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RICHARD A. BEST
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March 8, 2006

Chris Zimmerman, Chairman
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard
#1 Courthouse Plaza
Arlington, VA 22201

RE: Four Mile Run Master Plan

Dear Chairman Zimmerman:

I am writing to express the views of the Transportation Commission with respect to the "final draft" Four Mile Run Master Plan.

The Commission recommends that the County Board approve the "final draft" Four Mile Run Master Plan if the Board gives the following instructions for adjustments to be included in the final plan:

- that the Eads Street bridge be planned to be constructed in a manner that lowers the cost of conversion allowing vehicular access at such time in the future when that might be desired,
- that the plan include language describing and addressing trailhead connectivity, and
- that the plan include language describing connectivity to the Shirlington Bus Depot

The Commission heard this item at our March 2, 2006 meeting, where we received a presentation from staff. There were no public speakers. Commissioners present were Owen, Murdock, Gimmler, Cura, Armbruster, Petty, Wagner, Fallon and Zimmerman. We had previously received the item as an information item at our February 9th meeting.

The Commission was largely supportive of the Master Plan, which describes substantial improvements to the Four Mile Run area, including trails, pedestrian, bicycle and boating facilities. Of particular significance and benefit is the increased connectivity planned both across and along Four Mile Run, which will significantly improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity. The Plan is the result of considerable community outreach between Arlington and Alexandria, in which the Commission was invited to participate.

The principal concern raised during Commission discussion was the perception that insufficient attention had been given to external access to the new planned facilities. There are ample transportation resources in the vicinity, including pedestrian, bicycle, bus, auto and (planned) light rail/BRT facilities that run across or near the planned area. However, in order to maximize public benefit of the facility, the Commission believes that consideration should be given to identifying and naming specific trail-heads and expressing in the plan how they can best be accessed (for example, by identifying parking facilities near the trail heads). Pedestrian connectivity from the Shirlington bus depot is a significant element of this accessibility, and should be addressed specifically.

The Commission is aware that, while allowing vehicular access across the proposed Eads Street bridge would improve circulation and connectivity in the local road network, it is currently strongly opposed by some near neighbors in Alexandria. The Commission respects that the public process has resulted in a compromise of a pedestrian/bike crossing at this location. The Commission recommends, however, that the bike/pedestrian crossing be designed (for example, by including sufficient columns and supports) that conversion to vehicular access would require a minimum of additional cost. This way, in the event that Alexandria neighbors should one day seek the connectivity they currently oppose, it could be made available to them (and to Arlington) more readily.

I hope these views are helpful to the Board in its deliberations. If I can be of assistance to you in this or any other matter, please do not hesitate to contact me at 703-243-4337.

Sincerely,



Peter Owen
Chairman