



Alexandria Transportation Commission  
301 King Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314

Phone: 703.746.4025

[www.alexandriava.gov](http://www.alexandriava.gov)

Mayor and City Council  
301 King Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314

July 21, 2019

Re: Seminary Road Complete Streets Project

Dear Mayor Wilson and Members of City Council:

At its June 19, 2019 meeting, the Alexandria Transportation Commission received an update from staff and feedback from the community on the Seminary Road Complete Streets Project. The Commission noted discrepancies between staff's "hybrid" recommendation at that time and the City's transportation vision, as embodied in several adopted plans and policies including the Transportation Master Plan, the Vision Zero Action Plan, and the Complete Streets Policy and Design Guidelines. At the meeting, the Transportation Commission voted unanimously to prepare two letters on this topic – one to the Traffic and Parking Board and one to City Council, to emphasize the importance of consistency with our citywide plans and policies in the decision-making around implementation of all complete streets projects, but specifically the one currently being vetted for Seminary Road.

The staff recommendation was then presented to the Traffic and Parking Board (TPB) on Monday, June 24, 2019, and at that time the TPB voted 3-2 in favor of a different alternative – one that retains all four lanes of car travel through the entire length of the repaving area, and which provides no pedestrian or bicycle improvements other than a small number of HAWK signals.

In this letter, the Transportation Commission would bring to your attention key inconsistencies between staff's "hybrid" proposal and adopted City plans and policies. These inconsistencies hold true and are even more pronounced under the alternative put forward by the TPB at their June meeting, as noted below.

- **In the Transportation Master Plan (2008)**, "the City of Alexandria envisions a transportation system that encourages the use of alternative modes of transportation, reducing dependence on the private automobile" and the City commits to "promote a balance between travel efficiency and quality of life, providing Alexandrians with transportation choices, continued economic growth, and a healthy environment." Staff's and TPB's recommendations explicitly prioritize maintaining existing car travel patterns and do not increase choice or reduce dependence on the private automobile. Staff's traffic analysis stated that project Alternative 3, the one that would provide safer facilities for people walking and people biking, would cause little to no impact on vehicle travel times, suggesting that Alternative 3 is most consistent with promoting "a balance between travel efficiency and quality of life."
- **In the Complete Streets Policy (2011, reenacted in 2014)** "every street project shall incorporate to the extent possible Complete Streets infrastructure sufficient to enable reasonable safe travel along and across the right-of-way for each categories of users" and "if the safety and convenience of users can be improved within the scope of resurfacing, restriping, or signalization operations, such projects shall implement Complete Streets infrastructure to increase safety for users." Of all the alternatives considered to-date, Alternative 3

would improve the safety of more categories of users along more road. This is in fact the purpose of the Complete Streets analysis of the repaving program – this stretch of Seminary Road may not be the most dangerous road segment in Alexandria by any means, but the City has for economic reasons committed to implementing Complete Streets improvements through the scheduled repaving plan, which means that as street segments come up in that plan, that is when staff assess the needs of that segment under this adopted policy.

- **The stated goals of this Seminary Road Complete Streets Project** are to improve safety and accessibility for all users, improve facilities for people who walk, bike, ride transit, or drive cars, and to implement previously adopted plans, policies, and study recommendations. However, the staff recommendation provides for no improved facilities for people who bike, and it does little to ameliorate the dangerous proximity between people on the sidewalk and fast-moving cars. The TPB four-lane alternative is even less supportive of the safety and comfort of pedestrians walking along Seminary. Alternative 3, the Alternative that scored the highest in staff's original analysis of options, is most consistent with the stated goals of the project.
- **The Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan (2016)** is full of goals and objectives supportive of Alternative 3 for this stretch of Seminary Road: "The City will create a safe, well-maintained, comfortable and enjoyable pedestrian environment that encourages walking and is accessible for people of all ages and abilities," "ensure that all streets, trails and intersections are accessible, safe and well designed using national best practices for safety and accessibility," "ensure sidewalks are available on both sides of all streets," "apply the Complete Streets Design Guidelines on all street projects in the City," and so on. The Plan recommends filling the sidewalk gap on this portion of Seminary as one of the top 10 sidewalk projects and calls out Seminary Road as one of the City's top 10 priority on-street enhanced bicycle facilities. The TPB recommendation offers no enhanced bicycle or pedestrian facilities with this repaving project, which is inconsistent with this very recent Master Plan Chapter update.
- **The Vision Zero Action Plan (2017)** prioritizes safety engineering/design treatments to eliminate fatal and severe injury crashes, especially by reducing speed (a key factor in crash morbidity and mortality), and especially considering the needs of the most vulnerable road users. However, the staff and TPB recommendations lack the necessary engineering/design treatments to reduce speed or crashes or substantively improve the perceptions of safety or experience of people walking or biking through this corridor. While Vision Zero and Alexandria's Action Plan emphasize the use of engineering alongside education and enforcement to eliminate road deaths, the plan and the literature upon which the plan is based point to the fact that education and enforcement are less effective without safe road design as the foundation.

Looking carefully at recent small area plans in the city, you will see that staff and the community have thoughtfully woven the spirit and substance of these guiding citywide plans and policies into the transportation designs for those neighborhoods. This is how these plans should be used. Each of these adopted plans represents the input of hundreds of community participants, and the careful weighing of quantitative and qualitative data, case studies of best practices, staff analysis and expertise, and many community opinions. In the instance of this project along Seminary Road, the Transportation Commission believes that Alternative 3 best embodies the letter and spirit of these citywide adopted plans and policies. The Transportation Commission respectfully requests that City Council direct staff to implement Alternative 3 for these reasons.

The Transportation Commission was created by Council to advocate and promote the development of balanced transportation systems in the City through oversight of the Transportation Master Plan. We appreciate your consideration of this input on the project.

Sincerely,



Stephen Klejst

Chair, Alexandria Transportation Commission

cc: Alexandria Transportation Commission

Yon Lambert, Director, T&ES