



THE GEORGE WASHINGTON MASONIC  
NATIONAL MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

*"To inspire humanity through education to emulate and promote the virtues, character  
and vision of George Washington, the Man, the Mason and Father of our Country."*

March 19, 2021

Yon Lambert, Director  
Department of Transportation  
& Environmental Services  
City of Alexandria  
301 King Street, Room 4100  
Alexandria, VA 22314

Re: Intersection of King Street & Callahan Drive Improvement Project  
Updated Position Statement

As we have expressed in community meetings and communications with city officials consistently since January 15, 2015, the George Washington Masonic National Memorial has supported pedestrian, cyclist, and motorist safety at the King-Callahan-Russell intersection. Part of this project involves the access road around the traffic island, which connects the Memorial's driveway to Callahan Drive. While the Memorial Association believes the modifications before Council for approval are a positive step, it is the viewpoint of the Memorial Association that this access road, which is used by motorists as a way to circumvent the traffic light at King and Callahan, should be permanently closed to vehicle traffic.

Closing the King Street entrance to the access road would be consistent with the City of Alexandria's stated aims of improving pedestrian and cyclist safety with little, if any, legitimate motorist needs. The King Street entrance is a neither needed nor desirable entrance to the Memorial grounds. The main entrance to the Memorial Drive is off Callahan Drive. The closure option is explicitly identified as "Safest for Pedestrians" in the Fall 2020 Project Update presentation slides produced by the Department of Transportation & Environmental Services, apparently this was voted down by less than a majority vote in a recent virtual online poll.

We support Vision Zero and the concept of Complete Streets. In our view, the fact that it would be "Safest for pedestrians" to restrict that section of the access road to emergency vehicles should speak for itself. Many of these pedestrians are attempting to visit the Memorial, and should not have to contend with motorists who are rushing to evade the traffic light at the intersection.

*Page 1 of 2 Pages*



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We were particularly pleased to have been informed that T&ES revised the concept that was to be presented to the Council in February which was designed and planned not only to legitimate the cut-through, but to make the primary purpose of the access road a cut through and give priority over vehicles entering the Memorial off Callahan Drive has been reversed and now motorists visiting the Memorial are given priority. We appreciate that, after our objection, an adjustment was made to provide for traffic calming midway through the short-cut. That said, we see no legitimate reason why the short-cut should exist. The King-Callahan-Russell intersection should be like any other: motorists should wait for the light, and then pass through the intersection.

Finally, although it is not common knowledge, the traffic island at this intersection is part of the National Historic Landmark designation that the Memorial enjoys, not only for the building itself, but for the terraced landscaping from the base of the building to the traffic island. This is the only Olmstead Brothers landscaping in the City of Alexandria. As designed a century ago, it was meant to be a pedestrian-friendly and safe access to and from the George Washington Masonic National Memorial. We are committed to working with the City's agenda for making upper King Street safer and more welcoming for pedestrians. It is and will remain our position that the safest option for pedestrians should be implemented.

Respectfully,

George D. Seghers  
Executive Director

The George Washington Masonic National Memorial Association, Inc.