

Complete Streets and Age-Friendly Community Initiatives

Complete Streets

In 2015, Town Meeting accepted Complete Streets legislation. The following year, the Select Board adopted a policy to make Arlington streets better and safer for all modes of travel—walking, biking, driving, and transit. The policy encourages the Town to consider all modes when making street and sidewalk repairs and improvements.

The policy was developed by the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), in consultation with the Departments of Public Works and Planning and Community Development. In May 2016, the policy was endorsed by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), making the Town eligible for funding under the State's Complete Streets Program. In September 2016, Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito visited Arlington and signed a Commonwealth Community Compact, which contained a reaffirmation by the Town to support Complete Streets principles.

Consistent with its emphasis on the need to support all modes of transit in any roadway improvement project, Arlington's Complete Streets Policy seeks to readjust the balance of transportation infrastructure, which has historically favored automobiles. Specifically, the policy includes as a purpose and goal:

Facilitating better pedestrian, bicycle and transit travel for users of all ages and abilities throughout the Town.

One of the associated implementation actions is to “maintain an inventory of the existence and condition of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facility infrastructure, and will use it to prioritize projects to eliminate gaps in the sidewalk, bikeway, and transit network and increase safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders.”

The policy specifies performance measures to assess effectiveness, including:

- Linear feet of new or improved pedestrian accommodations.
- Number of intersection improvements made to improve mobility and safety for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles.
- Increased rate of children walking or bicycling to school.

A commitment of the last override in 2011 was to add \$400,000 to the roadway construction budget. This commitment has been maintained.

Augmentation of funding for pedestrian infrastructure and transit options in this override will assist the Town in fulfilling Complete Streets Policy goals and will address a frequently expressed desire of Arlington

residents and business owners. A doubling in the number of weekday walkers — as measured by the Transportation Advisory Committee between 2011 and 2016 — serves as but one indicator of the value of this investment.

Age-Friendly Community

In 2016, the Council on Aging held a special meeting to discuss the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Age-Friendly Community initiative. As described by AARP:

The AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities is an affiliate of the World Health Organization's Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Program, an international effort launched in 2006 to help cities prepare for rapid population aging and the parallel trend of urbanization. The program has participating communities in more than 20 nations, as well as 10 affiliates representing more than 1,000 communities.

The WHO defines eight domains of livability and provides communities with a toolkit and checklist of recommended actions supporting each domain. The first two domains are *Outdoor Spaces and Buildings* and *Transportation*. There is significant concordance between these action items and the spirit of the Complete Streets policy described above, including:

- Pavements are well-maintained, free of obstructions and reserved for pedestrians.
- Pavements are non-slip, are wide enough for wheelchairs and have dropped curbs to road level.
- Pedestrian crossings are sufficient in number and safe for people with different levels and types of disability, with non-slip markings, visual and audio cues and adequate crossing times.
- Specialized transportation is available for disabled people.
- A voluntary transport service is available where public transportation is too limited.

In early 2017, the Town of Arlington filed an application for designation as an Age-Friendly Community and was accepted into the network in exchange for a commitment to work toward the program goals. A commitment for additional funding for pedestrian infrastructure and senior transportation will move this initiative forward.

In this fiscal year to date, there has been a 23% increase in rides on Council on Aging vans, as compared to the same period last year. The overall increase in rides is tied to moving medical rides to volunteer medical escort drivers and utilizing the van -- which is grant-funded -- for more people. There has also been a marked increase in "everyday errand runs," indicating an unmet need and providing our seniors with more opportunities to go food shopping and to hairdressing appointments, visit the pharmacy and friends, and be more visible in their community, reducing isolation and ageism.

The FY20 budget -- as currently proposed -- includes funding for a sustainable mobility plan that will ultimately guide the investments that are proposed here.