

**REPORT FROM THE TASK FORCE ON ARTERIAL  
ROAD SIDEWALKS AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY  
BLUEMONT CIVIC ASSOCIATION**

**SEPTEMBER 27, 2012**

# BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

- In December, BCA reaffirmed previous decisions that our arterial road sidewalks are not adequate.
- BCA established a Task Force to identify and investigate options to improve Bluemont's arterial roads in a way that would:
  - make them safer and more accessible for pedestrians
  - meet ADA laws and County design standards
  - allow for the safe, orderly flow of pedestrians, bicyclists, motor vehicles, and other transit.
- The Task Force would be open to all members, and it would report back no later than September 2012.

# TASK FORCE PROCESS

- 20-person/organization email distribution list for notification of meetings and dissemination of relevant information
- Website established for posting of meeting minutes and reference information
  - [bluemontroads.wordpress.com](http://bluemontroads.wordpress.com)
- Meetings on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of each month; minutes taken and posted for each meeting
- Substantial bibliography of pertinent information developed, disseminated and reviewed:
  - More than 20 information and reference sources discussed or posted to website

# TASK FORCE PROCESS

- Regularly contributing members included:
  - Eric Goodman, Dan Laredo, Sandeep Maripuri, Suzanne Sundburg, David Van Wagner, Ed Fendley, Chris Healey
- Personal outreach to all businesses in the Bluemont commercial area, Arlington Traditional School, Ashlawn Elementary School, Dominion Hills Civic Association, Boulevard Manor Civic Association
- Consultation with experts and reference to County guidelines:
  - Richard Best, Arlington County Transportation Department planner
  - Tim Ohora, Arlington County Real Estate Acquisition
  - Elizabeth Priaulx, Senior Legal Specialist, National Disability Rights Network
  - Christopher Forinash, Engineer and Program Director, Institute for Sustainable Communities
  - Wayne Wentz, Arlington Transportation Engineering and Operations Chief
  - Dennis Leach, Arlington County Director of Transportation
  - County design guidelines for emergency vehicle access

# TASK FORCE FOCUS

- BCA arterial roads include Wilson Boulevard, Washington Boulevard, Carlin Springs Road and George Mason Drive
- The Task Force focused on Wilson Boulevard west of George Mason
  - This follows the Arlington Arterial Transportation Management (ATM) plan of 2004 and past BCA recommendations
- The Task Force recommends additional efforts to address the area of Wilson Boulevard east of George Mason

# APPROACH

- Discuss current conditions (as-is).
- Understand County requirements, options, and constraints.
- Discuss what is at stake if we don't make a change.
- Establish a “To-Be” vision.
- Identify strategic options and reach consensus on recommendations.
- Ask County to provide baseline data to determine existing levels of service at traffic-light intersections, public transit time, emergency vehicle response time along the corridor, crash statistics and other relevant metrics.
- Compare baseline data to updated data to measure outcomes.

# CURRENT CONDITIONS



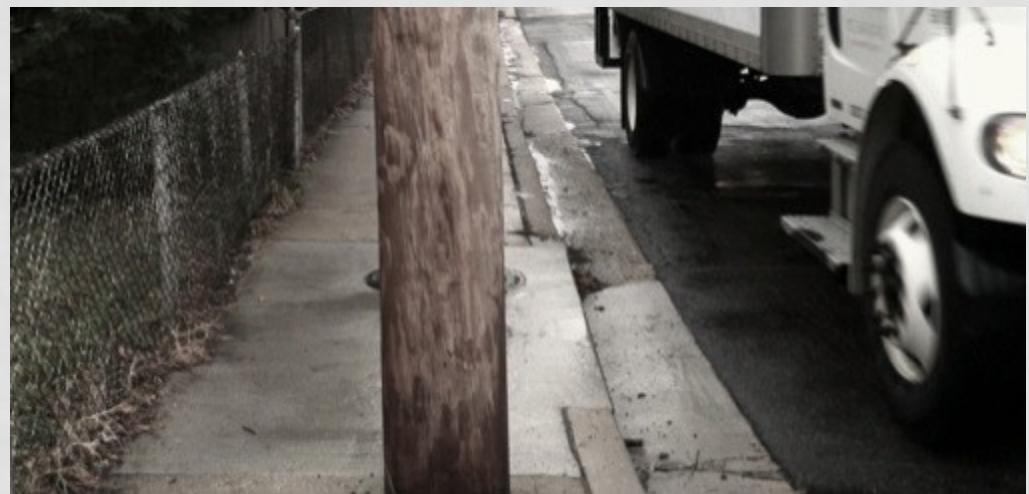
Sidewalks  
are narrow  
and  
obstructed



# CURRENT CONDITIONS (CON'T)



Large vehicles  
drive close to  
the sidewalk



# CURRENT CONDITIONS (CON'T)



There is limited room to expand into private property

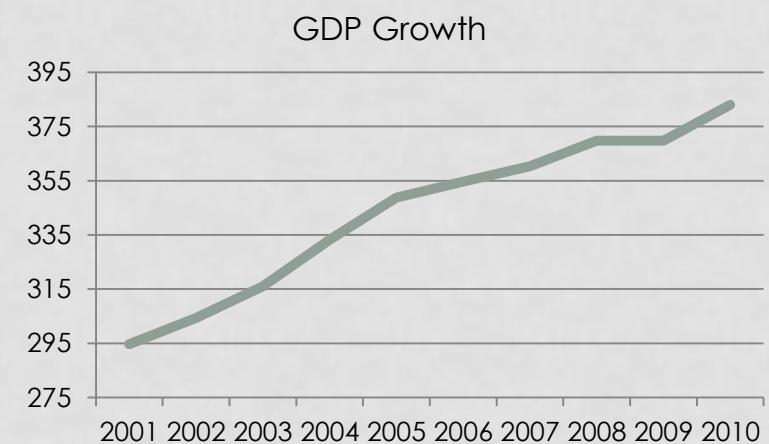
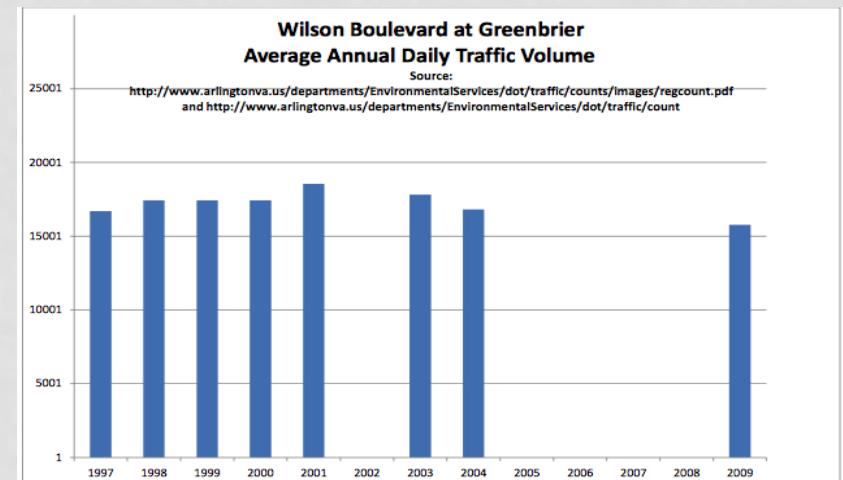


Photo: Chris Healey

# CURRENT CONDITIONS

## TRAFFIC VOLUMES

- Traffic volumes on Wilson Boulevard west of George Mason Drive have been steady for more than 30 years, despite significant increase in population and economic activity
- Wilson Boulevard has about the same amount of daily traffic as Washington Boulevard
- Washington Boulevard has higher traffic volume during morning and evening peak hours of travel than Wilson Boulevard.



# WHAT IS AT STAKE?

- Health, safety, quality of life, and viability of businesses
- Lack of adequate pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure limits safe transportation options, adding more cars on the road.
- Wilson is particularly inaccessible to many people with disabilities and presents hazardous conditions for children and older people :
  - forces pedestrians/residents with disabilities into the street
  - unsafe for school children to walk or wait for a bus
- We do not want to leave this problem to our children.

# TO-BE VISION

- Streets that are safe and accessible to all pedestrians
- Streets that allow for the safe, orderly flow of pedestrians, bicyclists, emergency vehicles, motor vehicles, and transit
- Arterial sidewalks that meet ADA laws and Arlington design guidelines
- Ease of access from/onto Wilson Blvd. from side streets
- Acceptable flow of traffic along Wilson Blvd.

# WASHINGTON BOULEVARD IS A NEARBY EXAMPLE



- Unobstructed and level sidewalks
- Planting and utility strips
- Street trees
- Bike lanes
- On-street parking
- Vehicular travel lanes



# FOUR POTENTIAL OPTIONS

- Underground utility poles.
- Acquire additional right-of-way.
- Reconfigure the existing right-of-way.
- Do nothing.

# OPTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Utility undergrounding
  - County policy allows for utility undergrounding
  - Would require significant funding (costs of up to \$1 million/block on average)
  - Bluemont is not among the County's "high priority areas"

# OPTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Acquisition of additional right-of-way
  - Has been done successfully at other Arlington locations
  - Property acquisition or easements are sometimes difficult to secure, especially in cases of commercial properties and properties that are not owner-occupied.
  - Sometimes, one or more property owners will not agree to grant an easement or sell property. Increased sidewalk width is counted toward the “covered” percentage of a property under lot coverage rules, potentially affecting property changes/improvements.
  - Projects requiring right-of-way acquisition are currently not eligible for funding under the “Complete Streets” program.

# OPTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Reconfiguration of existing right-of-way
  - Converts four existing lanes into two through lanes, one two-way center turn lane (with dedicated turn lanes at intersections), and two bike lanes
  - Could be a phased project: Phase 1—pavement striping; Phase 2—sidewalk widening and utility pole relocation
  - Funding available through “Complete Streets” program
  - According to Wayne Wentz:
    - Two through lanes with a center turn lane typically provides a better line of sight and safer transitions for cars entering the traffic lanes.
    - No expected changes to flow of vehicular traffic; speeding may be reduced while maintaining the same overall travel time.
    - Reduced crash risks for all users are expected.

# STRATEGY AND RECOMMENDATION FOR CONSIDERATION

- The Task Force recommends reconfiguring Wilson Boulevard west of George Mason Drive to make it safer and more accessible for all modes of transportation.
- This strategy can be implemented in two phases:
  - Convert existing four lanes to two through-lanes and a two-way center turn lane (with dedicated turn lanes at intersections), and two bicycle lanes by restriping the pavement.
  - Widen sidewalks to meet ADA requirements.

# STRATEGY AND RECOMMENDATION BEFORE AND AFTER EXAMPLE

**Four Lanes w/o center turn lanes**



**center turn lanes, bike lanes,  
ped refuge island at bus stop**



# QUESTIONS?