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12-15-12

**A statement by Bert Ely to the Alexandria City Council
on the Union Street Corridor Study**
December 15, 2012

Mr. Mayor and members of Council, I am Bert Ely and I am here to address the Union Street Corridor Study. Although I am a director of the Old Town Civic Association and a co-chair of Friends of the Alexandria Waterfront and was a member of the City's Waterfront Plan Work Group, I am speaking today only for myself.

The Union Street Corridor Study is so typical of what passes for planning in Alexandria today – the Study does not address the issues it was supposed to address, the Study proposes changes in Union Street that do not address the issues which triggered the study, and the Study recommendations are not integrated with recently proposed flood mitigation initiatives in the King-Union area. I will explain.

The Waterfront Work Group recommended that City staff study the impact on Union Street traffic of the increased development proposed in City staff's waterfront plan. Of course, staff's proposed Waterfront Plan should have incorporated both baseline data about current traffic conditions on Union and nearby streets and the impact of increased waterfront development on traffic conditions in the waterfront area.

The Corridor Study makes absolutely no reference to the increased traffic on Union and adjacent streets that increased development along the waterfront will cause. Instead, the Corridor Study gave City staff the vehicle to propose changes to Union Street, the so-called "shared streets" concept, that will worsen traffic congestion along Union while diverting traffic to other streets, notably Lee and Fairfax. To pose this observation as a question: How do the proposed changes on Union in the vicinity of King relate to the development proposed in the Waterfront Plan?

Even more puzzling is the lack of any meaningful connection between the design recommendations in the Corridor Study and street redesign proposals incorporated in the recently released Project Update on flood mitigation on King, Strand, and Union. The Corridor Study makes no reference to flood mitigation and the Project Update makes no reference to the Corridor Study yet they overlap geographically.

Apparently the City's left hand does not know what the City's right hand is doing, and vice versa. What is before you today is classic Alexandria piecemeal planning. Council needs to pose this question to City staff: Where is the comprehensive, detailed infrastructure plan for the King-Union vicinity that shows how all the pieces would fit together?

A comprehensive, integrated plan must be put on the table before irreversible infrastructure changes are made, such as raising streets or trying to minimize the effects of nuisance flooding. Of course, such a plan might reveal the folly of much of what has been proposed for dealing with increased traffic and nuisance flooding along and near lower King Street, but Council should take that risk.

Council should direct City staff, today, to go back to the drawing board and produce a comprehensive, integrated infrastructure plan for the lower King Street area that addresses all the tough questions, such as how will increased traffic from denser waterfront development be accommodated along Union and what are the cost/benefit tradeoffs of trying to mitigate nuisance flooding.

Thank you for your time. I welcome your questions.

6
12-15-12

From: Bruce&Linda Dwyer <ouibike@gmail.com>
To: Sandra Marks <Sandra.Marks@alexandriava.gov>
Cc: Justin M. Wilson <justin@justin.net>; John Chapman <j.taylor.chapman@gmail.com>; 'Jonathan Krall' <jonathan@jonathankrall.net>; Randy Cole <jrcolehound@yahoo.com>; members-alexandriabpac@googlegroups.com
Sent: Monday, December 10, 2012 8:35 PM
Subject: (Members BPAC) Urgent Request for the city to stop issuing tickets for bicycles riding on the sidewalk

Please consider the below request.

Thanks

Bruce Dwyer

Founding member of Alexandria first bike committee in 1992

The city code relating to bicycles is out of date and needs updating. An experienced cyclist was recently fined \$121 for riding his bike on the sidewalk where in his judgment the roadway was unsafe. The state code has clearly allowed bicycle riding on the sidewalk for over 10 years, during which time the city code has not been in compliance with the state code. If my interpretation is correct, I recommend city staff request, as soon as possible, the police department to cease issuing tickets for riding a bicycle on the sidewalk until such time as the code is updated. This issue has the potential of being an embarrassment to the city in the bicycling community and beyond and getting out in front would help significantly.

The Alexandria bicycling community (currently represented by the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee- BPAC) has been asking city staff for many years to update the codes. I have heard second hand of other tickets issued for sidewalk riding, but they were reported to have been thrown out. This is the first case I know of a fine being levied, but other cases of fines may be on the books. The city has been designated as a "Bicycle Friendly Community", the city has joined the Capital Area Bicycle Sharing program (CaBi), and the city has also adopted a "Complete Streets Policy", however actions speak louder than words. The city lags behind Arlington and the District in safe on-street bicycle accommodation, so sidewalk bicycle riding in many cases is the only safe route. Imposing fines on bicyclists for riding on their perceived safest route based on an ordinance that may be out of date certainly further sends a negative message to those seeking alternative transportation solutions.

There are 2 issues. The existing city code:

1. Prohibits bike riding on sidewalks unless so designated, and
2. Prohibits bike riding on streets and roadways where there is a designated bike route on a side path or sidewalk.

The state code:

1. Allows bike riding on sidewalks unless there is a specific prohibition designated with signs posted, and
2. No longer prohibits bicycles from roadways adjacent to sidewalks/side paths designated as bike routes.

A little background: The state code for sidewalk riding was revised about 10-12 years ago and has also been updated more recently for such things as riding two abreast. The revised state code sections for sidewalk riding came about in part from kids in the Hampton Roads area organizing a PR campaign because “the law” would not allow them to ride their bikes to school on the sidewalk and their parents would not allow them to ride in the street. The state code was changed to remove general prohibitions on bike riding on sidewalks and also to remove the prohibition on bikes riding in the street when there was a designated sidewalk/side path available. Further, jurisdictions could prohibit bike riding on sidewalks, but only when they designated specific locations.

In Virginia , local jurisdictions generally can not have ordinances without specific authority from the General Assembly. Thus, local jurisdictions cannot do things that are not in synch with the state code. When the state code was updated, the bicycle committee asked the city attorney about bringing the city code into compliance with the state code. We were told it was not a priority and not to worry about it since it was not being enforced with fines (but we now know this is not the case). Ten years ago we were most concerned about the prohibition on riding in the street when sidewalks had been designated as bike routes. At our request, the city did remove all the “On Sidewalk” bike route signs in anticipation of the revised code and to remove any ambiguity concerning the rights of bicyclists to use the roadway.

Over the intervening 10-12 years, the bicycle community has requested city staff to bring the city code into compliance with the state code, but it has been a low priority for all since it did not appear the outdated city code was not being enforced. With the significant increase in bicycling in the area and with bike sharing now in the city, there will a greater number of less experienced bicyclists out there. These cyclists will have a greater tendency to use the sidewalk, especially where they do not see safe bicycle accommodations (like bike lanes) on the road. In August, BPAC did meet with city staff from Transportation and Environmental Service and the City Attorney to discuss updating the code and my understanding is that they are working on it. In light of the recent fine, it would behoove the city to update the code as soon as possible if it is determined by legal staff to not in synch with the state code.

For reference, following are the pertinent city and state codes:

1. Sidewalk Riding

-City Code (Go to <http://library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientId=10349> and search on bicycle to see all bicycle related code sections

Sec. 10-7-4 - Designation of sidewalks as bicycle routes.

With the exception of bicycles operated by police officers in the course of their law enforcement duties, no bicycle shall be operated on any sidewalk in city, except such sidewalks or portions thereof which city council shall by resolution designate as bicycle routes. (Code 1963, Sec. 6-4; Ord. No. 3588, 6/13/92, Sec. 1).

-State code (Go to <http://leg1.state.va.us/000/src.htm>) and enter bicycles in the search field

§ 46.2-904 ...The governing body of any county, city, or town may by ordinance prohibit the use of roller skates and skateboards and/or the riding of bicycles, electric personal assistive mobility devices, motorized skateboards or scooters, motor-driven cycles, or electric power-assisted bicycles on designated sidewalks or crosswalks, including those of any church, school, recreational facility, or any business property open to the public where such activity is prohibited. Signs indicating such prohibition shall be conspicuously posted in general areas where use of roller skates and skateboards, and/or bicycle, electric personal assistive mobility devices, motorized skateboards or scooters, motor-driven cycles, or electric power-assisted bicycle riding is prohibited...

The state code says that the city may prohibit bike riding on sidewalks, but the jurisdiction has to take action to make specific designations and put up signs so saying. While I do not see anything specific that says bikes may ride on sidewalks, I believe this is the intent and is reflected on the VDOT website: (<http://www.virginiadot.org/programs/bk-laws.asp>) *Bicycles may be ridden on sidewalks unless prohibited by local ordinance or traffic control devices. While on sidewalks and shared use paths, bicyclists must always yield the right of way to pedestrians and give an audible signal before passing a pedestrian.*

Arlington did update its code and it reflects the VDOT language. Go to <http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/countyboard/countycode/default.aspx> and go to section 14.2 and click to get a PDF files and go to Article II Bicycles beginning on page 38. *Riding on sidewalk. Persons of any age may ride a bicycle upon any sidewalk, except for those sidewalks, designated by the County Manager on which bicycle riding is prohibited. Signs indicating such prohibition shall be conspicuously posted in general areas where bicycle riding is prohibited.*

2. Prohibited riding on roads and streets

-City code

Sec. 10-7-6 - Manner of operating.

(c)Wherever a bicycle route designated as such pursuant to section 10-7-4 of this chapter is provided adjacent to a roadway, bicycle riders shall use such bicycle route and shall not use the roadway. (Code 1963, Sec. 6-4.2)

-State Code

Neither the current versions of state code nor the Arlington code authorizes jurisdictions to prohibit bicycle use of general roadways.

Jackie Henderson

6
12-1572

From: Jonathan Krall <jonathan@jonathankrall.net>
Sent: Thursday, December 13, 2012 12:38 PM
To: William Euille; Frank Fannon; Kerry Donley; Alicia Hughes; Del Pepper; Paul Smedberg; David Speck; Jackie Henderson; Tony Castrilli; Craig Fifer; JoAnn Maldonado; Elaine Scott
Subject: COA Contact Us: Union Street Corridor Plan
Attachments: 64f5debce69bd6bc2d02a9706ebfb546.pdf; ATT00001.txt

COA Contact Us: Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Council Members

Time: [Thu Dec 13, 2012 12:37:40] Message ID: [44213]

Issue Type: Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Council Members
First Name: Jonathan
Last Name: Krall
Street Address: 6a E Mason Ave
City: Alexandria
State: VA
Zip: 22301
Phone: 703 477 4186
Email Address: jonathan@jonathankrall.net
Subject: Union Street Corridor Plan
Please see attached PDF file representing the views of the Alexandria
Comments: Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee.
Thanks!
Jonathan
Attachment: 64f5debce69bd6bc2d02a9706ebfb546.pdf

December 13, 2012

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen of the City Council,

I am writing about the Union Street Corridor Plan, which has the full support of the Alexandria Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee, of which I am Chair. I am writing to express my concern that an important element of the proposed plan may not be implemented.

We have a situation where city consultants count hundreds of bicycles on Union Street every hour of the day and yet, for some reason, there is very little bicycle parking to be found. I myself lead groups of bike-riders through there often, but we rarely begin, end or pause our rides at the foot of King Street, where the shops are. As a result, our snack, coffee-shop and post-ride luncheon dollars go elsewhere. Counts by the Alexandria Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee verify that an estimated 1 million potential customers roll down Union Street each year, but we as a community have failed to invite them to stop and to shop.

I have talked to the head of the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce about this, but received little interest. I have talked to the Waterfront Commission about this, and was astounded when a member of the Commission stated that bike parking corrals "sound ugly." They then specifically recommended to City Council that proposed bike parking corrals in the Union Street Corridor be excluded from the foot of King Street. Given that Alexandria has a large tourist-driven economy, I find this astounding and frustrating. I feel as if I am trying to give money to someone who doesn't know what money is.

I cannot believe that it has come to this, but it has. I am now going to beg. My bicycle-riding friends and I would sincerely like to come to Old Town and give you our money. We would do this if we had somewhere inviting to park. By somewhere inviting, I mean out on the street—not hidden behind a building where bicycle thieves can work undisturbed. Alexandria city staff and consultants understand this and have proposed adding these facilities. We are now asking you on the City Council to please specify that bike parking be located near the shops at the foot of King Street, where it belongs. Thank you for your time and attention.

Jonathan Krall
Chair
Alexandria Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee
<http://sites.google.com/site/alexandriabpac/>
703 477 4186

6
12-15-12

Jackie Henderson

From: Christa Watters <wattrsedge@aol.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 13, 2012 11:43 AM
To: William Euille; Frank Fannon; Kerry Donley; Alicia Hughes; Del Pepper; Paul Smedberg; David Speck; Jackie Henderson; Tony Castrilli; Craig Fifer; JoAnn Maldonado; Elaine Scott
Subject: COA Contact Us: Union Street Corridor
Attachments: 4d6fe142c4e35dcbf4b93ccb778ff108.docx; ATT00001.txt

COA Contact Us: Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Council Members

Time: [Thu Dec 13, 2012 11:43:20] Message ID: [44207]

Issue Type: Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Council Members
First Name: Christa
Last Name: Watters
Street Address: 1186 N. Pitt St.
City: Alexandria
State: VA
Zip: 22314
Phone: 703-549-6167
Email Address: wattrsedge@aol.com
Subject: Union Street Corridor
Attached for your consideration prior to your Saturday meeting, which I cannot attend, is a letter regarding the Union Street Corridor. Thank you
Comments: for your attention.
Christa
Attachment: 4d6fe142c4e35dcbf4b93ccb778ff108.docx

December 13, 2012

Re: Union Street Corridor

Dear Mr. Mayor and Council Members:

I urge you to accept and act on the recommendations of the Waterfront Commission, on which I am a citizen member for North Old Town. This plan received our serious consideration and represents the results of a careful and deliberate collaborative process with opportunities for citizen input.

The Union Street Corridor is a lively, engaging, and much-used part of Old Town, with a strong blend of history and contemporary attractions. It is most heavily used by pedestrians, who must compete with motorists, buses, cyclists, delivery trucks and motorcycles. Any re-engineering of the corridor should continue to accommodate all users, but with adaptations for the safety of all. It should also promote a feeling of welcome and well being for visitors.

Our Chairman, Nate Macek, has written a letter summarizing all the Commission's recommendations, and will speak at your Saturday hearing. I support these recommendations fully, and also want to reinforce a few points particularly.

The most important recommendations, in my view, concern the intersection of King and Union streets and the immediately adjacent areas, which have the highest usage. We support better crosswalk design at that intersection in the near term, and a shared street concept for the long term. To make that work, we believe that a pedestrian zone should be implemented in the unit block of King Street. There are of course delivery issues to work out, but this can be done. Pedestrian shopping zones are very successful in many European cities and towns where I have lived and traveled. It's easier, perhaps, in new developments, where construction can more easily accommodate delivery needs and other logistics, but it can work beautifully in narrow old historic districts as well, perhaps by timing restrictions on particular uses such as deliveries.

Many of the hazards of the area could be diminished by better enforcement. Having an active police presence enforcing stop sign and right of way compliance is a strong start. Enforcing delivery locations and forbidding double parking, along with limiting delivery times by huge trailer trucks along Union Street would be another step. Actual enforcement of the motor coach rules would also be a huge improvement. These are policy steps that could be implemented immediately without incurring huge costs, but that could make a big difference in perception, which matters in public spaces. Regularly seeing police officers standing and chatting in an area of congestion instead of enforcing the rules and laws or facilitating traffic of all kinds is demoralizing to the citizenry.

I urge you to move forward with funding and implementing the plans for an improved Union Street Corridor.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Christa Watters
1186 N. Pitt Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703-549-6167

Jackie Henderson

6
12-15-12

From: Suzanne Bethel <suzanneb@theartleague.org>
Sent: Friday, December 14, 2012 1:58 PM
To: William Euille; Frank Fannon; Kerry Donley; Alicia Hughes; Del Pepper; Paul Smedberg; David Speck; Jackie Henderson; Tony Castrilli; Craig Fifer; JoAnn Maldonado; Elaine Scott
Subject: COA Contact Us: Union Street Corridor Study
Attachments: ATT00001.txt

COA Contact Us: Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Council Members

Time: [Fri Dec 14, 2012 13:58:09] Message ID: [44245]

Issue Type: Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Council Members

First Name: Suzanne

Last Name: Bethel

Street Address: 418 Bashford Ln #102

City: Alexandria

State: VA

Zip: 22314

Phone:

Email Address: suzanneb@theartleague.org

Subject: Union Street Corridor Study

Dear City Council,

I understand that City Council will be discussing the

Union Street corridor study tomorrow and I would like to offer my support

of the Waterfront Committee's endorsement of the study recommendations,

including the improvement to Union & King intersection crosswalks, and

the proposed pilot of a dedicated pedestrian space in the unit block of

Comments:

King Street. I experience, daily, the energy and flow of this unique old

town hub as well as the challenges of traversing the intersection for

pedestrians including Torpedo Factory visitors and scores of Art League

participants/students burdened with equipment and materials. I believe that

the recommendations would improve the corridor.

Thank you for all that

you do to help our community thrive!

Suzanne Bethel
Waterfront

Commission member

6
12-15-12

Dear Editor,

I am writing about the Union Street Corridor Plan, which will be discussed by City Council later this week. This plan has the full support of the Alexandria Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee, of which I am Chair. I remain concerned, however, that an important element of the proposed plan may not be implemented.

We have a situation where city consultants count hundreds of bicycles on Union Street every hour of the day and yet, for some reason, there is very little bicycle parking to be found. I myself lead groups of bike-riders through there often, but we rarely begin, end or pause our rides at the foot of King Street, where the shops are. As a result, our snack, coffee-shop and post-ride luncheon dollars go elsewhere. Counts by the Alexandria Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee verify that an estimated 1 million potential customers roll down Union Street each year, but we as a community have failed to invite them to stop and to shop.

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Jonathan Krall

Chair

Alexandria Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

<http://sites.google.com/site/alexandriabpac/>

[703 477 4186](tel:7034774186)

Bob Wood
6
12-15-12

✓ “The goal is for Old Town residents and businesses, living with a residential, commercial and civic mix of uses as neighbors, to be assured a balanced, livable environment into the future.” (Alexandria Waterfront Plan)



✓ **“The City will only support a future vision for the waterfront that has adequate transportation and parking systems to support it. It has therefore been imperative in planning for the City’s waterfront that any increase in private or public activity not overwhelm the existing multi-modal transportation and parking systems by increasing vehicular or pedestrian congestion or parking impacts for residents, businesses or visitors beyond which this area can support.”** (Alexandria Waterfront Plan)



!?” **“Significantly, the study found that the traffic generated by the additional waterfront development would not be perceptible to persons driving through the six (Washington Street) intersections that were studied.”** (Alexandria Waterfront Plan)



“ A Transportation Management Plan that comprehensively **addresses parking, motor coach, freight loading and other impacts** along the **Union Street corridor** should be completed prior to approval **of any new development.**”

Union Street Corridor Study Goal #1

“Evaluate existing conditions along Union Street including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, delivery vehicles, and transit vehicles.”



Waterfront
Plan Work
Group Report

NEED A CAPACITY STUDY SUPPORTIVE OF POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT, NOT JUST A STUDY OF EXISTING USES

12-15-12
Paul Hertel

