

Residents of King and Braxton Street

BY EMAIL

23 December 2013

Mayor William D. Euille
Vice-Mayor Allison Silberberg
John T. Chapman, Esq.
Timothy B. Lovain, Esq.
Redella S. Pepper, Esq.
Paul C. Smedberg, Esq.
Justin Wilson, Esq.

Dear Sirs/Madam:

We are writing to ask you to reverse the December 20, 2013 decision of Director Rich Baier to install bike lanes on King Street. We well understand your general reluctance to overrule the Director's decisions, but this case is different. His decision:

- exceeded his authority,
- exhibited bias,
- was based on false factual information,
- was tainted by misrepresentations, and
- reveals a stunning disregard for safety concerns and the balance of convenience.

The Director Exceeded his Authority. The December 20 letter relies heavily on the city's Complete Streets Policy. That policy has lapsed, however, and unless and until it is re-authorized by you it is without effect.

Even had it been in effect, the Policy did not authorize the Director to give priority to bicyclists over homeowners to remove parking spaces. Moreover, the Eco-City Alexandria policy is inapplicable to a heavily-travelled Virginia highway that is King Street.

The Director Pre-judged the Issue. In the Mayor Euille Today podcast of Nov. 4, 2013, the Director said his goal was to “try to get people out of cars, on bikes.” No Director has the wisdom to shape the preferences of Alexandria voters in this way.

The Director Relied on False Factual Information. The Director relied on false bicycle volume counts as well as false information about street and sidewalk widths in the report of a city employee. That false information was passed on to city Commissions which met without notice to us, and whose members did not attend the Nov. 25 meeting of the Traffic and Parking Board. As such, their recommendations cannot be relied on.

The Director’s Report Was Tainted by Misrepresentation. A crucial finding in the Director’s letter was the statement that bicycle volume averaged 12 riders during the peak period. We can show, however, the bicyclist community was given advance notice of the count, and that they inflated it by encouraging their members to travel up the steep hill. The reality is that far fewer bicyclists use King Street. This misrepresentation gives us reason to question the bias of city officials.

The letter states that the plan complies with the policies of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. In fact, it fails to do so. It also fails to comply with the Bicycle Road Safety Audit Program of the Federal Highway of the U.S. Department of Highways.

Further, the Director misstated the number of people who spoke in favor of the plan. Of those in our neighborhood, 90 percent spoke against the plan, and it was opposed in a petition signed by 87 of us.

The Director Has Dismissed our Safety Concerns. Over a half-mile stretch, King Street is unsafe for pedestrians who wish to cross the street. The Traffic and Parking Board recognized this in asking for a delay in the plan. Shockingly, the Director reveals his contempt for homeowners by dismissing their advice.

Should you allow this flawed decision to stand, you will have given it your approval, and voters will draw the conclusion that you pay much greater attention to a narrow group of activists than to the ordinary residents of the city.

Before anything further is done on this matter, we would ask that one of us be given an opportunity to state our concerns to City Council.

Yours very truly,

Berry Biles
Maria Biles
Frank Buckley
Barbara Corcoran
Bill Corcoran
Aaron Eastman
Abbie Eastman
Robert Evans
Arlene Fitzpatrick
Esther Goldberg
Lauren Hamel
Max Hamel
Bob Harris

Tracy Hollingsworth
Craig Hudson
Darlene Johnson
Richard Johnson
Judith Klesius
Mike Klesius
Jo Kwong
Richard LaFalce
Amy Lehmkuhler
Monte Lehmkuhler
Rachel Malleck
Stephen Malleck
Abigail Matia

Douglas Matia
Jennifer Mattson
Robert Mattson
Kellie Meehan
Patricia Metz
Jean-Marie Murphy
Eamon O'Kelly
Don Stanton
Ellen Stanton
Louise Welch
Julie Whitmer
Martin Whitmer
Ryan Work
Whitney Work