Legislation Details (With Text)

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Title:	Consideration of recommendations for the Seminary Road Complete Streets Project.		
Sponsors:			
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Attachments:	1. 19-2239_Attachment 1 - Seminary Road Phase 1-3 Comment Summary and Appendices, 2. 19-2239_Attachment 2 - Seminary Road Traffic and Parking Board June 24 Docket, 3. 19-2239_Attachment 3 - FHWA Countermeasure Summary Sheets for Attachment 2, 4. 19-2239_Attachment 4 - Traffic and Parking Board June 24 Meeting Minutes, 5. 19-2239_Attachment 5 - Compiled Community Feedback, 6. 19-2239_Attachment 6 - Appeal of the Traffic and Parking Board Decision, 7. 19-2239_Attachment 7 - Transportation Commission Letter to Mayor & City Council, 8. 19-2239_Attachment 8 - Alexandria Fire Department Comments on the Seminary Road Project, 9. 19-2239_Attachment 9 - Presentation Seminary Road v1, 10. 19-2239_Alexandria City Council Seminary Memo September 2019, 11. 19-2239_After items:Seminary Rd		

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: SEPTEMBER 9, 2019

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:
Consideration of recommendations for the Seminary Road Complete Streets Project.

ISSUE: What Seminary Road Complete Streets project elements to approve?

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council (1) concur with the recommendations of the Traffic and Parking Board in regard to the Seminary Road Complete Streets project including the addition of two HAWK signals along Seminary Road, and (2) deny the appeal of the Traffic and Parking Board decision in regard to the Seminary Road Complete Streets Project.

BACKGROUND: On June 24th, 2019, the Traffic and Parking Board considered multiple alternative traffic control plans for Seminary Road, and made a recommendation to maintain the existing four motor vehicle lanes and install two HAWK signals for traffic control. The Director of T&ES has deferred a final decision on that recommendation to City Council, and a group of residents has filed an appeal of that recommendation to ask that Council consider another alternative. Council will consider both the recommendation of the Traffic and Parking Board and the residents' appeal on September 14.

Seminary Road between Kenmore Avenue and North Quaker Lane is scheduled to be repaved no later than October this year. The City's Complete Streets Policy directs staff to use routine maintenance as an opportunity to consider changes that improve safety and convenience for all roadway users. Seminary Road is a key corridor in the City of Alexandria's transportation network. Safety and mobility improvements are recommended in the City's Vision Zero Action Plan and Transportation Master Plan. Because of these recommendations and policies, staff initiated a process to get a better understanding of the community's concerns with this roadway and discuss design options for improved safety.

DISCUSSION: In 2018, City staff initiated the Seminary Road Complete Streets Project. The project study area encompasses Seminary Road between Kenmore Avenue and North Quaker Lane, which are the limits of the roadway resurfacing project. In Fall 2018, staff was informed of a project by Transurban, the company constructing and operating the I-395 Express Lanes, that could impact traffic along this segment of roadway. Staff put the project on hold while Transurban collected data and provided more details to the City and Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) regarding its evaluation of allowing High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes to exit at Seminary Road. Considering the potential changes to traffic along the corridor and existing traffic counts that showed higher traffic volumes between Kenmore Avenue and North Howard Street, staff reduced the project scope to focus on the roadway between North Howard Street and Quaker Lane.

Although Transurban and VDOT still have not concluded the analysis related to the HOT conversion (an updated schedule is forthcoming in October), staff incorporated a conservative traffic growth factor into the Seminary Road Complete Streets project analysis in order to allow the City project to resume in Spring 2019 (when three design alternatives were presented to the community). If the city chooses to further delay paving of Seminary Road in order to wait for the final Transurban/VDOT traffic analysis, the City could do so. However, neither VDOT nor Transurban have provided an updated schedule. If Seminary Road is not repaved in FY 2020 the City risks $290,000 in state Primary Extension grant funding allocated for the work. Additionally, staff expects the roadway to continue to deteriorate which may require more expensive repair.

For the section between North Howard Street and North Quaker Lane (which is the area of revised scope), staff originally considered three design alternatives, which are described below:

- Alternative 1: Slightly narrow existing travel lanes and slightly modify signals
    - *Lane configuration*: Maintain four travel lanes, two in each direction, and narrow the center lanes to discourage speeding.
    - *Safety improvements*: Minor signal improvements at Howard and Quaker to enhance safety at these intersections.
    - *Filling the sidewalk gap*: This alternative does not allow space to be allocated to filling the sidewalk gap on the north side of the road between the Old Post Office and approximately Zabriskie Drive.

- Alternative 2: Remove one eastbound travel lane, install bike lanes and pedestrian crossing improvements and fill the sidewalk gap
    - *Lane configuration*: Maintain two westbound travel lanes and one eastbound travel lane and repurpose the remaining roadway width for bicycle lanes.
    - *Safety improvements*: New crossings could be introduced as well as signal changes that enhance corridor safety.
    - *Filling the sidewalk gap*: The sidewalk gap on the north side could be temporarily filled with a walking space in the west bound bicycle lane. A permanent, approximately 6-foot-wide, sidewalk could be designed for the westbound portion and the bike lane.

- Alternative 3: Remove a travel lane in both directions, install a center turn lane, bike lanes and pedestrian crossing improvements
    - *Lane configuration*: Reconfigure the roadway to have one travel lane in each direction with a center, two-way left turn lane and repurpose the remaining roadway width for buffered bicycle lanes for most of the corridor.
    - *Safety improvements*: New crossings and traffic signal safety enhancements were proposed for multiple locations along the corridor.
    - *Filling the sidewalk gap*: A temporary treatment during the repaving project could accommodate an in-road sidewalk and a climbing bicycle lane that could be implemented for the uphill, westbound direction. A permanent sidewalk could be built to approximately 8 feet, inclusive of a buffer, with either the eastbound bicycle lane merged with traffic and converted to shared lane markings or removing the center turn lane where the demand for left-turns is lower.

Additional details on each of the three alternatives is provided in Attachment 1 and 2. Attachment 3 shows summary sheets of federal guidance for the safety countermeasures included in each alternative and the staff recommendation.

After considering the initial round of public input - which favored Alternative 1 but included support for multimodal improvements - staff recommended to the Traffic and Parking Board at its June 24 meeting a hybrid approach between Alternatives 1 and 2. The goal of this hybrid was to focus on the missing sidewalk (which is called out in adopted City transportation plans) while acknowledging the support for Alternative 1. The hybrid included:

- Staff Hybrid Recommendation: Maintain travel lanes except where the sidewalk is missing. Fill the sidewalk gap and remove one eastbound travel lane for this segment of roadway. Install pedestrian crossing improvements at some locations.
    - *Lane configuration*: Maintain four travel lanes (two in each direction) for most of the corridor. Between St. Stephens Road and Zabriskie Drive, maintain two westbound travel lanes and one eastbound travel lane. Use the remaining roadway width to increase the buffer space for pedestrians on the sidewalk on both sides of the roadway.
    - *Safety improvements*: New crossings and traffic signal safety enhancements were proposed for multiple locations along the corridor.
    - *Filling the sidewalk gap*: A temporary treatment during the repaving project could accommodate an in-road sidewalk with a vertical protective buffer for pedestrians. A permanent sidewalk could be built to approximately 8 feet, inclusive of a buffer.

At the June 24, 2019 meeting of the Traffic and Parking Board, staff recommended the hybrid option. Staff also reviewed the original design alternatives, community engagement summary and project process/timeline. The

board voted 3 to 2 to reject the staff recommendation and instead opted to maintain four travel lanes, close to Alternative 1. It also recommended the installation of two HAWK signals with one located at Chapel Hill Drive and one between St. Stephens Road and Fort Williams Parkway. Meeting minutes are available in Attachment 4 with additional comments in Attachment 5.

In consideration of the significant public interest (and to provide clarity of process in final decision-making) staff had previously stated the Board recommendation would be taken to City Council for its consideration. Therefore, the Board decision is now before Council as the Staff Recommendation.

Subsequent to the Traffic & Parking Board meeting, staff received an appeal to the Traffic and Board decision (Attachment 6) seeking that staff present a side-by-side comparison between the Board recommendation and Alternative 3, which is the 4 to 3 lane road reconfiguration and associated multimodal improvements.

Staff asks that Council consider the Traffic and Parking Board recommendation of the installation of two HAWK signals at Chapel Hill Drive and at the bus stop pair for Beth El Hebrew Congregation with all appropriate and associated markings and signage. These locations facilitate safer crossings for transit riders and have safety benefits summarized in Attachment 3. The Beth El location is particularly important because it allows for pedestrians to safely transition to the south side of the road to continue along the sidewalk to avoid having to cross after the sidewalk ends on the northern side. Each activation of the HAWKs would result in a pedestrian phase, which holds all traffic, of approximately 13 seconds, based on typical crossing distance signal timing. Staff does not anticipate that the activation of the HAWKs will occur to the extent that it will have any predictable and regular delay to vehicular traffic.

Staff is also recommending a lane reconfiguration at the intersection of Seminary and N Quaker Lane for the eastbound approach to the intersection. The existing conditions include a left turn-only lane and a lane that is for through movements and right turns. Staff recommends that the configuration change to a left-turn and through lane and a right turn-only lane. This recommendation is a result of comments from the community about traffic queue lengths at the intersection and the counts for right turns in the peak periods. Staff has evaluated this improvement with traffic modeling, and it has shown to decrease overall delay at the intersection by approximately 14 seconds.

FISCAL IMPACT: In the FY 2019 Capital Improvement Program (CIP), Seminary Road (from I-395 to N Quaker Lane) was estimated to cost $625,000 for street resurfacing. The City sought and was approved for $290,000 in FY 2020 State Primary Extension grant funding for a portion of this work. If the work is not completed in FY 2020, the City risks the state funding which was obligated for use in FY 2020.

Further deferral of maintenance on this roadway may increase costs as the pavement condition of the street continues to deteriorate and repair costs will escalate based on a need for additional base repair, patching, and a deeper milling at the time of repaving.

The recommendation of the installation of two HAWK signals and associated curb ramps would range from approximately $90,000 to $200,000 depending on site-specific considerations and utility needs. This project is funded through the FY 2019 and FY 2020 Complete Streets CIP project with monies designated in the *Roadway Resurfacing Complete Streets Projects - Design / Construction* and *Pedestrian Signals and Technology Citywide* categories. Other associated striping work and signage are included in the maintenance budget and expenses for the project.

ATTACHMENTS:
Attachment 1: Seminary Road Phase 1-3 Comment Summary and Appendices

Attachment 2: Seminary Road Traffic and Parking Board June 24 Docket
Attachment 3: FHWA Countermeasure Summary Sheets for Attachment 2
Attachment 4: Traffic and Parking Board June 24 Meeting Minutes
Attachment 5: Compiled Community Feedback
Attachment 6: Appeal of the Traffic and Parking Board Decision
Attachment 7: Transportation Commission Letter to Mayor and City Council
Attachment 8: Alexandria Fire Department Comments on the Seminary Road Project
Attachment 9: Presentation

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