

Columbia Pike Multimodal Street Improvements Preliminary Engineering Phase

PUBLIC HEARING QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

A public hearing for the Columbia Pike Multimodal Street Improvements project was held on Monday, March 26, 2012, from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM, at the Walter Reed Center, 2909 S. 16th Street, Arlington, Virginia. Copies of the meeting agenda and presentation are on the "Meetings and Presentations" page of the project website at www.pikemultimodal.com.

The purpose of the hearing was to present the proposed project design and obtain feedback from the public on the elements of the design. The following questions were posed during the session and on comment forms provided to the attendees. Responses to the questions and comments are provided in *italics*.

QUESTIONS DURING THE PUBLIC HEARING

- Question: What exactly are the details for the land swap taking place between Arlington County and the federal lands east of the bridge?

Answer: Arlington National Cemetery (ANC) has a need to expand. ANC staff is working with staff from Arlington County, Washington Headquarters Services (WHS, which oversees the Pentagon Reservation) to plan the following activities:

 - *Demolition of the Navy Annex facilities and release of the Navy Annex land from WHS to ANC; in exchange for transferring the Southgate Road right-of-way to the ANC, the County would obtain a strip of the property along Columbia Pike*
 - *Construction of a 2-lane road from Henderson Hall Gate 3 to Columbia Pike on the west edge of the Navy Annex property*
 - *Removal of most of Southgate Road*
 - *Potential realignment of Columbia Pike from the Air Force Memorial to the east to intersect with S. Joyce Street south of the current S. Joyce St./Columbia Pike intersection*

While the Navy Annex is being demolished, the timing of the land swap, ANC expansion, and street projects are still to be determined.
- Question: Concerns for lanes where buildings are close to the sidewalk—how will they fit?

Answer: This project will result in sidewalks with a minimum width of 6 feet, clear of any obstacle, between the face of curb and building faces. For locations where buildings are close to the street, a six-foot minimum will be achieved. For locations where buildings are set further back, the intent is to construct a sidewalk at least six-feet wide, and if there is room, to add additional sidewalk width, street trees, landscaping, bicycle racks, bus shelters and other amenities. In each situation, the design will accommodate travel lanes for vehicles and buses that are 11 feet wide (outside lane) and 10 feet wide (inside lane), with a center turn lane (or median) 10 feet wide with an additional one foot "shy line."

3. Question: Will smaller lanes mean slower traffic and more accidents?
Answer: Current lane widths range from less than 10 feet to more than 13 feet. This project will standardize the lane widths. Lanes that are 10 to 11 feet wide (narrower than 12 feet) do tend to slow traffic. In an urban setting, there is little evidence that 10- to 11-foot lanes create any more accidents than wider lanes. The proposed lane widths (discussed in the answer to Question #2 above) provide for adequate space for the width of vehicles that typically use the street. For some segments, building narrower lanes will allow for the construction of wider sidewalks within the limited public space.
4. Question: Will there be a study of the impact of traffic when lanes get smaller?
Answer: This project will standardize the lane widths. Some travel lanes will actually become wider than they exist today. The County has completed several studies over the past decade, including the Arterial Transportation Management (ATM) Study, that have made use of traffic data, traffic models, and U.S. DOT guidelines that take into account the width of lanes. The studies and models have shown that lanes narrower than 10 feet are not desirable and create operational challenges, given the width of typical vehicles; lanes less than 12 feet provide some "friction" to slow traffic, but they are considered safe for typical vehicles; lanes greater than 12 feet wide tend to encourage faster vehicle speeds, given the additional pavement width.
5. Question: Where will on street parking be added?
Answer: This project currently keeps on street parking where it exists today. Limited on street parking is proposed between S. Frederick St. and S. Jefferson Street. On street parking will be added with redevelopment, per the recommendations of the Street Space Planning Task Force and in areas subject to the Form Based Code.
6. Question: Is this a change from the 2005 plan? Parking was on both sides in that plan but it is not in this plan.
Answer: For the near term, i.e., until redevelopment occurs, existing right-of-way is constraining the implementation of parking on both side of the street. On street parking will be added with redevelopment, per the recommendations of the Street Space Planning Task Force and in areas subject to Form Based Code.
7. Question: Safety issues with parking lane being only 7 feet wide—what's your view of that?
Answer: The County standard parking lane width is 7 to 8 feet wide, from edge of travel lane to face of curb (including the gutter). Automobiles fit within this space. Given that on street parking tends to slow traffic in the travel lane, there have been no significant safety issues with on street parking in Arlington County. Future parking spaces along Columbia Pike will be eight feet wide.
8. Question: New street traffic lights—are there further studies that have to be done for them to be put in where indicated?
Answer: Yes. Signal warrant studies will need to be performed by the County to determine whether or not they will installed now or sometime in the future.

9. Question: Are we constricting traffic by creating wider “giant” sidewalks?
Answer: *No. The project is not proposing to sacrifice travel lanes for sidewalk width. The number of travel lanes and their proposed widths are appropriate for the existing and future volumes of traffic and for the desired speeds of vehicles.*
10. Question: What about the unintended consequences of the new traffic pattern on the nearby neighborhoods? Have you gotten feedback from the residents north and south of the Pike?
Answer: *The project is not proposing to alter existing traffic patterns. The County has made a number of presentations to civic associations, other citizens groups, and the Columbia Pike Implementation Team (CPIT), which is made up of Columbia Pike residents and other Arlington citizens. Through these meetings, there has been a significant amount of feedback from residents north and south of the Pike. One result of this feedback was the removal of some proposed medians and the addition of center left turn lanes for accessing the many existing driveways along the Pike.*
11. Question: Question about a specific bus turn out lane where there's a wider sidewalk for school and metro bus. Are there safety issues when you remove bus turn out lanes?
Answer: *It is the County's preference that Metro and ART buses remain in the travel lane at bus stops. Bus turn out lanes tend to make it difficult for buses to re-enter the travel lanes and maintain their schedules, especially in heavier traffic.*
12. Question: For the bridge at Four Mile Run, is there historic significance?
Answer: *The bridge itself has not been designated as a historical resource. It has been altered several times since its construction in the 1940's.*
13. Question: How much is it costing the County to standardize the 56-foot-wide street? How much of this is being done to facilitate the trolley project? How much lane width does the streetcar need?
Answer: *The project proposes to reconstruct Columbia Pike, which will include rebuilding the street pavement, replacing or repairing curb and gutter, widening sidewalks to improve pedestrian access, improving drainage and stormwater management, and relocating utilities including the undergrounding of the overhead utilities. One result will be a standard 56-wide street, which will provide a consistent cross section and, in some locations, allow the widening of sidewalks. The project is not being done to facilitate the streetcar project, but the reconstruction of the street and relocation of utilities will not preclude the streetcar or make the streetcar more costly to implement. The total cost for street improvements along the entire 3.5 mile corridor is \$79 million. A streetcar needs approximately 8 feet of the lane width for its track slab*
14. Question: Philosophy for synchronizing the traffic lights and will that change when the project is implemented?
Answer: *The County synchronizes traffic signals on a routine basis for all of its streets. Signal timing on Columbia Pike is periodically updated, and this philosophy will remain when the project is implemented.*

15. Question: For the addition of left turn lanes, which intersections will not have dedicated left turn lanes?

Answer: *Most intersections along the Pike have dedicated left turn lanes today. New left turn lanes are proposed at S. Scott Street, S. Quincy Street, S. Taylor St., and S. Thomas St. Left turns are not currently provided nor are they proposed for S. Rolfe Street and S. Oakland Street.*

16. Question: Questions about lane widths and general safety.

Answer: *Lanes that are 10 to 11 feet wide (narrower than 12feet) tend to slow traffic. In an urban setting, there is little evidence that 10- to 11-foot lanes create any more accidents than wider lanes. Studies have shown that lanes narrower than 10 feet are not desirable and create operational challenges, given the width of typical vehicles; lanes between 10 and 12 feet provide some "friction" to slow traffic, but they are considered safe for typical vehicles; lanes greater than 12 feet wide tend to encourage faster vehicle speeds, given the additional pavement width.*

17. Question: Why propose more traffic lights if one of the major goals is to keep the progression of traffic, especially at the intersection mentioned earlier that has 2 dead end streets with little traffic?

Answer: *Traffic signals, if timed well, can actually assist with progressing traffic at desired speeds. A signal warrant analysis will be performed for the proposed signal in question (at S. Quincy Street). The need for a signalized pedestrian crossing and more efficient vehicle access will be considered as part of the warrant analysis.*

18. Question: Are there any plans for bike lanes on sidewalks? Will there be new signage to indicate bicycle use?

Answer: *The County considered proposing dedicated bicycle lanes on sidewalks (cycle tracks) in some locations, but given the limited sidewalk width and the variety of users, cycle tracks are no longer being considered. However, signage indicating that bicycle use is allowed on sidewalks will be part of the project.*

19. Question: Will there be signage for pedestrian crosswalks that aren't at stop lights?

Answer: *Yes. There will continue to be pedestrian crossing signs indicating to drivers the presence of pedestrians and that they should yield to the pedestrians.*

20. Question: This is not a complete street without designated bike lanes. The alternative is bike boulevards but they are not yet complete.

Answer: *From the perspective of the bicycle mode, the County is proposing a "complete corridor" to include the proposed bicycle boulevards, routes, and lanes on streets parallel and perpendicular to Columbia Pike. At the eastern and western ends of the Pike itself, there will be a 10' shared facility for both pedestrian and bicycle use. The project will also add numerous bicycle racks along the length of the Pike.*

21. Question: Will there be any partnership with the police to make sure people are following traffic laws and flow?

Answer: *Arlington County Police enforce traffic laws today. The partnership between Arlington County Police and County staff, elected officials, and citizens is solid and will continue in the future as proposed improvements are implemented.*

22. Question: Reduction of speed limits along the Pike? Is this something Arlington County will consider studying?

Answer: *Currently, the intent is for the speed limit for the length of Columbia Pike to be 25 or 30 miles per hour, depending on the location. The County will consider 25 miles per hour for segments that have a greater speed limit today.*

INPUT FROM COMMENT FORMS

DO YOU SUPPORT THE GOALS OF THE COLUMBIA PIKE MULTIMODAL STREET IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT? WHY?

YES

1. Currently, on the west end of the Pike where I live (S. Dinwiddie and Columbia Pike) there are NO safe crosswalks or sidewalks due to construction and lack of adequate lighting.
2. It is an improvement.
3. The time for incremental investments in the Pike to enable similar successes to other corridors.
4. Most of them.
5. Standardize the roadway before future development makes sense. Improve pedestrian/bicycle accessibility to the extent possible with existing ROW will vitalize the Pike as an urban corridor.
6. They seem like reasonable, safe improvements to the Pike for everyone.
7. Improve safety for pedestrians, vehicles. Improve operations for public transit. Improve traffic flow.
8. Consistency, predictability.
9. I do not own a car and Columbia Pike is very difficult to navigate without one. Sidewalks are not 100% great.
10. The left turn lanes are a safety and traffic flow improvement. I am concerned about the 7 ft. wide parking lanes delaying bus and vehicle traffic. The effects need to be modeled.
11. More consistent streetscape, hopefully done in conjunction with the streetcar project so the taxpayers don't have to pay for the road to be paved twice.

12. Improved pedestrian safety is very important to me. Beautification and undergrounding utilities are also great goals.
13. Looks like a good way to balance need of all constituents.
14. I like the mix of transportation on the Pike and this will improve it for most users. Bus and bike access is why we chose to move here.

NO

1. The timing on this is terrible. Let's get through the recession before committing to big spending. If Obama loses the Presidency, many taxpayers might be leaving the area.
2. Columbia Pike has no customer base for wide sidewalks, etc. Redevelopment for what audience base? What studies have been made?
Revitalization and redevelopment planning for Columbia Pike has been going on since the mid-1980's. Numerous studies have been undertaken. Please see links provided on the project web site (www.pikemultimodal.com) for some of the studies. The Columbia Pike Street Space Task Force Report which was approved by the County Board in 2004. The multimodal level of service study accomplished with this project (a draft of which is on the project web site) helped determine appropriate sidewalks widths.

NOT MARKED YES or NO / MARKED BOTH YES & NO

1. The concept is good. Did not realize that traffic lights needed to be "warranted". This was not explained to the public in initial meetings. Concerns about the light at the S. Oakland and Columbia Pike intersection.
As a matter of policy, the County will be undertaking signal warrant analyses for the intersections of S. Rolfe St., S. Scott St., S. Oakland St. and S. Frederick St. to determine if and when a signal needs to be installed.
2. No accommodations for bikes on the road.
Due to safety concerns and conflicts with bike lanes next to the proposed streetcar alignment, parallel bike routes on South 9th and 12th Streets with connections to the Pike are being designed that will serve the central portion of the corridor. At the east and west ends, a 10-foot wide shared facility will be constructed along the northern side of the Pike.
3. I'm concerned about adding in a fifth lane in front of my house on Columbia Pike (4031 Columbia Pike).
Several areas of the Pike currently have a 5-lane cross section. The turn lanes and landscaped medians will provide for easier turning movements and more efficient traffic flow and will improve the appearance of the corridor. A fifth lane will not require the acquisition of any additional right of way along this segment of the Pike.

4. Undecided. The idea is noble; however, I am not sure about the sidewalks. Are there going to be sidewalks going north and south or just north? I think a bike lane in between cars is dangerous.
Sidewalks are proposed along both sides of Columbia Pike.

PLEASE PROVIDE US WITH ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION WHICH YOU FEEL WOULD ASSIST IN THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THIS PROJECT.

1. Small project, interconnected in a planned executable manner will improve the community with or without large investments. Small projects should be prioritized and funded in similar quantities to large capital projects.
The County is currently undertaking numerous capital improvement projects, both small and large in all areas of the County.
2. It seems short sighted that there has been no coordination of this project with the possible streetcar proposal. Why Not?
This project has been and will continue to be closely coordinated with the streetcar project so as not to preclude implementation of the streetcar or add any additional costs to that project.
3. I am adamantly opposed to a streetcar here. The articulated bus makes sense.
It is noted that some people are opposed to the streetcar.
4. Please pay as much attention to the needs of residents at the west end of the Pike as you are at the east end.
We will be undergrounding the overhead utilities and constructing street and sidewalk improvements between S. Wakefield St. and Four Mile Run beginning in June or July. Our plan is to then begin street improvements from the western County line at S. Jefferson Street to Four Mile Run, then proceeding eastward with additional improvements.
5. Pedestrian crosswalks should have sign IN CENTER of lanes reminding people of LAW TO STOP. Signs on side of road are not effective.
We will investigate the use of placing signs in the medians – and possibly installing other notification devices.
6. Safe crosswalks, more street trees, consistently wide sidewalks. Would like timeline on bike network connection to east.
We are working on a phasing plan and will post that information as soon as it's available.
7. People want to bike but are scared of inconsistent speeds. Cannot afford to stroll to work on the sidewalk, that disincentive new bikers.
The County is investigating standardizing speed limits along the Pike (current posted speed limits range from 25 mph east of the Washington Blvd. interchange to 35 mph. at the western end).

8. Disperse bike racks along the Pike, rather than cluster the racks in groups of 2 or 3. Lower posted speed limits along the Pike by 5 MPH.
See above comments regarding speed limits. We will work to better disperse bike racks as part of future street improvements.
9. North side of Walter Reed Drive adjacent to Cinema and Draft house: left turn onto Columbia Pike too short to accommodate cars. They cross yellow lines into oncoming traffic to get into turn lane. Very dangerous.
This issue has been raised to the County's Transportation Engineering and Operations staff to look into.
10. There is a two-lane wide turn off lane in front of our building (5300 Columbia Pike) currently serving Metro and school bus stop. As a safety issue, could one of those lanes be retained instead of having such an exceptionally wide sidewalk?
Staff is looking into this, but both Metro and County Transit Bureau staff favor in-lane stops (not bus pull outs) because of the difficulty in buses getting back into the travel lanes from bus pull-outs. This area may be an exception and warrant a bus pull-out.
11. Representatives from our building (5300 Columbia Pike) would like to talk about design of the filled-in bus pullout. How can we make it a friendly, green space?
Please see response above. We will be converting some of this space into green space/landscaping.
12. Hold individual neighborhood presentations.
We have presented the plans at numerous meetings of Columbia Pike area Civic Associations. We would be glad to present to any additional Civic Associations or neighborhood groups upon request.
13. Narrowing of Rolfe Street entrance – its already pretty narrow especially with cars parked. May have to move "No Parking" sign further in on Rolfe Street.
Comment noted. We will consider moving the no parking sign further back on S. Rolfe St.
14. Can you rename Arlington streets so they make sense and distinguish it from other communities (i.e. trees, plants, flowers, or historic figures)? They need upgrading as well.
Comment noted. This would be a major undertaking which is outside of the scope of this project. Only the County Board has the authority to name or re-name locally-owned streets.

OTHER

1. Don't disrespect current transit. Repair pavement. Make near term useful improvements. Lane widths are bogus. MOT for all construction.
Pavement repairs will be ongoing. There will be maintenance of traffic plans for all County construction projects.
2. Can newspaper boxes at bus stop at Quincy be eliminated?
The boxes cannot be eliminated but can be moved if blocking pedestrian access.