

BLUEMONT CIVIC ASSOCIATION  
Task Force on Arterial Road Sidewalks and Pedestrian Safety

**Meeting Minutes**

April 21, 2012

Two Chefs Pizza, 5901 Wilson Boulevard, 8:00 a.m.

**Attending:**

Ed Fendley, Eric Goodman, Chris Healey, Dan Laredo, Sandeep Maripuri, Suzanne Sundberg, David Van Wagner

***Invited Guest: Christopher Forinash.*** Mr. Christopher Forinash joined the Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC) as a Program Director in 2012 to lead the development of the Sustainable Communities Learning Network. Before joining the Institute, Christopher led transportation policy work in the US EPA's smart growth program, including diverse projects such as efforts to develop street design standards, promote car-sharing, change parking requirements, and otherwise create a transportation system to support smart growth communities. His work at the US EPA followed several years with a leading worldwide engineering consulting firm, where he developed sophisticated computer models to forecast development patterns and transportation impacts for cities from New York to Honolulu. Christopher holds a Master's Degree in Civil Engineering and Transportation from Northwestern University, where his thesis examined the financial feasibility of a Midwestern high-speed rail network centered on Chicago. Christopher earned his Bachelor's Degree in Engineering from Duke University.

**Review and Approval of March Minutes and Pending Action Items**

It was noted that there were no comments or edits on the draft minutes for the March meeting and as such, the minutes were approved.

**Presentation and Discussion with Mr. Forinash**

Mr. Forinash noted that "complete streets" design concepts are a key part of developing what are considered to be sustainable communities. Complete streets in the context are considered to be arterial roads that serve multimodal transportation needs such as pedestrian, cyclists and automobiles.

Mr. Forinash noted that the Institute of Traffic Engineers has a manual for road design that includes specifications for lane widths, gutter and curb design and other relevant requirements.

It was noted that undergrounding utilities is often thought of as an attractive solution to creating safer pedestrian access. However, Task Force members noted that even if utilities were undergrounded along Wilson the sidewalks would still be woefully inadequate to handle routine pedestrian traffic because they are too narrow and there is

no safety buffer between the sidewalk and the road. In a recent email from a County official to a BCA member it was explained that:

*In the County's experience, the cost associated with undergrounding is extremely expensive and has to be funded well in advance. Major utility undergrounding projects, even if done in residential streets in your neighborhood, would also require significant community outreach and participation that would also add time and cost to the process. The removal of all overhead lines and placing them underground throughout the County is still a fundamental goal. Unfortunately, at this time, current ongoing undergrounding in the high priority areas defined in the adopted Utility Underground Plan continue to consume the resources and funding in this program for the foreseeable future.*

Mr. Forinash stated that in his experience there are existing design solutions to address the current pedestrian safety and traffic throughput concerns along the relevant stretch of Wilson Boulevard. He stated that the most expedient and practicable solutions are those that do not require land acquisition because of the expense and delay associated with trying to acquire land from individual homeowners.

Mr. Forinash also noted that road diet designs often are initiated through painting and striping new lanes and access features before investing in moving curbs, gutters and pouring concrete. This is because the relocation of curbs and gutters is more costly and is often considered phase II of a road diet design implementation. He further noted that when road diet designs are implemented an initial drop in traffic counts is typically noted early on and that traffic levels then trend upward back to baseline levels prior to the road diet design work.

It was also suggested that the Task Force try to obtain traffic count levels on Wilson prior to the construction of I66 as a means assessing the extent to which Wilson is used as an alternate route to I66, especially during rush hours. This may be a relevant consideration in light of new initiatives to further restrict I66 traffic through use of HOT lanes.

### **Next Meeting Topics / Speakers**

Ed and Chris would identify and distribute articles relevant to the topics Mr. Forinash discussed for the next meeting.

It was also noted that an effort would be made to invite an official from the Arlington County Fire Department to address the task force with regard to any concerns the ACFD may have regarding access through areas with a road diet design.

### **Conclusion**

The Task Force meeting was adjourned until its May 19 meeting at 8:00am.