

Civic Federation - Motion and Ballot

Parking Element of the Arlington County Master Transportation Plan

Whereas, the County Board on September 26, 2009, announced specific text that it would consider for adoption as the parking element of the Master Transportation Plan at its November 14, 2009, meeting;

Whereas, the draft element will provide guidance on parking policy for the next 20 or so years and the wording in the document will be much scrutinized by developers and their attorneys, County staff, and the public for years to come as to the intent of the drafters and the Board when it approved the document;

Whereas, the draft element consists principally of detailed explanations and implementation steps for 13 overarching policies that were adopted by the County Board in December 2007;

Whereas, the draft element contains much technical language with subtle details that require careful and time-consuming review;

Whereas, in addition to the Board-advertised version, County staff has presented for public and advisory commission consideration various additional preliminary recommended changes to the draft, some of which were released to the public only days or hours before the respective meetings.

Whereas, the parking needs of residents in single families was not appropriately emphasized or fully treated in drafts circulated prior to the version advertised by the County Board;

Whereas, parts of the element provide a unified approach for all of Arlington with insufficient distinction between highly urban versus more suburban areas in the County.

Therefore, Be It Resolved that the Civic Federation recommends approval of the draft parking element subject to the followings considerations:

1. PASSED (26 to 15) - Clarify and limit the scope of a proposed action item to encourage voluntary reduction of residential driveway area to only situations and neighborhoods in which there is ample, safe on-street parking available to accommodate a shift of cars to the roadway. Such encouragement of voluntary citizen action should not occur on streets where it would result in less safety, convenience or negative changes in neighborhood character;

(Note: For reference, the language in question is an "action item" for a policy of promoting on-street parking: "Encourage the removal of off-street impervious-surface parking in excess of zoning requirements in residential areas where on-street parking is expected to be undersubscribed.")

2. PASSED (25 to 11) - Make clear that parking reductions in the major transportation corridors through the site plan process should be granted only in exchange for community benefits that are of equivalent value and are related to transportation infrastructure. To this end the element should recognize that most site plan zoning categories in use in the transportation corridors already contain significant parking reductions that reflect access to transit (e.g. compare site plan parking requirements with by-right C-3 parking requirements) should require that reductions be done on a case by case basis taking into account the parking needs of the building and adjacent area and transit availability, and should also recognize that increased use of transit in these corridors has a price (e.g. additional bus purchases to handle increased loads);

3. PASSED (37 to 3) - Provide clear advance notice of variable pricing rates in effect to persons using applicable spaces;

4. PASSED (37 to 4) - As part of the Site Plan or Use Permit Process consider the impact of new commercial and residential buildings on nearby low density residential neighborhood parking. Develop and implement measures to address the projected impact on neighborhood parking, such as expanded zoned parking or change in hours of existing zoned parking. Ensure that implementation of the residential zoned parking is prioritized by County staff such that it can be implemented very speedily after the discovery of any new overspill parking locations;

5. FAILED (18 to 23) - Create a new category of parking spaces that would be available both to handicapped persons and also to seniors and other designated categories of citizens. The intent of this recommendation is not to reduce parking spaces for the handicapped required under ADA provisions, but to increase the number of spaces available both to the handicapped and to other persons with physical limitations who do not meet the handicapped test. Seniors might be defined as those over 70, and other qualified persons might include women who are pregnant and parents with small children. Such spaces might be located in a section of a parking garage near an elevator, and might be subject to certain time and day limitations, such as available only weekdays before 6 p.m.;

6. PASSED (32 to 9) - Request a minimum of a one-month deferral prior to adoption by the County Board due to the large number changes recommended by staff subsequent to the issuance of the publicly advertised version which have not been widely disseminated where they could be adequately considered by members of the public who may wish to comment.