

Mr. Mark Schwartz
Arlington County Manager
2100 Clarendon Boulevard
Arlington, Virginia 22201
Via e-mail: MSchwartz@arlingtonva.us

January 12, 2017

RE: Arlington County response to the National Foreign Affairs Training Center (NFATC)
Master Plan Update Draft Environmental Assessment (December, 2016)

Dear Mr. Schwartz:

The Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC) is writing to you to encourage the County to submit a strong response to the [draft Environmental Assessment](#) (EA) for the NFATC Master Plan Update). We are specifically alarmed at recommendations in the Assessment that propose permanently closing non-NFATC access to the existing pedestrian/cycling path beyond the current southern perimeter fence (p.5, 16, 19, 27, 32) and closing access to the pedestrian tunnel under George Mason Drive (p.16, 26). We believe that these closures will require a “significantly longer” ride or walk; that adequate, alternative, and safe routes do not currently exist; and that these closures are a significant barrier to connectivity for the immediate neighborhoods and for all of Arlington County alternative transportation methods users.

We make three points in this letter:

- We reiterate our support for the County to address NFATC plans as expressed in our August 12, 2016 [letter to you](#);
- We strongly support the [petition](#) of Alcovia Heights residents requesting that a permanent, public, protected bike/ped path be constructed along the southern perimeter of the NFATC site; and
- We are commenting on possible conflicting comments on the value of pedestrian and bicycle access in the [NFATC EA](#).

PAC Letter of August 12, 2016:

In [this letter](#), we made several points about pedestrian and biking paths around the NFATC. We described the inadequacies of the sidewalk on the south side of the Arlington Boulevard access road that serves as a combined bike/ped trail. In its current condition, it cannot support safe bike or pedestrian transit, let alone both. We also encouraged a continuation of the existing trail on the southern perimeter of NFATC to connect Quincy to Oakland to serve neighborhood and general users. We also supported making the tunnel under George Mason Drive ADA-compatible and accessible to cyclists. We also provided several comments on current conditions along Glebe Road, 6th Street, and George Mason Drive that were impediments to pedestrian, cyclist, and transit users.

Committee Members
Pamela Van Hine, Chair
Eric Goldstein, Vice Chair
Ellen Armbruster
John Armstrong
Rosemary Ciotti
Jim Feaster
Eric Goodman
Dennis Jaffe
Tom Korns
Christine Ng
Collin Weber

Petition of Alcovia Heights residents:

In [this petition](#), Alcovia Heights residents request that a permanent, public, protected bike/ped path be constructed along the southern perimeter of the NFATC site, which will require that 1) the proposed NFATC expansion to the south be halted or amended, 2) plans to eliminate the existing path between George Mason Drive and Oakland Street be canceled, 3) the County be given a permanent easement to construct a public bike/ped path around the entire southern fence line, thus connecting George Mason Drive with the corner of South Oakland Street/Third Street South, and 4) the County immediately finalize plans to construct an east-west connector around NFATC as described in the TMP.

NFATC Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) Conflicting Comments on the Value of Bike/Ped Access:

In several places in the [NFATC EA](#) are recommendations for the permanent elimination of access by non-NFATC staff and students to both the current bike/ped trail (p. 5, 16, Table 5 p. 19, p. 27, p. 32) and pedestrian tunnel under George Mason Drive (p. 16 and p. 26). Yet, in other parts of the Assessment, recommendations support the Arlington County Master Transportation Plan (MTP), importance of the walkability of Arlington County (p. 27, 43,) and how paths in and around the NFATC campus “provide connectivity with other designated routes throughout the county” (p. 43). These points are cited as key rationale for the NFATC proposed TMP and EA that promote alternative transportation modes, including cycling and walking, to reduce the use of single-occupant vehicles and decrease the parking ratio for the NFATC campus (p. 42).

Our committee finds the stated NFATC EA support of Arlington’s alternative modes of transportation, including cycling, walking, and existing connectivity of walking and biking trails inconsistent with their decision to close access to NFATC trails to local cyclists and walkers who are not affiliated with NFATC. The Assessment states “Neighborhood connectivity via NFATC will not be possible and will require a *slightly* longer bicycle ride or walk around the campus to get to and from desired destinations” (Table 5, p. 19). We believe that these closures will require a “significantly longer” ride or walk; that adequate, alternative, and safe routes do not currently exist; and that these closures are a significant barrier to connectivity for the immediate neighborhoods and for all of Arlington County alternative transportation methods users. We recommend that current trails and paths remain open and that the promised trail connectivity throughout the local community be completed.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. We are grateful for your continuing support of walkability in Arlington County.

Sincerely,

Pamela Van Hine
Chair
Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC) Chair

cc: Arlington County Board; Pedestrian Advisory Committee staff and members; Dennis Leach, Director of Transportation; Chris Slatt, Chair, Transportation Commission; Gillian Burgess, Chair, Bicycle Advisory Committee; John Carten, Chair, Transit Advisory Committee; William Staderman, Chair, Disability Advisory Commission; Danielle Arigoni, Alcovia Heights