

To: Stephen DeCoursey (Arlington Select Board), Eric Helmouth (Arlington Select Board), Lenard Diggins (Arlington Select Board), John Hurd (Arlington Select Board), and Diane Mahon (Arlington Select Board)

From: Phil Goff and Nawwaf Kaba
East Arlington Livable Streets (EALS) Coalition

Date: June 14, 2021

CC: Mike Radamacher PE (Public Works Director), Jenny Raitt (Director of Planning), Howard Muise (Chair, Transportation Advisory Committee)

Re: **Need to mitigate removal of Mass Ave/Lafayette St bump out for priority bus lane**

To the esteemed members of the Arlington Select Board:

We and the members of East Arlington Livable Streets (EALS) would like to congratulate the Board and other Town staff on a successful response to the pandemic that allowed us to navigate through the ordeal relatively unscathed. We are writing to express our concern about the pedestrian safety issue at the Mass Ave/Lafayette crosswalk (aka the “CVS crosswalk”) and would like to see improvements that were discussed on multiple occasions during the planning for the BRT pilot in 2019.

The crosswalk is close to two intersecting streets, the exit from the CVS parking lot and the end of the merge zone for the inbound Mass Ave lane. This creates an increased potential for distracted drivers and an increased risk for pedestrians. In addition, the area is poorly lit after dark, especially the south side of the crosswalk as there is no street light at the Mass Ave/Lafayette intersection.

As you may recall, the Mass Ave redesign included a bump out on the south side of the crosswalk, but the safety enhancement was removed to make way for the bus priority lane in 2019. **EALS was supportive of the removal of the bump out, but it was with the understanding that the Town would investigate the addition of a pedestrian safety counter measure as mitigation.** The possibility of incorporating a low-cost RRFB¹ (rectangular rapid flashing beacon) was discussed more than once at the BRT Pilot committee meetings staffed by Ali Carter and Daniel Amstutz. It was toward the end of the committee process that Nawwaf (and other EALS members) spoke publicly of the need to mitigate the lost bump out and improve lighting during the Feb 19, 2019 Select Board meeting.

¹ A pair of solar-powered RRFB’s can cost only \$5-10,000, not including installation.

We recall that Board members recognized the problem and indicated that the Town would look into improving pedestrian safety at the CVS crosswalk as mitigation. Mr. Hurd suggested potentially adding buckets of orange crossing flags as a very low cost improvement as well. Soon after, Phil provided an informational email on March 14 related to a study that showed the effectiveness of RRFB's for pedestrian safety (confirmed receipt by both Ms. Carter and Mr. Amstutz on 3/15).

As we understand it, there has been no subsequent action taken by the Select Board, the planning department, or DPW to address this issue. **We respectfully request that at the very least, the Board request TAC's input on appropriate safety counter measures: either a RRFB or median island and improved street lighting on the Lafayette St side of the crosswalk.** (It would also be logical to consider more enforcement of crosswalk parking setback rules, as the missing bump out occasionally leads to motorist parking right up to the striped crosswalk—not possible when bump outs are present—which decreases visibility of crossing pedestrians.) The desired treatment for the CVS crosswalk should ultimately be considered for ALL unsignalized Mass Ave crosswalks throughout the Town as the desired condition to enhance pedestrian accessibility and safety.

With the pandemic now in the rear-view mirror, traffic volumes will likely rebound in the coming weeks and months and we believe it is time to address this serious safety issue now. Installation of an RRFB and improved street lighting at the Lafayette crosswalk is the minimum that should be done to avoid a serious or deadly collision at this important pedestrian crossing.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Phil Goff". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Phil Goff

Nawwaf Kaba

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