



## Waste Treatment Upgrade in Arlington

By Rick Keller

Arlington County's waste treatment plant was last updated twenty years ago, the typical lifecycle for this type of facility. If you've read about the issue facing the City of Alexandria and its storm water system, you know that Arlington is fortunate that its facility exceeds requirements for air and water quality to meet any future standards and is robust enough in capacity to get the County to 2040 if not beyond. But that performance must be sustained in order to avoid getting hit with costs down the road.



*Photo courtesy of Arlington County.*

County staff have been meeting with a citizen stakeholder group for some time and will present the County Board with recommendations for a revised master plan by this summer. Treatment technology, like all technology, has changed significantly in the last twenty years; this not only impacts sewage treatment but also the emissions and effluent that remains.

For example, Arlington currently spends \$1.2 million/year to transport the solid waste that remains after treatment (it goes to specific non-food-production farm use). Newer technology can cut the amount of solid waste in half. Newer technology may also improve the *quality* of the solid waste, making it acceptable for a wider range of uses, such as food production.

New processing technology may also yield compressed natural gas (CNG) that can be treated to be used in vehicles (ART buses for example) or sold to existing pipeline vendors. This could save the County funds by reducing CNG purchases for ART buses or earn the County income.

More information is available on the County website <https://projects.arlingtonva.us/projects/water-pollution-control-plant-solids-master-plan/> . The public will have an opportunity to comment on the proposed update before County Board approval.

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