



CITY OF FALLS CHURCH

Date: Dec. 14, 2022
To: Mayor Tarter and Members of Falls Church City Council
From: Citizens' Advisory Committee on Transportation (CACT)
Subject: CACT Comments on Proposed East End Area Plan

The CACT liked much of what it saw in an Oct. 12 presentation on the [East End Small Area Plan \(SAP\)](#).

The plan substantially raises the bar for multimodal access, implicitly setting a goal of all ages and abilities access for people on bicycles in the depiction of separated bike lanes on major routes. It prioritizes people over cars with road diets. It is proactive about connecting with nearby projects. Our comments below are presented from the perspective of making a solid plan even better.

Things that are not explicitly in the East End SAP that we recommend including:

- Specifically state that the City's goal for bicycle routes is to meet an "all ages and abilities" standard per the [National Association of City Transportation Officials \(NACTO\)](#). This will help materially shift mode share.
- Specifically state the need for additional use of public transit in this area to reduce the impact of transportation on climate change and for equity considerations.
- Design the bicycle and road facilities with more e-bikes in mind. The global e-bike market was valued \$17.6 billion in 2021 and is expected to reach nearly \$41 billion by 2030, according to [Precedence Research](#). American e-bikes currently offer pedal assistance with speeds from 20 to 28 mph, much higher than the 12 mph models in Europe. Faster e-bikes will require wider bike lanes, bigger turning radii, and/or better ways for bikes and cars to share the road, namely lower speeds and lower volumes.
- Be specific about our intent to set design standards that we hope will encourage neighboring jurisdictions to follow suit (e.g., the road diet).

- Explicitly set a goal of making a bike/pedestrian connection via or adjacent to Oakwood Cemetery, just as the plan lays out desired smaller streets to break up blocks. Let's explore more easements for stairs/ramps and pedestrian/bike paths to reverse the car-centric designs that separate people in local neighborhoods from walking and biking to these attractions that should be mere steps from their homes. These connections will significantly increase all ages and abilities bike/pedestrian access to the East End (from the neighborhood and to Metro and the W&OD Trail), without being reliant on separate projects to fix Broad, Hillwood, and Sycamore streets. Please set a goal to connect the BJ's Wholesale Club parcel to N. Rochester St. for people walking and biking, perhaps with an easement on the Cavalier Club property. These bike/ped links serve to make active transportation faster and more convenient than driving and will make the area livelier.
- State that the intent is for bicycle and pedestrian facilities that cross the edges of the SAP to be continuous on those streets beyond the planning area, though details would need to be worked out with separate City, Arlington, and Fairfax projects.
- Explicitly state that the City is OK building bike and pedestrian routes "where and when we can" — that we can temporarily have "bike routes to nowhere" because they will eventually be connected through our updated Bike Master Plan and SAP. Cambridge, Massachusetts, demonstrated this very well: If you try to build your bike network all at once, it never happens or takes decades. If you build it block by block when you can, you get the neighborhood pushing you to finish it, rather than fighting you on building it at all.
- The most direct route from Eden Center to East Falls Church, the closest Metro station, along Sycamore/Roosevelt is not entirely encompassed within Falls Church City. The current path through Arlington does not have contiguous bike lanes, crosswalks, or handicap-accessible sidewalks. As previously stated, that should not preclude the development of those features within Falls Church, but action should be taken to work with Arlington County to ensure continuity of access to the Metro station.
- Show how this links up with the latest Fairfax Ring Road plans, with the large caveat that the CACT has questions about that evolving plan.
- Stormwater retention and sustainable energy can help with placemaking in the East End. The City already has too much impervious area at 42+ percent, as of the 2012 Watershed Management Plan. It's alarming that this Planning Opportunity Area (POAs) has a whopping 78 percent impervious at one of the highest points in the city, giving stormwater a chance to collect volume, speed, and pollutants before crashing downhill toward Four Mile Run or Tripps Run.

Let's add stormwater collection ponds in large impervious areas to retain/detain stormwater, perhaps with a covered pavilion ([example](#)) over the water where Eden Center patrons could gather and eat. Perhaps this could even be stocked with fish and

native plants for further placemaking and MS4 benefits. Also, with so much flat land at high elevation with southern exposure, let's explore adding solar canopies above these parking lots to generate power and reduce the urban heat island effect caused by so much paving.

- We suggest more research on Chinatowns (specifically the history of San Francisco's, which was the first in the U.S.) and other [ethnic enclaves](#) around the country to ensure the City is being thoughtful and respectful about how best to celebrate and integrate Vietnamese and Vietnamese American culture in the resulting designs for the East End.

Beyond the scope of this SAP, it raises some interesting implications:

- East Broad St. with 15,000 Average Daily Traffic (ADT) should be suitable for a road diet if Wilson Blvd. is with 12,000 ADT since both fall under VDOT's guidance of 16,000 ADT. That would enable a bike route from Wilson (where Arlington and Fairfax will build their parts) to the center of the City! Similarly, Annandale Road (ADT 4,800 north of Washington and 11,000 south of Washington) is planned to go into one lane at the future roundabout.
- Falls Church does not have a citywide streetscape design for things other than setbacks and sidewalk design. This SAP calls for the major roads to have separated bicycle lanes, but on the other end of Broad Street, the West Falls project will instead use a shared sidewalk on Broad, which is much less bike-friendly. The City needs a common standard for the full right of way for how we design roads going forward. There is significant difference across the SAPs, some of which were written more than decade ago. Nationwide design approaches, especially on bicycle mode share and on pedestrian safety, have evolved dramatically in that decade.