

## Angela Brackett

---

**From:** teas42@comcast.net  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 11, 2011 10:07 PM  
**To:** Barbara Favola  
**Subject:** Traffic Calming Project proposed for 16th Street South

Dear Ms. Favola,

I'm writing about the 16th Street South traffic-calming project (3 circles) that the County Board will be addressing this coming Saturday, October 15th.

I live in Douglas Park, approximately 2.5 blocks from 16th Street. The County did not notify me of this project, nor did they notify the bulk of those people that are even more proximal and hence more directly affected by the addition of three traffic circles (which, I will add, will be bracketed on 16th Street by TWO 4-way stops). At this point, I just want to mention that anyone driving a vehicle or bicycle along this stretch of 16th Street South, in the future, will encounter first a stop sign, then a traffic circle, then another traffic circle, followed by a third traffic circle and then another stop sign. Five consecutive intersections with stop signs or circles. I think that this is over the top. Is the County (by a neighborhood committee of 4 households with a total of 5 adults) really just forcing traffic, by means of vehicular torture, to use other routes? This is what it seems.

Through the public record, it has come to my attention that on June 1, 2010 (1:54 pm), Jeff Sikes, in charge of the Arlington County Traffic Calming program, sent an email to Marsha Allgeier, Deputy County Manager, about the River Street project. In that email he said "Yes, we need to finalize and reprint the NTC manual as you indicate. I believe that Ms. Favola was interested in making sure that the larger community was notified of the traffic-calming effort early in the process and to not rely on the civic association to do so." The email goes on to say that "Kevin will want to move forward with a final printed manual." I assume that he means Kevin Sweeney.

This brings me to the point as to why I am emailing you directly - your opinion/direction was clearly referenced in that 2010 email. Obviously, you were interested in making sure - presumably because these traffic circle installations are often so controversial - that more people are brought into the decision-making process in a community early on. The neighborhood traffic calming manual currently on the County website is from 2008 so I'm assuming that the request for an updated manual and more neighborhood households being notified was not implemented. I know that the "larger community" (by my definition) including most of Monroe Street, was not notified by the County in regards to this 16th Street South project.

The current manual on the County website, defines the "area of impact". This is a critical definition because it identifies the only households situated in a given community who are directly notified, through mail, of the project by County staff and it is only these people who have "voting" rights on a proposed project early on. If I read the County manual correctly, I would say that the "area of impact" is defined as (1) residences that directly front on the street segment where the traffic calming measures will be installed; (2) residences on cul-de-sacs or courts directly connected to that street segment; and (3) nearby residences on side streets directly connected to that street segment. The NTCC and County Staff may have to exercise judgment in determining the area of impact for any given project, depending in part on street layout. "The 'area of impact' is an important element in the planning process. This is the area that must be polled to determine whether a traffic calming plan has the required level of support; residents in this area are most directly affected by the speeding problem and the possible traffic calming measures." The last (underlined) portion is very subjective and I would say that, in reality, the people impacted (as you seemed to indicate as quoted in the email) are in a much larger part of the community than the few household directly notified by the County for this particular proposal.

I would like to say that I don't fault the County staff in this regard - I think that this likely just simply slipped through the cracks. The problem is the policy/procedures, which is flawed and unfair. I think this topic should have been addressed last year when the subject came up (see Mr. Sike's email). Now in front of us all we have a proposed project that might not have even approached this stage in the process if the process requirements had been changed in regards to who is notified by the County (in writing) and may "vote" earlier in the process.

I ask that the Board either vote against this proposal or else or put on hold until 1) more households really affected by the project are notified objectively; 2) a more comprehensive effort is made to communicate at the early notification

stages with those households in which English is not a primary language; and 3) more research is performed as to whether or not traffic circles should ever be installed on Emergency Response Routes.

My last point, which is also highly important, and I just touched upon this, is that this proposed project is situated on an Emergency Response route. Those of us who have broached this subject have been assured that the local fire station responders do not object to this project. I surmise that this can only be because the responders believe that the construction of traffic circles on the emergency response routes where the average speed has been clocked at only 24 mph is a project that is very important to County staff, given the larger picture. But the fact remains that the 3 traffic circles would be installed with a assumed intent to slow regular neighborhood resident driver but it would ALSO have the affect of slowing emergency response vehicles (even if by only seconds per circle). Each circle will create a traffic conflict for the longer firetrucks because the circles may stop the firetruck driver's ability to make a right hand turn at traffic circle intersections. A fireman (who drives the trucks) recently told me that the longer trucks may be forced, at these kind of traffic circles, to navigate around traffic circles in the wrong direction in order to make that right-hand turn. I believe that this could be very dangerous for other drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians. I would also say that I do not want ANY decrease in response time by firetruck or by ambulances if there is any emergency need at my house. Seconds matter when you have a heart attack or can not breath.

Attached is a publication. I hope that you will be able to look at it prior to making a decision about the merits of this proposed project on South 16th Street. The attached document is entitled "Traffic Calming Programs & Emergency Response: A Competition of Two Public Goods" by Leslie W. Bunte, Jr., B.S. It is a "professional report" presented to the faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Texas at Austin as part of a Master's thesis, dated May 2000.

You may want to initially focus on the upfront summary of conclusions on pages ix-x and then on Chapters 8 & 9 - especially pages 161 to 166. There are many parts of this report which you will likely find very interesting and I hope that you share this report with your fellow County Board members as well as the County Manager's Office. I suspect that you too, after reading this report and perhaps doing some more web searching on the problems associated with building traffic circles on Emergency Response routes, will be persuaded to seriously question the soundness of any proposal to install these traffic circles on an Emergency Response route.

Here is the link to the document I just referenced:  
[http://www.edmecka.com/Forms/tfc\\_calm.pdf](http://www.edmecka.com/Forms/tfc_calm.pdf)

I thank you for your time and consideration in addressing my concerns.

Sincerely,  
Ellen Menown  
1311 S. Pollard Street

Angela Brackett

FA

**From:** Caryn Leslie <ketselah@msn.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 06, 2011 3:12 PM  
**To:** Jeff Sikes  
**Cc:** Marsha Allgeier; ksweeney@jhenergy.com; cfreysinger@kellenccompany.com; CountyBoard  
**Subject:** RE: Traffic circles on 16th Street South

Dear Mr Sikes,

Thank you for your note. While awaiting for your response, I did some checking on traffic circles, and found the Institute of Transportation Engineers website. <<http://www.ite.org/traffic/circle.asp>>

As I read the potential impacts (pasted below), they seem to be much more effective at preventing intersection collisions than they are at slowing speed. (Speed reduction is only 10%, which in the case of 16th, amounts to 3 - 4 mph.)

Since collisions are not the issue on 16th, I wonder if traffic circles are really the way to go, especially since so many other municipalities have started to take issue with putting them. (Santa Barbara council recently banned them on emergency routes.) Slowing fire trucks to "slow speeds" does not seem like a good idea especially since that only works if there are no cars parked nearby.



#### Potential Impacts:

- no effect on access
- reduction in midblock speed of about 10 percent; area of influence tends to be a couple hundred feet upstream and downstream of intersection
- only minimal diversion of traffic
- intersection collisions have been reduced on average by 70 percent and overall collisions by 28 percent
- can result in bicycle/auto conflicts at intersections because of narrowed travel lane

#### Emergency Response Issues:

- emergency vehicles typically slow to approximately 13 mph; approximate delay of between 5 and 8 seconds per circle for fire trucks
- fire trucks can maneuver around traffic circles at slow speeds provided vehicles are not parked near the circle

#### Other/Special Considerations:

- large vehicles may need to turn left in front of the circle (which could be unsafe at higher volumes); legislation may be required to legally permit this movement
- quality of landscaping and its maintenance are key issues
- landscaping needs to be designed to allow adequate sight distance
- care must be taken to avoid routing vehicles through unmarked crosswalks on side-street approach

---

From: [Jsikes@arlingtonva.us](mailto:Jsikes@arlingtonva.us)  
To: [Ketselah@msn.com](mailto:Ketselah@msn.com)  
CC: [Mallge@arlingtonva.us](mailto:Mallge@arlingtonva.us); [ksweeney@jhenergy.com](mailto:ksweeney@jhenergy.com); [CFreysinger@kellenccompany.com](mailto:CFreysinger@kellenccompany.com)  
Subject: Traffic circles on 16th Street South  
Date: Wed, 5 Oct 2011 16:21:13 +0000

HAR/CB

FA

attach.  
1

377985

Ms. Leslie,

This is in response to the email message sent to the Arlington County Board on September 29 concerning the proposed traffic calming circles on 16th Street South between South Quincy Street and South Monroe Street.

You mentioned three concerns in your message. The first has to do with the number and spacing of the circles. The distance between the intersections where the circles are proposed is approximately 400 feet. Our experience has been that traffic circles are more effective at reducing speeds when installed in a series at consecutive intersections. Providing only one circle would have little impact of travel speeds, except in the vicinity of the circle.

You also mentioned that nothing is being proposed for the section of 16th Street South west of South Quincy Street. This section of 16th Street South (South Quincy to South Four mile Run Drive) is on the list of streets that qualify for traffic calming, but the ranking score of problem-severity is lower than the segment of street currently being considered for traffic calming measures. It may be selected in the future for traffic calming assistance.

Your second concern relates to access, especially during inclement weather. Sixteenth Street South serves as a the major access street in the neighborhood between South Glebe Road and South Four Mile Run Drive. Traffic calming projects are not intended to reduce access or discourage the use of a street, but to improve safety by reducing travel speeds. The locations adjacent to the three proposed circles are flat and vehicles should be able to travel around the circles in inclement weather without difficulty or loss of control.

Your final concern relates to the maintenance of the County-provided landscaping in the circles by residents. As part of the project construction, the County will install a ground hydrant in each circle. We will also ask for volunteers who are willing to sign a pledge card to maintain (water and weed) the circles. The County pays for the water used. The residents are issued a key to the box containing the hydrant. The box is locked other than the times when it is being used to irrigate the landscaping. We have done this for years and I am not aware of any theft of water.

I hope this responds to your concerns.

Jeffrey Sikes  
Neighborhood Traffic Calming Coordinator  
Department of Environmental Services  
Division of Transportation  
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 900  
Arlington, VA 22201  
703-228-3696  
[jsikes@arlingtonva.us](mailto:jsikes@arlingtonva.us)