

## *City of Falls Church*

Meeting Date:  09-03-19	Title: MEMO TO CACT FROM CITY MANAGER REGARDING WALKABILITY AND SPOT PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS	Agenda No.:  03
Originating Dept. Head: City Manager Wyatt Shields 703.248.5004 FWS 8-29-19		Disposition by Council:

**DATE:** September 3, 2019

**TO:** Mayor Tarter and Members of City Council

**FROM:** Wyatt Shields, City Manager

**SUBJECT:** CACT Work Session on Walkability and Spot Pedestrian Improvements

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As part of the FY2020 City Budget approval, \$100,000 was set aside to be used for short-term spot improvements to address pedestrian safety and walkability problems in the City. The Citizens Advisory Committee on Transportation (CACT) has been invited by City Council to recommend specific locations where these funds could be used to address these problems in the short term.

Walkability and safe, adequate pedestrian facilities are issues the CACT frequently confronts when reviewing new development and addressing neighborhood traffic issues. Over time, the CACT has discussed this issue many times as part of their work, and in 2017 conducted a Walkability Survey that focused on sidewalk conditions and street crossings in the Broad Street and Washington Street Corridors. The ultimate goal is to provide an adequate and safe walkway system and for the City to ultimately achieve "Walk Friendly Community" designation.

Attached are two memos to Council from the CACT dated July 12, 2019 and August 26, 2019. The July 12 memo "Walkability Improvement Recommendations" speaks generally of a range of improvement needed throughout the City. The memo date August 26, 2019, "Spot Improvement Recommendations for Walkability" identifies specific locations that the CACT has identified as needing improvements, or lacking a sidewalk altogether.

Staff has reviewed the CACT proposals, and has sought to identify a list of spot improvements which would fit within the \$100k budget and which would not require engineering design or right of way acquisitions expenses.

**Staff proposal:**

**\$45,000** Install new sidewalk at S. Oak Street Near Seaton Ln.

This would close an 80-foot “missing link” along a heavily used walking corridor near TJ Elementary School and the newly acquired Fellows property.



**\$40,000** Install new sidewalk at 304 S. Maple Ave.

This would close a 60-foot gap in the sidewalk on the south side of S. Maple Ave, and better prevent stormwater from the street from overflowing to private property behind. Note, there would still be a sidewalk gap in front of the adjacent business to Wallace Street, as that area is paved, but not a true sidewalk with access to Wallace Street.



**\$15,000** Install handicap accessible ramps at locations there they currently do not exist.

**Total: \$100,000**

**Other improvements for consideration:**

Many of the CACT identified missing links are of a length that puts them beyond the \$100k spot improvements budget. The City will need to grow the sidewalk program with larger funding commitments, and/or apply for additional grant funding, to accomplish those larger sidewalk projects.

Removing utility poles obstacles was determined to be beyond the scope of this budget allocation, as such projects would typically require right of way acquisition, engineering, and cooperation of the utility companies.

The 412 W. Broad (Bedo's Leatherworks) sidewalk obstruction is an important and needed pedestrian improvement on one of the busiest corridors in the City. There is a budget allocation outside of the \$100k spot improvements budget.

Refreshing Pedestrian crossings and Sharrow with additional funding outside the normal operating budget may be considered by the City Council with "end of the year" budget allocations, when this report is delivered to Council in September.

Making all Broad Street intersections fully pedestrian activated by adding "Ped Heads" for the smaller crossing street at Lee/Broad, and at Spring/Broad is a potential use of these budget funds. We do not have up to date cost estimates for such pedestrian improvements at the time of writing this memo, but can be considered as part of signal improvements for these intersections in the future.

# City of Falls Church Citizens Advisory Committee on Transportation

**DATE:** August 26, 2019

**TO:** Mayor Tarter and Members of City Council  
Wyatt Shields, City Manager

**FROM:** Citizens Advisory Committee on Transportation (CACT)

**SUBJECT:** Spot Improvement Recommendations for Walkability

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*Note: This memorandum was assembled from input by individual CACT members during the summer. As the committee's next regular meeting is September 11<sup>th</sup>, it has not been formally approved. This draft is provided to facilitate discussion at the September 3<sup>rd</sup> Council Work Session. The final version will be submitted to Council following the September 11<sup>th</sup> CACT meeting.*

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In a July 12, 2019 memorandum (attached), the CACT provided Council a list of *general* recommendations to improve walkability. This memorandum follows up with *specific* spot improvement recommendations. Several items on this list were also identified in the 2017 CACT Citizen Walkability Survey.

The committee appreciates Council's commitment to walkability. Improvements in the past few years, particularly countdown traffic lights and neighborhood traffic calming measures, have made walking in the city a safer and more pleasant experience.

Following are the CACT's recommendations for spot improvements to further improve and encourage walking. The recommendations are presented in categories and, within categories, in priority order:

### **New Walkway**

The CACT supports the Economic Development Authority's idea of a painted walkway running the length of the parking area between the 100 blocks of North Washington and North Maple. This will provide an additional pedestrian option to access the new downtown park and businesses on West Broad and Park. It may also spur thinking about the development of a pedestrian mall.

### **Obstructed Sidewalks**

Many city sidewalks are obstructed by utility poles and guide wires, and some by overgrown shrubbery. The CACT considers the following to be most in need of correction:

- West Broad 412 (Bedo's) – The utility pole and block wall severely narrow the sidewalk and make it difficult for wheelchairs and strollers to pass. This was one of the most frequently mentioned problem sites in the 2017 Citizen Survey.
- North Cherry, 100 block – Only one side of Cherry has a sidewalk. The first few hundred feet from Broad are severely obstructed by utility poles and guide wires. People pushing strollers, dog walkers, and others are often forced to walk in the street. This sidewalk is the connection between the newly improved Broad and Cherry pedestrian crossings and Jessie Thackrey Preschool.

- West Broad 900 block north side (St. James Church). Utility poles and the retaining wall constrict the sidewalk.

Other sidewalks significantly obstructed by utility poles and guide wires:

- Little Falls 100 block east side
- Lincoln 400-900 blocks
- North Cherry 200-300 blocks
- East Columbia 100-200 blocks
- East Jefferson 100-200 blocks
- West Jefferson 100 block
- East Fairfax 200 block north side

### **Orphan and Missing Sidewalks**

The CACT considers the following to be most in need of correction:

- Park 700-800 blocks and part of the 600 block have no north side sidewalk. Although the south side has a continuous sidewalk, Park is expected to have considerably more foot traffic when Founders Row opens.
- Great Falls. Although the south side has a continuous sidewalk, the north side sidewalk is intermittent beginning from the 100 block.
- Irving and Kent – No sidewalks on either street. These are the access to Berman Park.
- North Virginia 200-300 blocks – No sidewalk
- Lincoln 400-900 blocks - Incomplete sidewalk on the west side

Other orphan and missing sidewalks:

- Lincoln 1000-1200 blocks– No sidewalk
- South Lee 200 block – No sidewalk
- Riley Street – No sidewalk
- North Fairfax – No sidewalk after Falls Church Presbyterian
- Fulton 700 block - No sidewalk
- Noland 200 block – Incomplete sidewalk

### **Confusing Signage**

The CACT agrees with the downtown parking study led by Council and its solutions for parking signage in the area between the 100 blocks of Broad and Park.

In addition, signs on the 100 block of Tinner Hill say parking is reserved for Elevation Burger. These signs face the street parking lane and may be on the public right-of-way.

### **Other Issues**

Broken, cracked, and uneven sidewalks and steeply inclined driveway entrances exist throughout the city, especially on North and South Washington Streets.

The CACT believes the following situations are most in need of correction. Both were reported in the 2017 Citizen Survey.

- 450 North Washington (Northgate) – Some stormwater collection/planter boxes have only a curb-height separation from the sidewalk. There is the potential for a trip and fall into the two-foot deep concrete boxes.
- 586 South Washington (next to Victory Comics) – The steel railing around the ten-foot deep concrete stormwater channel is failing and tilts inward.

Attachment: CACT Memorandum of July 12, 2019: “Walkability Improvement Recommendations”

cc: Jeffrey Sikes, Transportation Planner

## **City of Falls Church Citizens Advisory Committee on Transportation**

**DATE:** July 12, 2019

**TO:** Mayor Tarter and Members of City Council  
Wyatt Shields, City Manager

**FROM:** Citizens Advisory Committee on Transportation (CACT)

**SUBJECT:** Walkability Improvement Recommendations

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This Spring, Council Member Hardi asked the CACT for a list of recommendations to improve walkability. The intent was to provide Council with ideas to consider for FY2020 spot improvement funding. The CACT discussed the request at multiple meetings and generated the following list. Some items clearly transcend spot improvements.

- Connect “orphan” sidewalk sections.
- Ticket drivers who fail to yield right-of-way to pedestrians in crosswalks.
- Repaint faded crosswalks.
- Assure sidewalks are sufficiently wide and level for wheelchairs and strollers. Work toward full ADA-compliance.
- Build bike infrastructure to reduce sidewalk cycling.
- Improve street lighting to eliminate dark areas. Use energy-efficient, soft lighting technologies.
- Encourage public art along sidewalks, particularly on blank walls.
- Develop a pedestrian wayfinding signage system.
- In future development, locate building frontages along the sidewalk and parking in the rear.

cc: Jeffrey Sikes, Transportation Planner