

From: CountyBoard@arlingtonva.us

To: chickandsandy@msn.com

Subject: Responding to your message (Intranet Quorum IMA00255589)

Date: Fri, 22 Jul 2011 16:21:50 -0400

July 22, 2011

Dear Mr. Walter:

On behalf of the County Board, this letter is in response to your recent correspondence regarding implementation of the approved project at Arlington Ridge Road from 23rd Street S. to S. Meade Street. Board members have also met with a number of near-by neighbors in the past two weeks.

As a result of those meetings and your letter, the proposed project has been modified by staff, at the Board's request, to address some additional resident concerns. The most recent adjustments are detailed in the attached memo. We acknowledge that these modifications do not incorporate all the suggestions offered by some neighbors. However, based on our extensive experience, these changes serve to:

- improve pedestrian safety and accessibility throughout the Ridge-S.23rd intersection and project corridor, including the placement of a new crosswalk at the Meade-Ridge intersection where drivers are most likely to expect pedestrians;
- contribute to the primary goals identified by the most recent ARCA Neighborhood Survey - continue to slow traffic on Ridge Road and to improve overall pedestrian safety;
- allow drivers to move smoothly and efficiently in all directions through the Ridge-S.23rd intersection;
- maintain ADA accessibility throughout the project area in an efficient manner;
- provide signage for vehicles traveling south from S.23rd on Ridge to remind drivers that there are a number of possible turns (multiple driveways and Meade St.) that may be taken and that caution should be exercised;
- fully maintain the County's right of way and flexibility should additional lane adjustments be needed in the future to accommodate higher levels of traffic moving east on 23rd St through the intersection;
- maintain access to Meade Street for snowplows and other large vehicles moving at reasonable speeds.

Finally, it is County policy to remove slipways. In this case, residents will continue to have multiple safe ways to reach their homes in both good and inclement weather. We acknowledge that one existing westbound entrance will be removed but point out that the existing three other movements between Meade and Ridge all have been safely occurring for years at the proposed intersection. Narrowing the entrance and adding signage will ensure that all who use it – walkers, bikers, and drivers – approach with caution and care.

We acknowledge that elements of this project have created dissension within the immediate neighborhoods. Many have cited a lack of adherence to the Neighborhood Traffic Calming (NTC) procedures. To clarify, the NTC program and policies have never applied to projects involving minor arterials (like Ridge and S. 23rd). We apologize for the lack of clarity on that important distinction. Should you have suggestions about changes to the existing process or improved communication strategies that you would like us to consider on future projects, we would welcome them.

The project, including the many adjustments made since May, will begin the week of August 8th. Homeowners with plantings in county right of way will receive advance notice so that they may remove planted materials. Tree protection is part of all County projects so expect to see care taken around the many mature trees in the project area. If you have concerns during the project please contact Transportation Engineering Chief Wayne Wentz at 703-228-3720.

Sincerely,

Christopher Zimmerman, Chairman
Arlington County Board

Memorandum

To: The Arlington County Board **Date:** July 19, 2011
From: Shannon Flanagan-Watson, Assistant County Manager
Subject: Pedestrian Safety Improvement Project - Arlington Ridge Road
from 23rd Street S. to S. Meade Street

Here are the responses provided by staff to the questions raised during a meeting with several residents regarding the pedestrian safety improvement project.

1. Warning sign: Yes – an advanced warning sign of the approaching intersection at Meade St. will be installed for downhill traffic on Arlington Ridge Road. Staff recommends installing a "T" warning sign, black on yellow. This conveys a more consistent message than "Turning Traffic Ahead". The sign will be posted on an existing utility pole shortly after the Arlington Ridge Rd./23rd St. intersection to provide enough warning to drivers. A flag to alert drivers will also be put on the new sign for 6 months.
2. Crosswalk: Staff does not recommend placing the crosswalk where the residents requested it 50 feet after the turn onto Meade St. The crosswalk across Meade Street that parallels Arlington Ridge Rd closer to Arlington Ridge reflects the desired pedestrian crosswalk line. It is placed where drivers typically encounter crosswalks rather than 50 feet after the turn. This is the safest place for the crossing based on experience and operational best practices. The existing crossing location is around the corner and puts pedestrians in a place where turning drivers do not expect them. The proposed crosswalk is no steeper than the approaching sidewalks. The existing crosswalk requires pedestrians to use the steeper portion of the sidewalk on the southern corner.
3. Slope/Grade: Arlington Ridge Rd and other steep roads in Arlington County have driveways and intersections that require slow 90 degree right turns. These are normal, expected situations that have excellent safety records. The southbound drivers turning right onto Meade Street will have to drive up the same grade that northbound drivers turning left do today. Eleven percent grade (~ 4 feet) is easily traversable by modern cars. Such downhill to uphill movements are not unusual and have no negative safety history. Based on modeling and similar existing conditions throughout the County, there is enough clearance for snow plows to make the 90 degree turn onto Meade St.

4. Lanes at the Intersection of 23rd St & Arlington Ridge Rd: The need for safe lane alignments in this intersection led to the decision to leave out the full-time eastbound left turn lane. The westbound lane next to the nub aligns with the westbound lane across the intersection to receive those cars. Eliminating the nub and shifting everything north would lead to head-on collisions. The intersection currently operates as though it has a turn lane plus a through lane eastbound. The lane alignments will allow this condition to continue to operate this way.

Additionally, parking would have to be eliminated on the south side of 23rd St. full-time to have a full-time eastbound turn lane. Parking is currently restricted during the peak periods.

5. County Right-of-Way on 23rd St: The County is retaining its right-of-way on 23rd Street on the north side. The County is not using all of the right-of-way given the balance of numerous factors including the current grade conditions and to preserve the existing retaining walls and mature trees in support of the County's tree preservation policy. The County retains the right to make changes in the right-of-way if conditions should change in the future.

If you have questions, please let me know.