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TOWN OF ARLINGTON
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June 5, 2017

Boston BRT Pilot Program
c/o Barr Foundation

RE: Boston BRT RFP letter of support

Dear Review Committee members:

The Town of Arlington is pleased to submit an application for the Boston BRT Pilot program. The Town is interested in improving transit service along the MBTA Route #77 bus line by applying features of Bus Rapid Transit. Our goal in participating in this Pilot Project is to increase the percentage of residents using transit for their morning commute. We believe this is possible if the commute time can be noticeably shortened. Expediting bus service into Harvard Square and to other Red Line stations could reduce vehicle traffic by encouraging commuters to shift modes.

Our primary interest is to explore intersection treatments at four points along Massachusetts Avenue in Arlington to allow buses to move more quickly through the intersections, saving time and giving buses priority over vehicles. Strategies to address this might include but are not limited to bus signal prioritization and bus queue jumping. The Town is also interested in exploring a dedicated right-of-way. There may be locations where two full lanes exist and are not warranted or where parking is not heavily utilized during the morning peak hour between 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., when traffic is most congested eastbound toward Cambridge. However, there are a number of bump-outs along Mass. Ave. that would need to be considered in order to realign traffic lanes.

The MBTA #77 bus has the highest ridership in Arlington. The 3-mile route starts at the MBTA busway in Arlington Heights and terminates at Harvard Station in Cambridge. The total length of the bus route through Arlington and Cambridge is 5.5 miles. The #77 has been designated a Key Bus Route by the MBTA, because it is in the top 15 bus routes for ridership

in the entire system. Average daily ridership inbound is 3,641. Significant delays occur at four (4) locations—Lockeland Street (at Arlington High School), Pleasant Street (Arlington Center), Lake Street (East Arlington/ Capitol Square), and Alewife Brook Parkway (Cambridge City Line). The #77, #79 and #350 all travel along this corridor.

Improving bus transit is an important element of the Town's recently-adopted Master Plan (2015). The Traffic and Circulation Element of the Master Plan found that "MBTA buses stack together during peak periods due to congestion and heavy boarding/alighting activity. Routes #77 and #87 are both affected by congestion along the bus routes." (p. 67). The plan recommends that the Town "work with the MBTA to improve service and connections to increase transit ridership". It recommends the Town work to "reduce bus bunching and improve the efficiency of bus service, [by exploring]... the provision of queue jump lanes, bus-only lanes, bus signal prioritization, and real time bus schedule information". (p. 68)

Mass. Ave. in Arlington is the main thoroughfare in the Town, and is also State Routes 3 and 2A in various locations. It has a combination of residential and commercial uses. The #77 bus goes through all three of the Town's main business districts—Arlington Heights, Arlington Center, and East Arlington. The bus route provides connections to shopping and dining, the High School and Middle School, Town Hall, Post Office and two Libraries.

The Town anticipates working closely with the MBTA, the City of Cambridge, and the Department of Conservation and Recreation on this project.

Thank you for this exciting opportunity to apply for assistance to explore improving travel in this corridor through Bus Rapid Transit. If Arlington is designated as a recipient of this assistance we would anticipate using funds to develop a conceptual design, enhance community engagement, fund adaptation of three (3) traffic signals, coordinate with the MBTA, DCR and City of Cambridge, and assist with implementation. We look forward to your favorable response.

Sincerely,

Joseph A. Curro, Jr., Chair
Arlington Board of Selectmen