



August 19, 2021

Mr. Mark Schwartz
Arlington County Manager
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Mr. Schwartz:

Among the projects in Green Valley under planning or development are three: the ART bus maintenance and operations facility on Shirlington Road; road changes on Four Mile Run Drive in between Shirlington Road and South Nelson Street; and an enlarged mid-street crosswalk on Shirlington Road at South 27th Street. We have concerns with how Arlington County is – or is not – utilizing its own commissioned traffic assessment study from Timmons Group.

For background, the traffic assessment study results were first alluded to during a meeting of the Public Facilities Review Committee on June 16, 2021. The study was not provided to committee members – before, during or after the meeting. Staff and consultants instead stated such a study existed and it supports what the staff is already planning for the ART bus facility. Committee members asked for a copy of the traffic study, but even 10 days after the meeting a copy was not distributed to them, nor was a copy posted on the county website. It took a written letter dated June 28, 2021, requesting – again – a copy of the document before it eventually was posted to the county website. As of this date, committee members have still not been informed of its availability.

At Issue

The intersection of Shirlington Road and South Four Mile Run Drive will be impacted by the three projects noted above. The traffic assessment study for the ART bus facility notes the following regarding existing 2021 conditions for that intersection:

- *The signalized intersection of S. Shirlington Road/S. Four Mile Run Drive operates at an overall Level of Service (LOS) D in the AM peak with a delay of 35.1 seconds/vehicle and a LOS C in the PM peak with a delay of 29.9 seconds/vehicle.*
- *The eastbound and westbound movements at the intersection operate at LOS E or F (the worst ratings) in both peak hours. All 95th percentile and maximum queues are contained within the available storage.*

The traffic assessment makes no mention of the other two projects occurring near that intersection, which will add to the vehicular back-up.

The county plans, despite opposition from the Green Valley community, to widen the mid-street crosswalk on Shirlington Road, near South 27th. Already, the community that lives and works here experiences the back-up in this area, and the traffic assessment bears this out. Enlarging a crosswalk *mid-street* will only exacerbate the problem. The Green Valley Civic Association repeats that the crosswalk should occur at the existing intersection with present stop lights and cross signals. The mid-street crosswalk should be eliminated.

The county also plans to reconfigure *one* block of South Four Mile Run Drive, from Shirlington Road to South Nelson Street. The reconfiguration will diminish a four-lane road down to a two-lane road with a middle turn lane. It also calls for back-in parking on the south side of the street in front of Jennie Dean Park. These planned actions will further slow traffic, but it will also add to an already congested intersection.

Why is a traffic assessment study for one Arlington County project – the ART bus facility – not also applied to other Arlington County transportation projects in the same vicinity? Why is Arlington County failing to address the problems holistically?

These questions require responses.

Observation

It is curious to us that the 118-page report from an independent consultant depends on 2019 traffic count data from Arlington County. The report indicates “the 2019 traffic counts were grown using a 2% background annual traffic growth rate to obtain 2021 traffic counts” and states “the impact of the new facility (ART bus) will have little to no increase in pedestrian and bike traffic.”

The report fails to mention active and planned development along Shirlington Road that may impact the traffic assessment. It fails to note the development along Four Mile Run Drive and the planned adjustments to and surrounding the Green Valley bridge on Shirlington Road. Yet, the study recognizes that the intersection referenced above will remain graded poorly.

Troubling communications between the county and consultant include statements such as: “... was digging around for recent count to help... we can determine if they’re too old or still can be used.”

There is a troubling appearance that the county paid a consultant to read its own dated data back to them.

Conclusion

We will not assume that the ART bus facility will positively or negatively impact traffic in this area. The utility of this report in making impact declarations for the ART bus facility is questionable. That said, it is clear that the county is not working in concert on these transportation projects and Green Valley will suffer as a result. We again urge the county to rethink the mid-street crossing on Shirlington Road, and better plan for the worsening of conditions at the intersection of Shirlington Road and South Four Mile Run Drive.

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If you have questions or need additional information, please let me know. We would be pleased to demonstrate further these points.

Sincerely,

Robin Stompler
President (acting)
Green Valley Civic Association

cc: Members, Arlington County Board