



## ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

County Board Agenda Item  
Meeting of September 24, 2016

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**DATE:** August 11, 2016

**SUBJECT:** Amendment of the Master Transportation Plan (MTP) Streets Element to include new local street types

### C. M. RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the request to advertise public hearings by the Planning Commission and the County Board to consider amendments to the Master Transportation Plan (MTP) Street Element to add a new Pedestrian Street type and to modify the Pedestrian and Bicycle Priority Street type. Public hearings on the MTP amendments are to be held by the Planning Commission and the County Board no sooner than October 5, 2016 and October 15, 2016 respectively.

**ISSUES:** Should the Master Transportation Plan (MTP) Streets Element be amended to include a new Pedestrian Street type? Should the definition for the existing Pedestrian and Bicycle Priority Street be revised to include a greater range of vehicular traffic volumes and shared street treatments?

**SUMMARY:** The sector plan updates for the Rosslyn and Court House areas that were adopted in 2015 specified the development of local street types that are not currently included in the County's MTP. The proposed MTP amendments (Attachment A) include revisions to the definition for the existing Pedestrian and Bicycle Priority Street type and a new Pedestrian Street type. The amendments would allow for more variations of streets including pedestrian-only streets and the shared streets that are planned for the Court House Square area. The MTP amendments would accommodate the streets envisioned in the two sector plans and provide guidance for their potential use in other areas of Arlington.

**BACKGROUND:** During 2015, after considerable public involvement, the County Board adopted two sector plan updates that specified the development of new street types within urban centers. In July 2015, the Board adopted an update to the Rosslyn Sector Plan that calls for eventual development of several new street segments as well as many changes to the existing Rosslyn street network. Amongst the proposed new street segments are nine block-length

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segments of new street that are designated in the plan to be "Pedestrian Street/Way." The new Pedestrian Streets are illustrated in Map 3.7 (page 97) of the plan. Several descriptions of the new Pedestrian Streets are included in the plan.

The plan's description for the 18<sup>th</sup> Street North Corridor says: *"this new corridor would replace the remaining skywalk segments, break up north-south blocks and enhance access to the Rosslyn Metro Station. For N. Lynn to N. Oak Street – This segment will accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists only, without motor vehicle access."*

Similarly, in September 2015, the Board adopted an update to the Court House Sector Plan that included proposed modifications to segments of 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> streets that specify special design treatments and operation in order for them to be "Shared Streets." The plan provides the following descriptions for the two streets.

*"The character of 15<sup>th</sup> Street North should be changed to prioritize transit riders, bicyclists and pedestrians. 15<sup>th</sup> Street North should be reconstructed between North Veitch Street and North Courthouse Road to be a low-speed street that prioritizes pedestrians and allows for safe sharing of the space amongst the many users. Distinct paving materials (including the travel lanes), widened sidewalks, ample street trees and curbless paving transitions, except at transit boarding areas should be used."*

*"The character of 14<sup>th</sup> Street North should be reconstructed between North Veitch Street and North Courthouse Road to be a low-speed street that prioritizes pedestrians and allows for safe sharing of the space amongst the users of the street. From the Promenade to North Courthouse Road section, the section of 14<sup>th</sup> Street North should be reconstructed to include a prominent pedestrian crossing for the Promenade with distinctive paving materials (including in the travel lanes), widened sidewalks, ample street trees and curbless paving transitions."*

The MTP Streets Element, which was adopted in 2011, includes four types of local streets. All of the existing street types anticipate at least some motor vehicle use with none matching the Rosslyn Sector Plan's proposal of Pedestrian Streets such as envisioned for the 18<sup>th</sup> Street corridor as being without motor vehicle access. Throughout the world there are many examples of streets that are designed and operated for the exclusive use of pedestrians. Some examples of those streets are illustrated in this report.

The MTP's existing definition for Pedestrian and Bicycle Priority Street anticipates a regular traffic volume of less than 400 vehicles per day. As currently written, the definition is most appropriate for low-to medium-density residential areas where both vehicle use and pedestrian activity is relatively modest. The Courthouse Sector Plan in its description of future treatments for sections of 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> streets, anticipates significantly higher volumes of both vehicular and pedestrian travel than is described in the existing MTP definition for Pedestrian and Bicycle Priority Streets. The proposed amended definition is intended to broaden the range of pedestrian priority to include streets in high density/high volume locations, such as anticipated in the Courthouse area, with shared use travel-ways as well as other street treatments with low traffic volumes.

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**DISCUSSION:** The MTP Street Element currently provides definitions for four different types of local (non-arterial) streets. Local streets are identified as having as their primary purpose the provision of access to residences and businesses within the immediate community. Local streets also provide internal connectivity within neighborhoods and link neighborhoods within the County. The four types of local streets are: Urban Center Local Street, Neighborhood Minor Street, Neighborhood Principal Street and Pedestrian and Bicycle Priority Street.

Attachment A includes proposed changes to the existing Pedestrian and Bicycle Priority Street that would better identify the use of shared streets within more urban areas of Arlington. Also proposed for addition to the MTP Streets Element is the definition and description of pedestrian streets which could be created or retrofitted in urban, commercial centers.

The new street concepts were presented to the Transportation Commission for discussion at their June 30, 2016 meeting and to the Long Range Planning Committee at their July 21, 2016 meeting. In addition to the selected public hearing dates, the proposed MTP amendments are scheduled to be heard by the Transportation Commission at their September 29, 2016.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The proposed MTP amendments will have no fiscal impacts.

An example of a Pedestrian Street in Boulder, Colorado:



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Some examples of Pedestrian and Bicycle Priority/Shared Streets:

(top photo) Boston, Massachusetts, (bottom photo) Seattle, Washington



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**Attachment A: Proposed Text Revisions to the Master Transportation Plan Streets Element**

Proposed amendments to the definition of Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Street type:

**Pedestrian and Bicycle Priority or Shared Streets** – A pedestrian and bicycle priority or shared street is a local shared street where the needs of motor vehicles generally planned to be no more than 400 vehicles per day, are generally secondary to the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists and other roadway users playing children. In some European countries, these streets may be known as “Woonerven”, living streets”, “play streets” or “pedestrian zones”. These streets are designed and constructed to discourage travel at more than 15 miles per hour. Vehicular entrance to the street is typically via driveway-style curb ramps and the surface of the street may be of materials, colors and/or textures other than traditional asphalt. Linear curbs, landscaping strips, sidewalks, parking and travel lanes may or may not be provided; instead the various elements may be interspersed within the street area. Motor-vehicle access may be is generally limited to specific hours or and purposes (emergencies, public transit, trash collection, deliveries, etc.) so as to enhance the pedestrian experience. Shared streets allow people to comfortably walk within the roadway and implicitly slow traffic speeds through the mixing of travel paths, physical measures and visual cues. Shared streets typically use few traffic signs and markings and have a uniform surface height (limited use of curbs) to permit easier pedestrian and bicyclist travel along and across the street.

\* \* \*

Proposed new definition for Pedestrian Street type:

**Pedestrian Street** – A car-free travel corridor that provides public pedestrian access to adjacent buildings and properties fronting the street and serves as a public meeting place and location for commerce, communication and other community activities. A pedestrian street is predominately paved with a hard surface suitable for walking and includes physical measures that prevent regular access by motor vehicles. Pedestrian streets are typically located in urban environments with mixed land uses, high population densities and large numbers of pedestrians. Pedestrian streets also permit bicycle riding and typically link to other streets that permit motor-vehicle use. Unique paving surface treatments are typically used to help enforce the non-vehicular nature of the street. A pedestrian street may also accommodate other public space amenities, such as seating and landscaping provided that a travel corridor and direct visual access between adjacent streets is maintained.