

Joint Comments from Fairfax Healthy Communities Network on the Safe Street for All Program Recommendations

December 10, 2021

Coalition for Smarter Growth, Audubon Naturalist Society, Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions,
Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling, Washington Area Bicyclist Association,
Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance

Dear Active Transportation team:

The above named organizations, as part of the Fairfax Healthy Communities Network, write to express our support for the county creating a Safe Streets for All program and the draft program recommendations. We are glad to see Fairfax taking action to make our streets safer for active modes like walking, biking, and accessing transit, and we fully support the creation of a Safe Streets for All program.

Why we care

Our network partners envision a Fairfax County where people can live, work, and play in connected communities that are healthy, sustainable, and inclusive. Having safe and comfortable ways to walk, bike and get to the places we need to go without relying on driving is integral to making our communities more sustainable and healthier, and contributing to a vibrant local economy. People of all income levels, ages, and in all parts of the County want to or need to walk and bike - these decisions affect everyone, and every community.

As we face the current climate crisis, reducing car travel while prioritizing public transit, walking, and biking can help us reduce greenhouse gas emissions. But without safe streets, it is difficult for people to choose a different mode of transportation and those without choice are forced to navigate unsafe conditions.

We continue to face high rates of fatalities and serious injuries to vulnerable road users in Fairfax County, especially along our higher speed arterial roads that also serve as major transit corridors. Thirteen people have been killed walking or biking on our streets so far this year. This doesn't account for the near misses and other dangerous situations people face navigating our roads on foot or by bike.

We support the draft Safe Streets principles

The principles laid out in the draft recommendations are good and set the tone necessary for a strong Safe Streets program. If we are to truly make our roads safer for all users, we must do as the draft principles state:

- Recognize that traffic deaths and serious injuries are preventable
- Acknowledge that safety should not be a tradeoff for faster mobility
- Take a proactive approach to ensuring safe streets for all users and abilities

We support the draft recommendations

The draft recommendations contain an impressive set of actions to make our streets safer. In particular, we appreciate that the draft program recommendations include:

- The critical steps of identifying funding, which prioritizes needed safety improvements and ongoing maintenance
- Addressing equity and prioritizing high needs areas and communities disproportionately impacted by crashes and fatalities
- Developing a locally funded Safe Routes to School program serving K-12 to save the current part-time position and move to expand this successful program
- Ensuring safe routes to schools, metro and bus stops, parks, and community services
- Designing for slower speeds and 'complete streets' for all types of users and ages
- Providing more robust traffic safety education
- Ensuring accountability by developing an annual report card and other tools for the County and community can regularly measure and monitor progress

We support the creation of a Safe Streets program and the thorough and timely implementation of the draft recommendations. A strong Safe Streets program is needed to fix the dangerous conditions we currently face so walking, biking and accessing our metro stations and bus stops can be a safe and viable option to get around Fairfax County.

Thanks for your time and consideration of our comments.

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Audubon Naturalist Society, Renee Grebe, Northern Virginia Conservation Advocate
Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions, Andrea McGimsey, Executive Director
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Washington Area Bicyclist Association, Jeremiah Lowery, Advocacy Director
Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance, Michelle Krockner, Executive Director

CC: Chairman McKay and Members of the Board of Supervisors
Tom Biesiadny, Director, Fairfax County Department of Transportation