

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

Meeting Minutes

March 17, 2012

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

Attending:

David Van Wagner, Dan Laredo, Suzanne Sundberg, Sandeep Maripuri, Ed Fendley, Eric Goodman, Elizabeth Priaulx.

Review and Approval of February Minutes and Pending Action Items

It was noted that there were no comments or edits on the draft minutes for the February meeting. It was agreed that if no comments or edits were received by March 25, the minutes would be considered approved as drafted. *Post-meeting note: No comments or edits were subsequently received, so the minutes were approved.*

Ed, Sandeep, and David noted that, along with Chris, they delivered flyers to businesses along Wilson Boulevard, as planned.

Review of Wilson and Washington Peak Hours Traffic Data

The group examined and discussed a chart showing traffic volumes on Wilson Boulevard and on Washington Boulevard for their respective a.m. and p.m. peak hours.

It was noted that Washington Boulevard has somewhat higher peak traffic volumes than Wilson Boulevard for both a.m. and p.m. peak hours.

Information from County Real Estate Acquisition Office

Ed reported on his telephone conversation with Tim O'Hora, who heads the county office responsible for acquiring right-of-way for public works projects. Mr. O'Hora declined Ed's invitation to attend a Task Force meeting, but agreed to answer questions over the phone. Ed reported that according to Mr. O'Hora:

- The County real estate acquisition office has in a number of cases acquired property or easements in order to improve sidewalks on arterial roads. Some cases prove more difficult than others, but the office always does its best so that a project can move forward.

- Typically, acquisition and easement efforts for transportation projects involve multiple properties.
- Property owners are more likely to agree to forego property or grant easement rights if the neighborhood is supportive of the project in question, that is, there is a “peer pressure” effect
- Property acquisition or easements are typically more difficult or time consuming in the case of commercial properties and in the case of properties that are not owner-occupied.
- Sometimes, one or more property owners will not agree to grant an easement or sell property. In such cases, the project may still be able to go forward, but would have to be designed to accommodate any missing property pieces.
- The real estate acquisition office stands ready to assist in the event that the County transportation planning office decides to execute a project and requests action on the part of the real estate office.

Guest speaker and discussion on access for people with disabilities

Special guest Elizabeth Prialux made a presentation and answered questions regarding access to sidewalks and arterial roads for people with disabilities. Ms. Prialux works professionally as a Senior Legal Specialist at the National Disability Rights Network. Ms. Prialux indicated that she is also a Bluemont resident and that she herself has some disabilities, and so brings personal experience to these discussions.

Ms. Prialux:

- Greatly appreciated and thanked the Task Force for its interest and concern for access for people with disabilities
- Noted that many people with disabilities cannot drive a car, and that many depend on walking or wheelchairs to get around
- Considered that Wilson Boulevard is not accessible to many people with disabilities
- Noted the importance of continuous point-to-point accessibility –it is not good enough for 99% a sidewalk segment to be accessible; if even a small part is not accessible, that means the entire stretch is inaccessible for some people because it cannot be expected that they would go out into the vehicular travel lanes to circumvent a barrier.
- Any and all main routes should be accessible to people with disabilities – it is not acceptable to say that people without disabilities can go via an alternate route. For example, a restaurant cannot have people without physical disabilities go

through a front door, but have people with physical disabilities can go through a side door. Similarly, despite the existence of adjacent bike trails and side streets, it is still the case that Wilson Boulevard should be accessible to all people, not just people without physical disabilities. "If my husband can go there, I should be able to go there too", Ms. Prialux summarized.

Next Meeting Topics / Speakers

Ed and Chris would circulate a recent Federal Highway Administration article on road reconfiguration for consideration and discussion at the April 21 meeting.

Ed indicated that a transportation expert would be invited as a guest presenter for the April meeting. *Post meeting note: April's guest speaker will be Mr. Christopher Forinash, an Arlington-based transportation and planning expert.]*

Conclusion

The Task Force meeting was adjourned until its April 21 meeting at 8:00am at Two Chefs Restaurant.