



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** FEBRUARY 1, 2022

**TO:** THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** JAMES F. PARAJON, CITY MANAGER /s/

**DOCKET TITLE:**

Consideration of a Resolution to Support a Grant Application to the Transportation-Land Use Connections (TLC) program at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG). [ROLL-CALL VOTE]

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**ISSUE:** Consideration of a grant application for the Transportation-Land Use Connections (TLC) Program of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) to support Safe Routes to School program initiatives.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the City Council:

1. Approve a Resolution supporting the submission of grant applications by February 21 for:
  - a. Up to \$80,000 in funding to develop designs for crossing improvements recommended through the City's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program.
  - b. Up to \$60,000 in funding to conduct SRTS walk audits for Ferdinand T. Day Elementary, George Washington Middle, Francis Hammond Middle, and Alexandria City High School; and
2. Authorize the City Manager to apply for TLC funding through the MWCOG and enter into any agreements with MWCOG to accept and implement the grants.

**BACKGROUND:** MWCOG's TLC Program provides short-term consultant services to local jurisdictions for small planning and design projects that promote mixed-use, walkable communities and support a variety of transportation alternatives. The program provides \$30,000 to \$60,000 in consultant assistance for planning projects, and up to \$80,000 in consultant assistance for design projects. If funded, project award would occur in Spring 2022, and the planning and design phases of these projects would last from Fall 2022 to June 2023. Grant applications to the FY 2023 TLC program are due February 21.

In 2017, the City conducted Safe Routes to School walk audits for the City's elementary and K-8 schools with

parents, administrators, and safety specialists to identify improvements for students walking or bicycling to or from school. The final walk audit reports included approximately 250 infrastructure recommendations near these schools. Since the audits were completed, the City has made significant progress on the walk audit recommendations. As of 2021, roughly half of the 250 recommendations are either complete or in progress.

**DISCUSSION:** The City is proposing to request funding for two projects that would support the following strategies in the Alexandria Mobility Plan:

- Create a safe, well-maintained, and comfortable walking and biking environment.
- Build out a continuous, connected, and accessible pedestrian network that enables people of all ages and abilities to move safely and comfortably.
- Upgrade or install infrastructure that increases the accessibility of City streets and public spaces for people of all ages and abilities.

The proposed projects also support the Vision Zero Action Plan, which was adopted by Council in 2017, and includes goals to build safer streets for everyone and accelerate safety improvements as part of the City's Safe Routes to School Program.

Both projects would address the following MWCOG Transportation Planning Board priorities:

- *Multimodal Transportation Options:* The TLC Program seeks projects that support a variety of travel choices, particularly those that reduce dependence on driving. Such options include bicycle and pedestrian facilities, transit alternatives, options for people with disabilities, Safe Routes to School enhancements, and freight improvements.
- *Access for Low-Income and Minority Communities:* The TLC Program encourages applications focused on areas with high concentrations of low-income and minority populations.

#### *Project 1: Safe Routes to School Crossing Improvements*

This project would design curb extensions, pedestrian refuge areas, and crosswalk improvements near elementary and K-8 schools throughout Alexandria. These infrastructure improvements are intended to create safer crossing opportunities for schoolchildren and families and encourage more students to walk to school.

The proposed project would implement some of the 2017 recommendations by designing improvements at intersections near elementary and K-8 schools throughout Alexandria. The improvements could include curb extensions, median refuges, and improved crosswalks at as many locations as allotted funding allows at John Adams Elementary, Cora Kelly Elementary, Patrick Henry K-8 School, Naomi Brooks Elementary, and Jefferson-Houston K-8 School.

In June 2021, City Council authorized the City Manager to apply for Transportation Alternatives (TA) funding for this project from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). However, VDOT changed its application requirements with little notice before the application deadline, forcing the City to abandon its application due to additional time and funding that would be needed to meet the new requirements. This TLC-funded project would produce detailed design plans which the City could use to support future grant applications for construction funding.

#### *Project 2: Safe Routes to School Walk Audits: Phase 2*

The initial phase of walk audits focused on elementary and K-8 schools because small children are more susceptible to injury if involved in a traffic crash. The proposed project would include comprehensive safety audits at areas around the remaining schools - Ferdinand T. Day Elementary, George Washington Middle, Francis Hammond Middle, and Alexandria City High School. The final deliverable would be reports for each school with detailed recommendations for improving mobility, access, and safety for students walking or biking to school.

Because it opened in 2018 after the walk audits were completed, Ferdinand T. Day Elementary School is the only public elementary school in Alexandria that does not have a walk audit report with safety recommendations. Additionally, no comprehensive pedestrian and bicycle safety assessment has been performed for the City's middle schools and high school campuses. While improvements have been completed on an ad hoc basis near these schools, a set of clear recommendations would provide staff a blueprint from which to work to improve safety for all ACPS students.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** TLC program projects do not require a local match, and MWCOG staff conduct procurement activities and manage the project consultant in collaboration with City staff. However, City staff time will be required in both project phases. Once the design is complete, the City will leverage increased project readiness to compete with future grant opportunities to construct additional phases.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Resolution
2. Transportation Commission Letter of Support

**STAFF:**

Emily A. Baker, Deputy City Manager

Yon Lambert, Director, T&ES

Hillary Orr, Deputy Director of Transportation, T&ES

Christopher Ziemann, Division Chief, Transportation Planning, T&ES

Alex Carroll, Complete Streets Program Manager, T&ES