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JOHN W. FOUST
DRANESVILLE DISTRICT SUPERVISOR

Joint Board Matter
Chairman McKay and Supervisors Foust, Gross, Alcorn, Lusk,
Palchik, Smith, Storck and Walkinshaw
October 5, 2021

Funding Safer Pedestrian and Bicyclist Facilities

Background: Mr. Chairman, recently, one of my constituents inquired about the possibility of constructing a sidewalk improvement project to provide safer pedestrian access to an elementary school. The response from county staff was that “We currently do not anticipate funding will be available for new projects until FY 2026 or later.” Our offices have been getting similar responses when we identify the need for a pedestrian or bike project. Obviously, it is not acceptable to be in a funding position where that is the message that is delivered.

On January 28, 2020, this Board adopted a Board Matter sponsored by Supervisors Alcorn and Lusk that, *inter alia*, emphasized the importance of making our county much safer for pedestrians and bicyclists. Their Board Matter made the case that, despite significant past commitments, many important access and safety projects remained unbuilt due to lack of funding and that some of our most vulnerable residents have borne the brunt of unsafe or limited pedestrian access. They also emphasized the importance of implementing the new tools and technologies that will be identified in the ActiveFairfax Transportation Plan, but they made it clear that focusing on solving pedestrian and bicycle safety problems should not wait until final completion of that planning process.

Our Board has repeatedly acted to expand safe bicycle and pedestrian access for our residents. We have provided leadership through adoption of the Countywide Trails Plan (last updated in 2018) and the Countywide Bicycle Master Plan (adopted in 2014). The ActiveFairfax Transportation Plan will consolidate and update the Countywide Trails Plan and the Countywide Bicycle Master Plan. Staff has been working on preparation of the ActiveFairfax Transportation Plan over the past few years and recently advised that Phase One would soon be completed but that completion of Phase Two of the planning process could take another couple of years.

The County consistently emphasizes the importance of providing safe access for pedestrians and bikes, especially near schools, parks, activity centers, transit station areas, and in revitalization zones. Our Board has demonstrated that we are aware of the benefits of providing safe access for pedestrians and bikers and we have clearly expressed our commitment to making that happen. While we cannot finish the job overnight, the purpose of this Board Matter is to take action to expedite those efforts and arrange for a “down payment” towards meeting our active transportation needs.

Mr. Chairman, I have spoken to other Supervisors about the difficult and costly challenges each of us faces as we work with residents to make our communities safer and more accessible for

pedestrians and bicyclists. Over the years, there has not been sufficient funding available to address the universe of challenges we all face. Even when we thought we could fund our most pressing needs as part of the Transportation Priorities Plan (TPP), decisions made in Richmond forced us to revise those plans and defer tens of millions of dollars of critically needed transportation projects. The TPP projects that were deferred were among projects that the Board had designated as our highest priorities. Many other much needed projects were not even included on the TPP project list because we never expected to have enough funding to cover them.

Mr. Chairman, the County has done an excellent job of addressing challenges brought on by the COVID crisis. From supporting small businesses and their employees to making additional funding available for affordable housing, and from delivering vaccinations and contact tracing to meeting demands for basic human needs such as food, rent and utilities.

During the COVID crisis, pedestrian and bike activity seemed to increase everywhere it could be accommodated. However, the increased interest also highlighted the inadequacies of our infrastructure. Due to the excellent fiscal management by the County Executive and his staff, and due to significant support from several federal sources, we believe we are uniquely situated to begin to make one-time investments in pedestrian and bike infrastructure that will have long term, meaningful impacts on accessibility and safety in our community. It is important that we take this opportunity to begin to address a universally recognized need that is a priority of this Board.

Motion: Therefore, Mr. Chairman, we move that the Board of Supervisors direct the County Executive to do the following:

- For consideration by the Board at the Board's next Transportation Committee meeting:
 - Compile a list of previously identified and currently unfunded pedestrian and bike projects that would contribute to pedestrian and bike access and/or safety and that can be commenced as soon as funding is identified;
 - Recommend criteria for immediate evaluation of projects to be funded with additional funding in fiscal year 2022; and,
 - Identify additional potential funding options for allocation to these pedestrian and bike projects during fiscal year 2022;
- For consideration by the Board at the Board's next Transportation Committee meeting, if feasible, or at the following Transportation Committee meeting:
 - Compile a list of previously identified and other potential projects that would improve access and safety for pedestrian and bike projects that are currently unfunded and could be commenced over the longer-term (fiscal years 2023 through 2027);
 - Recommend criteria for evaluation and selection of projects from that list; and,
 - Identify longer term (fiscal years 2023 through 2027) additional funding options for pedestrian and bike projects that satisfy the criteria discussed herein.

We further move that the goal for new funding over the approximately six-year period through fiscal 2027 shall be at least \$100 million, and shall be in addition to any funding that was previously allocated to transportation projects.