

From the Arlington Forest Citizens Association

July 7, 2016

Ms. Libby Garvey, Chair,
Mr. Jay Fiset, Vice-Chair,
Ms. Katie Cristol, Board Member,
Mr. Christian Dorsey, Board Member,
Mr. John Vihstadt, Board Member,
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd. Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Mr. Mark Schwartz
County Manager
County Manager's Office
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 302
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Ms. Garvey, Mr. Fiset, Mr. Vihstadt, Ms. Cristol, Mr. Dorsey, and Mr. Schwartz,

We are writing to ask for your assistance with changing the pedestrian crossing signal at the corner of North Carlin Springs Road and North Harrison Street to a red light/beacon that is safe and visible to drivers and pedestrians. The current yellow pedestrian crossing light/beacon at this intersection is inadequate as cars do not recognize the beacon as an indication to stop. Cars consistently drive through the crosswalk while the beacon flashes.

Arlington Forest neighbors agree that the simple, cost effective solution to this problem is to change the current pedestrian light to a red, mandatory stop light/beacon and make it clearly visible to drivers and pedestrians. Either a pedestrian-activated stop light or timed stop light would work in this situation. This change is essential to keeping pedestrians safe in our neighborhood. The time and cost to the County for this solution will be minimal.

This is a serious safety problem that should be immediately remedied. Children and families lives are in danger every day, year round in our neighborhood when crossing at this intersection. In addition, there are no alternative street crossing options as this is the only pedestrian crossings on North Carlin Springs Road between North Park Street and Arlington Boulevard. The road is a well-used path to/from Kenmore Middle School by school children and to/from the Ballston Metro station by persons from adjoining neighborhoods. Metro and ART bus riders have no other cross walk along this road either.

A summary of the problem and solution is:

1. The North Carlin Springs Road and North Harrison Street crosswalk is dangerous for pedestrians year round and currently there is no alternative safe crossing for residents.

2. North Carlin Springs and North Harrison Street intersection is a serious problem that Arlington County can solve by changing the light to a red crossing light/beacon without much time or cost.

Carlin Springs Road is dangerous for pedestrians and currently there is no safe crossing for Arlington Forest residents. A combination of issues, including the current pedestrian light/beacon, creates hazards for pedestrians. This is not an enforcement issue and does not require further study.

- The crossing is confusing to everyone – drivers and walkers alike. One example is Lora Strine’s experience where a police officer in her car approached the intersection and flashed her vehicle police lights at nearby cars to stop. Ms. Strine was with small children -- the police officer was only on one side of the road -- and she was unsure if the cars were going to stop in the lanes on the other side of the road. Ms. Strine chose to stand and wait and the police officer sped off through the intersection in a huff because she wasn’t taking advantage of the gesture to help her cross. Ms. Strine felt unsafe. Drivers are confused, and even police officers, are confused by the current signal.

- North Carlin Springs Road begins at Glebe Road, at the back of the Ballston Mall, and continues south beyond Route 50. Pedestrians travelling from Arlington Forest to the local businesses on Wilson Boulevard -- such as Papatella, Seven-Eleven, or Safeway -- have no safe traffic stop lights or pedestrian crossings that stop traffic. Pedestrians traveling south from Glebe Road on Carlin Springs Road to the Route 50 intersection have no stop lights or pedestrian crossings that stop traffic on this entire route. This route is estimated to be one of the longest stretches of road with no traffic lights or pedestrian traffic lights in Arlington County. In addition, children crossing from the Arlington Forest Pool or going to and from their friends’ houses or to and from Kenmore Middle School have no safe way to cross North Carlin Springs Road. Crossing North Carlin Springs Road also provides access for Arlington Forest residents to the Bluemont Trail and busses and Metrorail in Ballston.

- There are visibility issues at this intersection. The road is impacted by sun glare issues that create a challenge for drivers and pedestrians. The bend in the road creates a blind spot for drivers where pedestrians step off the sidewalk into the road. Two hills on either side of the crossing make oncoming traffic invisible. The crossing includes four lanes of traffic. The current pedestrian light/beacon is difficult for both pedestrians to see when they press for the light to change and for cars to see due to the color and also the position of the lights. Drivers cannot see pedestrians stepping off the east side of the sidewalk into the road. To be sure that it is safe to cross, all four lanes of traffic must be stopped before the pedestrian can leave the sidewalk. This is currently nearly impossible to accomplish.

- Traffic speeds are difficult to anticipate on this road. Some drivers go slowly and some exceed the 30 MPH speed limit -- going up to 55 MPH. Some are traveling to the neighborhood and some are using the road to get to or from home or work. Sometimes drivers treat this road like a local road and some like a four lane highway and the combination makes it difficult for pedestrians to anticipate how long it will take to cross all four lanes safely.

- Our Arlington Forest resident, Beverly Johnston, has communicated with Andy Anton in the Arlington County Transportation Office over the last two years. Mr. Anton, along with his staff, have concluded that the yellow light/beacon is sufficient for the intersection and has

coordinated with Arlington County Police to enforce drivers to comply with the crossing. Despite this decision and enforcement, which currently does not appear active, the behavior of drivers has not changed and the crossing remains dangerous.

- This is not an enforcement issue and the issue does not need further study. When drivers see the pedestrians and flashing light they most often take the correct action and stop for walkers. There are several dangerous shortcomings, however, with the current yellow pedestrian light/beacon: drivers don't see the flashing light due to sun glare, they don't think they have to stop because it is not red, they don't know what to do when they see the light because the light is not a common fixture, they don't see the walkers, or some combination of these issues. Also, because pedestrians cannot trust drivers in all four lanes of traffic to stop and wait for them to fully cross the four lanes, they often hesitate on the sidewalk, causing more confusion for the drivers as to whether the pedestrians will cross.

Children and cars have had near misses and have almost been struck by cars at this intersection.

- There are several accounts of children who are old enough to walk alone through the neighborhood who were seen by other parents pushing the button for the light and then nearly getting struck by oncoming traffic. One example is Shae Dempsey, a middle school student at Kenmore High School. Lara Doyle witnessed a pedestrian incident that she describes as it appeared that Shae Dempsey was playing the game "frogger" as she was crossing the road.

This is an urgent matter. The light should be fixed as soon as possible. Similar red pedestrian lights/beacons exist in Arlington. For example, the light at the intersection of the Army Readiness Center on South George Mason Drive works well and applying this solution to North Carlin Springs/Harrison crossing does not require further study.

Every day that goes by is another day that one of our children or adult neighbors could get struck by a car or bus. Please help us create a safe crossing for our residents. Please change the crossing light/beacon from yellow to red light and ensure that the crossing is clearly visible to oncoming drivers.

We look forward to hearing from you or someone from the Arlington County Manager's Office soon. Please contact: Allison Kennett at president@arlingtonforestva.org and copy residents Lora Strine at lora_strine@yahoo.com; Beverly Johnston at johnston.beverly@verizon.net, and Lara Doyle at laradoyle@yahoo.com.

Sincerely,



Allison Kennett
President
Arlington Forest Citizens Association

cc: Patrick Hope, Virginia House of Delegates