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From: refdesk@world.std.com <refdesk@world.std.com>

Date: Tue, Aug 11, 2020 at 11:43 AM

Subject: Liberty and justice for all travelers

To: Len Diggins <ldiggins@gmail.com>

Liberty and justice for all requires opportunity for all. Transportation justice requires that all Arlington residents have the opportunity to travel safely. But women, children, elders, low income residents, wheelchair users, and others more likely to travel on the sidewalks must wait for their turn while others go first. Higher income men; who are more likely to travel our streets by bicycle and car; get a green light automatically. The traffic system favors them. How is that just?

Arlington pedestrians got a walk signal without pushing a "beg button" for a few weeks during the pandemic first wave. Cars got a turn, then walkers, then cars again, then walkers. Everyone counted as equally important on our public ways, and everyone could count on getting their turn. Traffic flow was smoother and fairer. A silver lining to this dark cloud, and one we want to keep.

Now we are back to forcing sidewalk users to beg for their turn by pushing a high touch button. All so men on the streets in cars and on bikes can wait a few seconds less? Why are we are disrupting the smooth flow of traffic so one particular group can go a little faster?

Forcing sidewalk users to beg for their turn; while road users get their turn automatically; is inconvenient and unfair in the summer. In the winter it becomes impossible. Until the Town takes back up its responsibility to clear snow from sidewalks and crosswalks, walk signal buttons are often made unreachable by barriers of snow and ice. Wheelchair users, elders with canes, and moms with strollers cannot reach the button to ask for their turn.

We turned off the beg buttons and turned on the automatic walk signals for a few weeks and it worked well. For the sake of justice, fairness, and the safe and smooth flow of all traffic, get rid of beg buttons forever. Just as we are learning that ending discrimination against Black people and women can benefit everyone, so ending discrimination against sidewalk users can benefit all travelers. If we time the stop lights properly; and include a walk signal in every light cycle; then a car driving the speed limit will never see a red light on a main street all the way through Arlington. And wouldn't that be nice for drivers?

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