmond Highway to a consistent 35 from Alexandria to Lorton.
2. Increase the number of high visibility crosswalks at each signalized intersection so there are crosswalks on all four segments (most now only have two).
3. Remove (close) all service roads that intersect with intersections and direct those business customers to exit on the side road further away from the signal.
4. Develop a maintenance plan to repaint crosswalks (all four segments) regularly when it is needed.
5. Eliminate right turn on red at all signalized intersections on Route 1.
6. Program pedestrian signals and establish as the default setting for "Ped Recall" (WALK indication will be given every cycle (as if someone were always there pushing the button) and/or "rest-in-walk" (automatically gives the WALK indication during the green signal for the major street) as appropriate for the intersection.
7. Program pedestrian signals at major commercial intersections (existing and planned) for "leading pedestrian interval" to give pedestrians a few seconds in advance to start crossing (as part of fully featured accessible pedestrian signals).
8. Designate the Richmond Highway between Beacon Hill and Lorton as a pedestrian safety corridor to increase signage, enforcement, penalties and illumination levels throughout. Install signs similar to the signs at Route 1's intersection with Sky View Dr to increase awareness of pedestrians throughout the entire corridor.
9. Install pedestrian barriers as a pilot program for directing pedestrians toward better crossing locations – this should be coupled with well-designed mid-block crossing areas where the distance to signalized crossings currently induce pedestrians to cross in unsafe places.

In addition, there are several mid-term actions that must be taken to reduce the risk and make it safer for pedestrians and bicycles utilizing the Route 1 Corridor. Most of these relate to reverse engineering the Highway to reinforce the desired operating speeds and therefore increase pedestrian and bicycle safety.

- As the Embark Plan is implemented over the next few years and VDOT widens the road, the design speed for the roadway needs to be reduced to 35mph and all mountable curbs should be replaced with barrier curbs over time between Lorton and Alexandria.
- Reduce turning radii at all signalized intersections and install barrier curbs coupled with curb extensions (bump outs).
- Install median refuge islands at all signalized intersections to provide a safe place for pedestrians that cannot cross the entire distance within one signal cycle.

There are many more measures that can be taken to increase pedestrian safety on roadways like the Richmond Highway. We encourage you to prioritize funding for these measures and to go beyond what can be done in a master plan.

An often-quoted article from *ProPublica* shines some light on the increased risk of getting killed by a car with every mile per hour of operating speed. <https://www.propublica.org/article/unsafe-at-many-speeds>. We urge you to take action now in the Richmond Highway corridor and other priority corridors to enforce slower operating speeds, increase visibility of existing signalized crosswalks, reduce conflicts in turning movements at those intersections, and continue the ongoing efforts to direct pedestrians to those crosswalks, or install new ones mid-block for those areas where no facilities currently exist.

Please don't wait for the Active Fairfax Transportation Plan to be completed and implemented. You can save lives now. We ask that you work immediately with VDOT to implement these actions to reduce the risk of pedestrian crashes and fatalities consistent with Supervisor Lusk's and Alcorn's board matter requesting evaluations of the ability of the County to establish and achieve measurable safety goals such as Vision Zero.

On behalf of the Trails, Sidewalks and Bikeways Committee, thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Kenneth Comer
Chairman

cc: Board of Supervisors
Bryan Hill, County Executive