

NEIGHBORHOOD COMPLETE STREETS PROGRAM GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

This Neighborhood Complete Streets (“NCS”) Program Guide describes the implementation of Arlington’s “Complete Streets” policy in Arlington’s residential neighborhoods. The NCS program overall and this Program Guide rely on guidance from a handful of important County documents:

- The County’s Master Transportation Plan (MTP), especially the MTP “Goals and Policies” element adopted November 13, 2007 and updated February 25, 2017,¹ which emphasizes “Complete Streets” as a central objective of the MTP; and the MTP Streets Element adopted February 12, 2011 and amended October 15, 2016.²
- A Six-Step Public Engagement Guide for Capital Projects adopted January 31, 2018.³

What is a Complete Street and what does it look like? There is no single definition or description for a Complete Street. Each is designed to fit its particular community’s needs. The MTP Goals and Policies element states that Arlington should strive to “Design and operate a comprehensive network of Arlington’s local and arterial streets to enable safe access by all user groups including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit vehicles and users, and motorists of all ages and abilities, allowing these users to access a full range of daily activities.”⁴ According to the National Complete Streets Coalition, a Complete Street “may include: sidewalks, bike lanes (or wide paved shoulders), special bus lanes, comfortable and accessible public transportation stops, frequent and safe crossing opportunities, median islands, accessible pedestrian signals, curb extensions, narrower travel lanes, roundabouts, and more.”⁵

¹ Master Transportation Plan, Goals and Policies Summary, <https://projects.arlingtonva.us/plans-studies/transportation/master-transportation-plan/>.

² Master Transportation Plan Streets Element, <https://arlingtonva.s3.dualstack.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2017/04/October-2016-Amended-Streets-Element.pdf>.

³ A Six-Step Public Engagement Guide for Capital Projects, https://www.arlingtonva.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/PublicEngagementGuide_020518.pdf.

⁴ Master Transportation Plan, Goals and Policies Summary, at page 5.

⁵ National Complete Streets Coalition. <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/program/national-complete-streets-coalition/publications/what-are-complete-streets/>.

CHAPTER 1: PROGRAM GOALS AND CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMISSION

The NCS Program Goals are derived from the MTP Streets Element:

- Construct and manage streets to be Complete Streets. Streets should be safe and comfortable for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, motorists and other users.
- Provide safe and convenient access for all users, of all abilities, on all streets.
- Minimize rates of injuries and accidents for each mode of transportation with a goal that transit riders, pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists feel safe and comfortable at all times when traveling in Arlington.
- Improved access, safety and livability in residential areas.
- Support compliance with traffic laws while minimizing reliance on police resources.
- Address residential traffic problems in a fair, consistent and comprehensive manner through application of uniform objective criteria.

Only Neighborhood Principal and Neighborhood Minor streets as defined in the MTP Streets Element are eligible under the NCS Program.⁶

The County Board, under the “Neighborhood Complete Streets Commission – Charter,” established a citizen advisory group, the Neighborhood Complete Streets Commission (NCSC) to help provide direction and support for the program along with County staff.

The NCSC carries out the following functions:

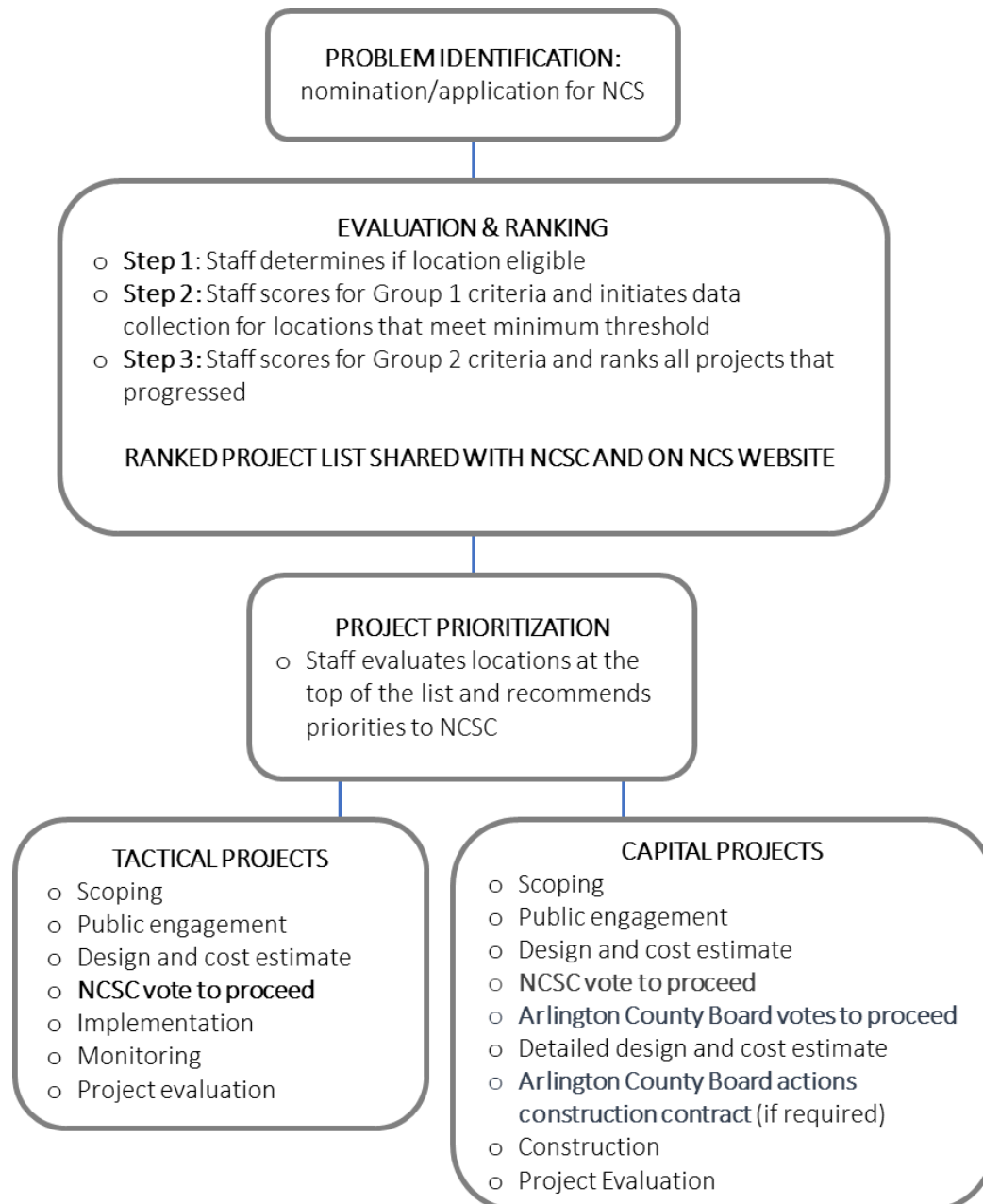
- Provides advice and input to the County Board and County Staff with respect to developing the NCS Program processes to be adopted by the County Board, including project selection criteria, project prioritization, public outreach to encourage engagement, and public traffic safety education.
- Provides advice to County Staff in connection with implementing the NCS Program processes approved by the Board, including calls for new projects, and ongoing advice regarding developing and implementing NCS projects.
- Participates with County Staff in administering the ranking system used by the NCS program to prioritize potential neighborhood complete streets projects.
- Makes funding recommendations to the County Board regarding proposed NCS Projects.
- Participates with County Staff in developing neighborhood traffic safety education programs.
- Recommends new policies and strategies to the County Board based on NCS Program experience and evolving best practices in other jurisdictions. Advises the Board on Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) priorities and on other relevant policies.

The NCS Program implementation is coordinated with other County programs to accomplish the objectives of the MTP. The NCSC receives guidance from the County Board through a Board liaison and via the project approval and funding process.

⁶ See “Master Transportation Plan Map” with street typologies: <https://projects.arlingtonva.us/plans-studies/transportation/master-transportation-plan/>.

CHAPTER 2: NEIGHBORHOOD COMPLETE STREETS PROCESS

The NCS Program process anticipates that projects will vary considerably in complexity, cost, and scope. Consequently, the specific process for development of each project will be tailored to the circumstances of that project. This Chapter sets forth in general terms the steps that projects will follow. The principal objectives of the process are to ensure that (1) safety issues have primacy; (2) evaluations and project rankings are based on objective criteria; (3) verifiable factual information supports all projects; (4) affected stakeholders are made aware of potential projects and have an opportunity to provide input during project development; and (5) NCS resources are distributed throughout the County through the use of a problem-severity ranking system. The following flowchart lays out the general process that projects nominated for the NCS will follow. See below for a narrative description of the steps.



Project Initiation

The first step in the process will be to identify and evaluate neighborhood street sections for program eligibility, and to assign those streets a ranking score to help determine the priority in which they will be selected for project development. The NCSC, working with County Staff, has established specific, objective criteria and a point system for determining eligibility for the program and for assessing eligible streets for project development and funding. These criteria and points are set forth in Appendix A to this Program Guide.

Requests for evaluation of a particular neighborhood street for the Complete Streets Program can be initiated in a variety of ways. Residents, community organizations or Board- or Manager-appointed advisory groups may request a street evaluation. County Staff could initiate a project request based on, for example, the anticipated impact of construction of a new school. Finally, County Staff will occasionally issue public calls for potential project locations.

Project Prioritization

All nominations will be investigated by staff for eligibility to the NCS program. If applicable, staff will adapt a preliminary project area and scope in order to rank all eligible projects. The list of potential projects will be periodically updated and posted on the County's website.

Project scopes will vary. A project could involve one or a few contiguous blocks of a street. Alternatively, a project could be limited to a single intersection with poor sightlines, unsafe pedestrian crossing areas or continual problems with stop sign compliance.

A numerical scoring system has been developed to prioritize Complete Streets requests for development. Each street for which a request has been submitted will be evaluated and scored by County Staff. The assigned score will affect the order of priority in which the street will be considered for project development and funding.

Projects will also be prioritized based on scope and potential costs. There will be two tracks or types of projects:

1. Capital Projects – these are projects with a more expansive scope, higher projected costs, and require more intensive interventions. Capital Projects will likely be required in instances where a street is missing sidewalks on both sides, where the sidewalk is incomplete or obstructed or in other instances with serious safety and accessibility issues.
2. Tactical Projects – these are projects that are relatively limited in scope, lower cost and can be completed quickly. If a project has a limited geographic scope and there is a clear safety or accessibility issue that can be solved quickly through low intensity measures, it will likely be recommended in the Tactical Project track. This track may also be used to try new methods, materials, and approaches to street improvements.

Staff will review projects on the numerically scored list and make recommendations to the NCSC about prioritization of projects and which track the projects belong in based on the availability of capital funding and Staff resources. The NCSC will then approve specific projects to move forward on either the Tactical or Capital tracks.

Note that while Tactical Projects will generally involve lower intensity interventions, completion of a Tactical Project does not mean that a street will be removed from consideration for more intense measures. In other words, if safety and accessibility problems continue after the initial Tactical Project is completed or more permanent fixtures are appropriate, the street may remain in consideration for a Capital Project.

Project Development

NCS Staff will coordinate project development in consultation with appropriate County Staff from other affected County programs, including emergency responders. The NCSC will monitor ongoing project status, and some individual NCSC members will participate in the community engagement process. Policy guidance in adopted County plans, including the Master Transportation Plan and Neighborhood Conservation plans, will be considered along with the physical characteristics of the neighborhood when designing the projects.

In developing projects, the NCS Program will coordinate when appropriate with complementary programs, such as the Safe Routes to School program, BIKE Arlington, WALK Arlington, Arlington Transit, etc.

NCS staff will also develop projects with an eye to addressing concerns raised by the community in nominating the project as well as design considerations such as sightlines, street lighting, etc.

Community Engagement

Community engagement at appropriate points during an NCS project will be integral to the success of specific NCS projects and the overall program. As with the scoping and prioritization process, the community engagement process will be context and project specific.

County staff will use the board approved document “A Six-Step Public Engagement Guide for Capital Projects” as a guideline to develop and execute community engagement around relevant projects. As the public engagement guide notes: “Arlington completes hundreds of projects -- small and large -- in any given year. Recognizing that there is no one-size-fits-all approach, this guide is intended to help align the level of public engagement based on characteristics, benefits and potential impacts of each project. Not every project will have a 6-step engagement process. While all County projects are important, there will always be some routine tasks that the County will complete at its discretion while practicing an efficient use of time and resources.”⁷

Project Funding

The activity level of the NCS Program will inevitably depend on the level of funding. The NCS Program is currently funded with capital funding support through a combination of Pay-Go and Bond funding for capital improvements, as well as budgeted funds for program administration.

The project funding process will vary based on project track. Because Tactical Projects are lower cost and require less intense interventions, once these Projects are developed to approximately 30% design, the NCSC will vote on whether to move forward with them.

⁷ 6 Step Guide, at page 3.

Once Capital Projects are developed to approximately 30% design, the NCSC will hold a funding session to formally vote on NCS project recommendations to the County Board. These funding sessions (like all NCSC meetings) will be open to the public and the public will be permitted to speak with respect to their project, subject to the general rules applicable to speaking at a public meeting. In making a formal recommendation to the County Board to fund a Capital Project, the NCSC will consider the results and feedback from the project's public engagement process, including positions taken by neighborhood civic associations and individual street users, among others, either written or presented directly during the funding session. The support or opposition of any given individual or organization will not, however, govern the NCSC's decision whether to recommend a project to the Board.

The NCSC will vote on whether to recommend funding a Capital Project to the County Board. Ultimately, only the County Board can take action on funding Capital Project execution.

Project Implementation

If the Board approved funding for a proposed Capital Project, project implementation will move forward. Likewise, if the NCSC votes to move forward on a Tactical Project, implementation will move forward. Either way, the NCSC will monitor the progress Staff's implementation of NCS projects and actual versus projected project costs.

Project Evaluation

Before-and-after studies are important for building a base of evidence for the effectiveness of the Complete Streets Program, allowing the County to target investment in Complete Streets projects based on effectiveness.

Within two years after project implementation (on either the Tactical or Capital Project tracks), staff will evaluate each project, solicit community feedback, and make a recommendation to the NCSC about the status of the project and any recommended next steps. In general, performance measures/evaluation criteria should be closely tied to planning goals and measure a relevant aspect of system performance.

Appendix A: NCS Project Ranking Guidelines

Group I	
A. Sidewalk Conditions	
No complete sidewalks (12)	
OR Narrow or obstructed (6)	
Missing curb ramps (2)	
B. Traffic Hazards/Safety	
Reported crash past 48 months (4 points per crash, max 8)	
Crash with Physical Injury (additional 4-6 points per crash, max 12)	
Minimum total Group I A + B (minimum 8 points)	
C. Speed & Volume	
Speeding Problem (8)	
Traffic Volumes above 1,000 per day (4)	
Traffic Volumes between 500 and 1,000 (2)	
Total Group I A+B+C: (minimum 12 points)	0

Group II	
A. Pedestrian attractors	
3/4 mile to Metrorail (4)	
1/2 mile to ES; 3/4 mile to MS/HS (4 points per school, max 12)	
School bus stop (2)	
1/4 mile to bus stop (1-3)	
1/2 mile to shopping/office (1-3)	
1/2 mile to civic building (3)	
within 500' of a park (3)	
B. Mapped Bike Routes	
Designated on bike map (3)	
Connects with trail (3)	
Connects to bike route (1)	
CaBi station w/in 1/4 mile (2)	
C. Land Use/GLUP	
Commercial/mixed use (5)	
37+ dwelling units (5)	
16-36 dwelling units (4)	
11-15 dwelling units (3)	
D. Equity Emphasis Areas (5)	
Total Group II A+B+C	0
OVERALL TOTAL	0

Notes:

Minimum Group I Score Required to Qualify for NCS Program = 12 points

Crashes include automobile collisions with bicycles or pedestrians