September XX, 2015

Dennis Leach

Director of Transportation

Department of Environmental Services

Arlington County

2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 900

Arlington, Virginia 22201

RE: Western Terminus of the Wilson Boulevard Reconfiguration Zone

Dear Mr. Leach,

This past May the Department of Environmental Services (DES) reconfigured Wilson Boulevard from North Frederick Street to the east and extending to North Manchester Street to the west. The reconfiguration was undertaken after a multi-year advocacy campaign by the Bluemont Civic Association (BCA) to improve conditions along Wilson Boulevard for all users (pedestrians, cyclists and drivers). As you are aware, the reconfiguration consists of merging four traffic lanes to two, with a center turn lane and bike lanes in the westbound and eastbound directions.

Although the reconfiguration initiative was spearheaded by BCA, Boulevard Manor and Dominion Hills Civic Associations (BMCA and DHCA, respectively) are joining with BCA to request that the County take immediate action to address circumstances at the western terminus of the reconfiguration zone. More specifically, we collectively request that the western terminus of the reconfiguration zone be moved further west to allow for lower speed eastbound traffic merging and improved pedestrian safety along the north sidewalk between North Arlington Mill Drive and Larrimore Street.

During public discourse leading up to the Wilson Boulevard reconfiguration members of DHCA expressed concerns about a forced merge of eastbound traffic at the bottom of the Four Mile Run “hill” close to North Manchester Street. Many of the concerns stemmed from the fact that eastbound cars heading down the hill would likely be traveling above the posted 30 mile per hour speed limit and may have difficulty observing the signage and painted road arrows directing drivers to merge.

With almost three full months of experience, the concerns of BMCA are more salient than ever. Merging at the bottom of the hill remains challenging at best and hazardous at worst. Consequently, the undersigned civic associations collectively request that DES move the point at which eastbound traffic merges to a location further west near the top of Four Mile Run “hill”. It would seem that the existing pedestrian crossing signals at either the Arlington Skate Park or at Wilson Boulevard and 8th Road North would be better locations for traffic to merge. Either location would allow ample time for cars to adjust to changing road conditions prior to heading down the Four Mile Run “hill”.

DHCA concerns relate to poor pedestrian conditions along the sidewalk on the north side of Wilson Boulevard between Arlington Mill Drive North and Larrimore Street. Rocks, branches and other debris routinely make this section of sidewalk unpassable. This hazard is exacerbated by the fact that cars transition from one traffic lane to two within this span of Wilson Boulevard as the reconfiguration zone ends at Four Mile Run. This transition is often accompanied by rapid acceleration up the Four Mile Run “hill” making it dangerous if not impossible, for pedestrians to navigate around the debris that obstructs the sidewalk. While we encourage DES to pursue a long-term solution to the debris problem (such as a retaining wall) a more immediate solution is desperately needed.

A more practicable approach (and one that is consistent with the request of BMCA) is to extend the current reconfiguration to a point further west that avoids the area of falling rocks and debris. This would provide pedestrians a buffer zone to avoid sidewalk obstructions while not being forced to step directly into a traffic lane. It would also provide the general benefits enjoyed by other areas within the reconfiguration.

DES has been clear that the Wilson Boulevard reconfiguration is a demonstration project to assess whether a permanent reconfiguration with improved sidewalks from Glebe Road to the County line is viable. While this analysis is underway and full funding options are explored, we collectively request that the western terminus of the demonstration project be extended to a point further west. This will provide immediate safety and usability enhancements without significant expenditure.

Thank you for your commitment to improving transportation for all users along Arlington’s roadways. We appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to your response. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this request in person, please contact either of the BCA Sidewalk Safety Task Force Co-Chairs, Ed Fendley or Chris Healey at sidewalksafetytaskforce@bluemontcivic.org.

Sincerely,

George Rovder Phil Klingelhofer Brian Hannigan

President, BCA President, BMCA President, DHCA