

From: Delegate David Englin <deldenglin@house.virginia.gov>
To: Delegate David Englin <DelDEnglin@house.virginia.gov>
Sent: Tue, Aug 2, 2011 9:40 am
Subject: Meade Street Project

Dear Constituent:

This is a follow-up to my previous note about the Meade Street Project. For the sake of efficiency, I'm sending this to everyone who has contacted me about the project, whether they support or oppose it.

As you might imagine, I've received numerous calls and emails from constituents about the project. Constituents opposing the project have expressed some combination of concern about the process by which the project has moved forward (alleging the County Board has not followed "the Arlington Way") and about the details and design of the project itself.

In response to those concerns, I had Arlington County staff brief me late last week, during which I asked a variety of tough questions about both the process and the design. Additionally, I have reviewed the materials various residents have provided, as well as information available on the Save our Streets blog and the Arlington Ridge Civic Association website.

Now that I have dug deeper into the details of the project, I wanted to share what I have found:

Process: Copied below my signature block is a project timeline that includes numerous substantive examples of citizen input and feedback and which demonstrates the County accounting for citizen feedback in the design process. While I understand some residents have mixed feelings about ARCA's role in the process, using a neighborhood's civic association as the primary mechanism for collaboration between residents and the County is a fairly standard and reasonable practice. Moreover, the County seems to have made multiple efforts to reach beyond ARCA directly to affected residents. It is also important to note that properly considering input and feedback does not necessarily mean that every specific suggestion can or should be incorporated into the final design. However, having reviewed multiple communications between the County and residents, it looks like the County has indeed been responsive to specific concerns, including making adjustments to the design where appropriate.

Design: I am certainly not a traffic engineer, but the traffic engineers at the County have many years of experience with projects like these. I discussed with them all of the concerns I have been provided about the design of the project, and they had sound responses to each, based on

data and standards. Details of the project design can be found at <http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/EnvironmentalServices/dot/page82573.aspx>. While I have heard a number of points of concern with the design, the one I will address most directly is the removal of the Meade Street slip lane, which seems to have generated the greatest volume of complaints. As I understand it, based on the actual volume of traffic turning from Arlington Ridge Road to Meade Street, if one were to design that intersection anew using current traffic engineering standards, there would be no need for a slip lane. The volume of traffic turning from Arlington Ridge Road to Meade Street is low enough for a 90-degree intersection to clear it without causing traffic problems on Arlington Ridge Road. Removing the slip lane allows for significant pedestrian improvements without harming access to Meade Street. Again, this is not my own personal assessment, but the assessment of professional engineers using empirical data and design standards who do this for a living and have done this successfully throughout Arlington County.

My purpose here is not to get into every detail of the project design, but to provide some information about what seems to be a major point of contention among some residents, and to convey the larger point that the design does legitimately seem to be based on a combination of community input, empirical data, and established engineering and design standards.

As a state legislator, I have no actual authority to delay this project, which is entirely within the purview of the Arlington County Board. However, as I stated in my initial note, my objective is to ensure that the County is giving full and appropriate consideration to various concerns so we can ensure the best outcome for the neighborhood. The more I have learned about this project, the more I appreciate how much actual engagement there has been between the County and residents. I recognize that this will upset some and satisfy others. However, in my experience, these kinds of projects can divide neighbors for a variety of reasons, but they almost always result in satisfied residents once the work is complete.

On a final note, I have been dismayed by the harsh personal tone of some of the communications I have seen from residents to County staff. As public servants funded by your tax dollars, they are certainly your employees. However, it would be helpful if we could communicate with each other in a manner that assumes all involved -- from residents to County staff to contractors -- have good intentions and deserve to be treated with basic courtesy even when passions are high.

Thank you again for contacting me about this important issue, and please

get in touch if I can ever be of assistance -- especially with matters that relate to your state government.

Yours,

David

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Vice Chairman, House Democratic Caucus
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2/26/2009 - Staff attended a joint meeting of Arlington Ridge Civic Assn. (ARCA) and Aurora Highlands Civic Association (AHCA) to discuss possible project and explain the County's programs.

4/16/2009 - Staff interviewed the crossing guard for the corner of 23rd Street S and Arlington Ridge and took pictures of intersection.

7/30/2009 - Received letter from ARCA and AHCA requesting safety enhancements on Arlington Ridge Road, 23rd Street S and S. Lang St.

8/2009 - Ordered data research to assist in response.

1/7/2010 - Staff responded to 7/30 letter from ARCA and AHCA requesting safety enhancements on Arlington Ridge Road, 23rd Street S. and S. Lang Street.

1/21/2010 - Wayne Wentz, Transportation Engineering Chief, attended ARCA meeting.

3/10/2010 - Project begins with IPR (Initial Project Request) engineering support and account numbers requested.

4/7/2010 - This is a developer contribution project (Potomac Yards - Developer funds). Funds received \$200,000.

4/14/2010 - Engineering received project from Transportation on April 13, 2010

4/16/2010 - IPR approved, account number and engineer assigned.

4/19/2010 - Met with TE&O and Planning Bureaus to review limits of work and set goals

4/20/2010 - Survey was ordered

5/11/2010 - Received ridership information from Metro regarding bus stop on northeast corner.

6/6/2010 - Transportation Bureau reviewed revised plan and accepted changes, continue to final design.

6/8/2010 - Engineering Bureau presented the horizontal alignment concept

plan to Transportation Bureau for comment.

6/10/2010 - WalkArlington Program agreed to fund 23rd Street S sidewalk portion from Arlington Ridge Road to S. Nash Street. TE&O stated they would fund the single traffic signal pole.

7/2010 - Staff contributed highlights of the plan for the ARCA newsletter

7/28/2010 - Received project from survey section

7/30/2010 - Engineering met w/Betty Diggs to discuss changes.

Engineering staff to have revisions completed within next 2 weeks.

8/13/2010 - Revision of exhibit to Betty Diggs, shared with ARCA and provided update to ARCA for the newsletter

9/2010 - ARCA newsletter advertising the 9/16 meeting including project presentation from County staff

9/16/2010 - Arlington Ridge Civic Association Meeting. Dan R. and Betty D. presented the 15% design plan to residents of Arlington Ridge and the civic association. Comments regarding the plan are due by October 8th.

9/17/2010 - Staff sent pdf. of the plan to ARCA for additional distribution and for web posting

10/2010 - Staff sent plan update to ARCA for newsletter

10/2/2010 - Transportation Bureau installed four permanent pole mounted speed displays, 2-Arlington Ridge Road and 2-23rd Street S.

11/2010 - Residents are requesting to walk the project mtg. Staff is to provide turning radius for buses prior to meeting. ARCA newsletter advises that county is reviewing the comments received on the 15% plans.

11/8/2010 - Received all comments from the neighborhood regarding 15% design.

12/20/2010 - Staff met with resident at 2322 Arlington Ridge Road, new owners, to share the proposed plan and explained the impacts of the project to their property.

12/21/2010 - Various staff held a walking meeting with residents and ARCA representatives to discuss the plan and their concerns.

12/22/2010 - Staff is following up with comments from the resident walk; turning radius for AR & S. Meade; 23rd onto NB AR; creating a buffer for peds. on SW corner. Engineering will amend the plan to incorporate additional requests.

1/2011 - Provided update for ARCA newsletter on the 15% plan

1/5/2011 - TE&O reviewed revised plan which moves the curb on the SW corner; removes bike lane for 20' and provides sharrow; adjusts location of stop lines; pole location to be adjusted. Requested additional survey for existing trees at 2322 ARR.

1/31/2011 - Plan to be presented at Transportation Engineering to address comments from citizen meeting.

2/7/2011 - Provided the County arborist the plan to identify tree impacts and replacement tree suggestions. A meeting is scheduled for 2/15/2011 to share the last edits to the plan with neighborhood reps. & residents.

2/15/2011 - Staff met with residents and shared the 50% plan. Flyers for this meeting were edited by staff and distributed by ARCA, door-to-door delivery. Requested that comments regarding 50% plan be received by February 28th. Plan was posted on ARCA webpage.

2/28/2011 - Met with Transportation Engineering (internal engineering staff). Betty will discuss plan with County Manager's Office before proceeding with 90% design

3/2/2011 - Met with Andrea Walker, ARCA rep. to discuss comments and concerns and shared the latest plan and edited newsletter.

3/3/2011 - Staff met with Oakridge Elementary School principal and vice principal to share the plan and collect comments. They were impressed with the project and felt it provided a great walking environment to the school.

3/24/2011 - Staff wrote a letter to residents that have not been heard from along 23rd Street S and Arlington Ridge Road to encourage them to contact her with questions or comments.

3/25/2011 - Staff met with all utility company on-site to discuss design impacts on utilities.

4/27/2011 - Staff met with the residents of 2326 S. Meade Street (Kellie and Chip Ferguson) to discuss their proposed driveway access. 90% plan was sent to both ARCA and AHCA. ARCA sent flyers to announce May 5th meeting. The plan incorporates additional changes and is now at 90% design (90% completed). Dan is primary engineer. Preparing for civic association meeting.

5/2/2011 - Staff met with Chick Walters, Pres, and Andrea Walker, Transportation Chairperson for Arlington Ridge Civic Assn. to discuss the plan, share the improvements and explain the MTP elements.

5/5/2011 - ARCA Executive Board meeting was held with residents invited to make comments on plans. County staff was not invited.

5/12/2011 - Received letter of support from Aurora Highlands Civic Association

5/19/2011 - Staff attended ARCA meeting and shared 90% plan and collected additional comments.

5/27/2011 - Staff met and reviewed ARCA comments, engineering to adjust plan and take to Transportation Bureau bi-weekly meeting for staff review

5/31/2011 - Chris Zimmerman, Chairman, receives letter from ARCA requesting to place hold on the project.

6/16/2011 - Staff responded to Chris Zimmerman, Chairman regarding

ARCA letter.

6/27/2011 - Barbara Donnellan, County Manager, responses to the County Board

7/5/2011 - Plans signed. R-O-W easements (0/1 perm. 0/11 temp) and utility relocations requested.

7/6/2011 - ARCA representatives met with Mrs. Hynes

(Note: The above list may not be exhaustive.)