



CITY OF FALLS CHURCH

DATE: January 10, 2011

TO: Mayor Baroukh and Members of the City Council

FROM: Wendy Block Sanford, Principal Planner/Transportation Planner

SUBJECT: **Pedestrian, Bicycle and Traffic Calming Strategic Implementation Plan Status Update**

BACKGROUND

The purpose of the worksession is to update the City Council on the status of the Pedestrian, Bicycle and Traffic Calming Strategic Implementation Plan and receive feedback on two policy issues.

The goal of the Pedestrian, Bicycle and Traffic Calming Strategic Implementation Plan is to identify deficiencies in the City's pedestrian and bicycle network and develop an implementation plan to remedy these deficiencies and create better and/or new connections throughout the City through the installation of new sidewalks/paths and/or corridor treatments. The City has hired KLS Engineering to assist with this effort. The project team as described in this staff report includes City staff and KLS.

The project will include the following final deliverables:

- Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Traffic Calming Strategic Implementation Plan – This is the main report that will include all project data and recommendations including existing conditions; gap analysis; recommendations for improvements to sidewalks, roadways, crosswalks, transit stops, trails, curb ramps, and signage throughout the City; performance measures; guidelines/policies; prioritization; implementation schedule; cost schedule; and funding sources.
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance Plan - This report will be a subset of the main report for ADA compliance purposes and will include an inventory of curb ramps, sidewalks and items in the pedestrian path (signs, poles, etc) that are not ADA compliant. This report will have a separate prioritization and implementation/cost schedule from the primary report and will comply with the requirements set out by the ADA.
- Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Plan - This report will also be a subset of the main report in order for the City to apply for funding through VDOT's SRTS program. This report will be focused solely on the Safe Routes to School elements as described in the VDOT manual. The SRTS plan will outline the City's needs to make bicycling and walking to school safe,

and will include recommendations for infrastructure and policy changes. The City's SRTS application is due to VDOT in the winter, thus this portion of the project is on a faster schedule than the rest of the project. All of the information/recommendations in the SRTS plan will be included in the larger master document in the event that the City does not receive full funding for the SRTS elements.

The information below describes each task of the project as laid out in the scope of work, summarizes the status of each item, describes two policy issues for the Council's review and input, summarizes the traffic calming approach, and outlines next steps.

PROJECT STATUS

Public Meetings and Community Engagement – The project team held three public meetings in May and June 2010 to introduce the project, hear citizen concerns about the pedestrian and bicycle network in the City, and hold walk and bike tours. Approximately 60 people attended the meetings and participated in the tours. The team also developed an on-line interactive web tool to solicit comments from City residents. The tool contained a drop down menu with 20 location-specific questions; users could locate icons on the map to provide responses to these questions and/or submit general comments. The website was active from May through August 2010 and generated over 700 responses/comments. The summaries of the responses to the 20 questions are available on the City's website. The team is reviewing all of the general comments received via the website and email, and will provide a written response to these comments in an appendix to the final plan.

In order to assist the project team and provide general oversight to the project, the City Council established the Pedestrian, Bicycle and Traffic Calming Advisory Group (PBTCAC) in August 2010. The PBTCAC contains four at-large members, four representatives from other City Boards and Commissions, and a representative from the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Advisory Committee, which is a separate committee working with the project team on the SRTS component of the project. The SRTS committee includes school administrators, teachers, a parent, a student, and the school resource officer. The PBTCAC has met three times and thus far has worked with staff to review policies and determine the project prioritization methodology. The SRTS committee has met twice to review school policies and establish the routes to school. Both committees' work is described further in the sections below.

Identify Benchmark Conditions / Data Collection – The consultant team collected an extensive amount of field data using hand-held Global Positioning Devices. The consultants collected the following information, which can then be used to generate layered maps in the City's Geographic Information System (GIS). This data will inform this plan and will then be an important resource for staff moving forward.

- Pedestrian / Bicycle Facilities including sidewalks, crosswalks, curb ramps, pedestrian/bicycle related signage
- Transit routes/bus stop locations
- Trail locations
- Signage locations
- Traffic calming locations

- Roadway characteristics including grades, horizontal curvature, sight distance, intersection configuration
- On-road bicycle facilities
- Accident data
- Truck access routes
- Access information including safety deficiencies for access to public facilities such as schools, emergency services, and community centers
- On-street parking locations

Gap Analysis and Mitigation Recommendations – At this point, the data collection effort has finished and the team has begun the process to sort projects into the following four categories.

1. ADA Projects – This group includes all projects to correct deficiencies on *existing* sidewalks that do not meet the ADA (sidewalk slopes, curb ramp angles, obstacles in sidewalk path).
2. New Sidewalk Projects – This group includes *new* recommended sidewalks for City streets.
3. Corridor Projects – This group includes projects such as traffic calming or bicycle lanes.
4. Other – This group includes other projects, such as signage or bicycle racks, that do not fall into one of the other three categories.

The next step is to prioritize the projects for implementation within each category. The prioritization process has not occurred yet and is pending finalization of the methodology. The proposed methodology and guiding policies for the plan are described below.

POLICY ISSUES

Before the team can prioritize projects within each category, the team has paused to develop two policies that guide the project selection and prioritization process. **Staff is requesting City Council feedback on these items.**

1. Complete Streets Policy - “Complete Streets” is a term coined to describe streets that contain facilities for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users and motorists, to the extent appropriate for the land use or the context of the street. Complete Streets policies support design with all users in mind including drivers, public transportation riders, pedestrians, and bicyclists as well as older people, children, and people with disabilities. Complete Streets are designed to balance safety and convenience for everyone using the street. Complete Streets are not “one size fits all” design solutions. The components of a Complete Street will vary based on the rural, suburban, or urban context of the roadway.

The staff team plans to develop a Complete Streets Policy tailored to the needs and context of the City of Falls Church. The City’s policy will state that the City must consider the needs of all users when designing new transportation facilities or retrofitting existing ones. This policy would serve as the backbone of the final Pedestrian, Bicycle and Traffic Calming Strategic Implementation Plan, as all recommendations would be based on this planning philosophy. **Staff seeks Council feedback on this proposed policy.**

2. Project Selection Methodology for New Sidewalk Locations - The staff/consultant team has worked closely with the PBTCAC to develop a methodology to rank the locations for new

sidewalks (category #2 described above) and a point system. This methodology uses a set of criteria and an established point system to evaluate all of the projects. The streets with the highest number of points are the streets with the highest sidewalk need. Staff and the PBTCAC have gone through a lengthy process to develop both the criteria and the point system. The nine criteria used in this methodology are explained below.

- **Does the street meet the City of Falls Church sidewalk policy?**

The team has established a sidewalk policy for the City that states that for arterial and collector streets, sidewalks must be located on both sides of the street; for residential/local streets, a sidewalk must be on at least one side of the street. For the prioritization exercise, if the street segment being evaluated does not meet the policy, it receives points.

- **Is the street on the Safe Routes to School Plan?**

The team has worked with the SRTS committee to identify and map the primary and secondary walking routes to all four City schools. These routes include the streets directly adjacent to the schools and then the streets that connect to those main streets. For the prioritization exercise, if the street segment being evaluated is included on this map, meaning that it is either a primary or secondary route to school, it receives points.

- **Is the street on a transit route?**

The transit routes in the City are Broad Street and Washington Street. If the street segment being evaluated is on either street, then it receives points.

- **Is the street on a primary route to Metro?**

The team has developed a map showing the primary walking/biking routes to the two Metro stations. If the street segment being evaluated is along this route, it receives points.

- **Is the street shown on the Park Connectivity Map?**

The team has developed a map showing a shared use path/trail that connects all of the City parks. This park connectivity route utilizes existing paths/sidewalks and identifies all new segments needed to complete the route. Staff worked with the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board to refine the route shown on this map. If the street segment being evaluated is one of the new segments needed to complete the route, it receives points.

- **Is the street within one block of a commercial corridor?**

The team has developed a map showing the City's commercial corridors and an area roughly within one block of those corridors. The team felt it was important to include this one block for those people who drive to the City, park near the commercial corridor, and walk to their destination. Staff worked with the Economic Development Authority to refine the commercial corridor zone shown on this map. If the street segment being evaluated is either the commercial corridor or one of the streets within the one block buffer, it receives points.

- **Does the street contain a partial sidewalk OR will a new sidewalk on this street provide a connection to an existing sidewalk?**

This criterion evaluates whether the street segment being evaluated will complete a partial sidewalk (a sidewalk that ends mid-block) or will provide a connection between two existing

sidewalks on adjacent blocks (known as a missing link). If the street segment meets either criterion it receives points.

- **What is the street's functional classification?**

All City streets are classified by VDOT according to their traffic volume. Streets with higher volume (arterials and collectors) receive more points than local streets.

- **What is the street's existing width?**

Narrow streets receive more points than wide streets. This is an indicator of safety for pedestrians; narrow streets without sidewalks are considered more dangerous than wider streets without sidewalks.

The project team is finalizing and testing these criteria. **Staff is requesting City Council feedback on this proposed methodology.** Once this prioritization methodology is finalized, the next step is to evaluate each location in the City and determine project rankings for the final report. Any projects relating to SRTS will be included in the master list of projects and also listed separately in the SRTS plan for purposes of applying for funding through VDOT.

TRAFFIC CALMING APPROACH

The team proposes a two pronged approach for addressing the traffic calming component of the project: 1) Evaluate all Collector streets for traffic calming and 2) Strengthen the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program.

To start, the team will evaluate all of the City's Minor Arterial and Collector streets for traffic calming. The rationale for studying only these streets is threefold: 1) Minor Arterial and Collector streets collect traffic from the residential/local streets; thus calming those streets should have a calming effect on the local streets that feed into them. 2) The City's Neighborhood Traffic Calming (NTC) Program responds to requests for traffic calming on local streets only. It is the City's responsibility to proactively consider traffic calming on the non-local streets. 3) It is not an efficient use of project funds to collect speed data for every City street, which is what would be required to evaluate traffic calming needs on local streets.

The team will determine the need for traffic calming on the City's Minor Arterial and Collector streets and then use a prioritization methodology similar to the one described above for new sidewalk locations to determine the ranking and scoring for the traffic calming corridor projects.

In addition, the team will work with the Citizens Advisory Committee on Transportation (CACT) to revise and improve the NTC program. The CACT has already provided preliminary suggested revisions on the program including raising the threshold for speeding (currently at 85th percentile speed at 30 mph); include a broader range of evaluation criteria; and lowering the threshold for neighborhood acceptance.

NEXT STEPS

The team is finalizing the methodologies and commencing the process to identify and rank projects for completion. The team anticipates holding another public meeting in the early spring to describe many of the project elements outlined in this report. In addition, the team is finalizing the City's SRTS application, which is due to VDOT in the next few weeks. The SRTS application includes a request for funding for the SRTS plan elements. The estimated project completion date is summer.