

1. Concur with the recommendation of the Traffic & Parking Board to implement roadway safety design changes on South Pickett Street to improve mobility, access, and safety for all road users; and
2. Deny the appeal of the Traffic & Parking Board decision as it relates to the South Pickett Street Corridor Improvements Project.

BACKGROUND: South Pickett Street east of Edsall Road is mostly a four-lane undivided roadway with intermittent on-street parking and a posted speed limit of 35 MPH. DASH route 32 provides transit service along the corridor every 30 minutes during peak hours and hourly during off-peak hours. There are also multiple ACPS bus stops along the corridor. South Pickett Street west of Edsall Road is largely a two-lane roadway with bicycle lanes, on-street parking, and a 25 MPH speed limit.

The corridor provides access between South Van Dorn Street and Duke Street in the Eisenhower East/Landmark Van Dorn neighborhood. There are a mix of land uses, including lower-density commercial buildings as well as high-density residential neighborhoods. Destinations that front the corridor include high-density multi-family communities, lower-density retail and commercial uses. The corridor also provides access to Armistead Boothe Park, Backlick Run Trail, and the Cameron Station neighborhood.

The City has adopted recommendations for South Pickett Street as part of the Eisenhower West Small Area Plan and the Alexandria Mobility Plan. The City performed over a year of community engagement in 2014-2015 and 2020-2021, respectively. Both adopted plans include recommendations to improve multimodal safety and access on Eisenhower Avenue (Attachment 1). Other applicable plans include the Vision Zero Action Plan, adopted in 2017, and the Complete Streets Policy, adopted in 2014.

The City initiated the South Pickett Street project as part of a technical assistance grant awarded through the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Transportation-Land Use Connections Program. The project team performed an existing conditions assessment, community outreach, conceptual design, and traffic analysis between October 2023 and July 2024. Notable takeaways include a high number of crashes (over 85 in 5 years), unsafe vehicle speeds, and community concern about speed and lack of pedestrian or bicycle accommodations. A community engagement summary is provided in Attachment 2.

On July 22, 2024, the Traffic & Parking Board (Board) considered and recommended approval of a staff proposal for roadway design changes on South Pickett Street between Duke Street and Edsall Road as part of the South Pickett Corridor Improvements Project (Attachment 3). The changes include removing one travel lane in each direction (except at the two major intersections) to allow for the installation of a left-turn lane, pedestrian crossing islands, and protected bicycle lanes. The recommended changes also include the removal of up to 10 on-street parking spaces to support seamless travel lane transitions and pedestrian and bicycle safety. The Board also approved a speed limit reduction from 35 MPH to 25 MPH. The recommended changes are consistent with the City's adopted plans and policies as well as industry guidance and best practices on safe roadway design, including the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Roadway Safety Strategy.

DISCUSSION: On August 2, a group of residents filed an appeal of the Board's July 22 recommendation, requesting that City Council reverse or suspend the decision to implement the design changes (Attachment 4). City Council will consider both the Board's recommendation and the residents' appeal, voting on this matter at the November 16, 2024, Council public hearing. While a letter defining the concerns with the Board's recommendation was not provided with the appeal, a community call to action was issued that highlights the primary concerns with the project, namely the potential for additional traffic on Cameron Station Boulevard and impacts to businesses (Attachment 5).

The project team has evaluated this concern. The major signalized intersections at either end of the corridor (South Pickett Street/Duke Street and South Pickett Street/Edsall Road) would remain largely unchanged with the Board's recommendation, resulting in little to no change in vehicle delay. Due to the lack of increase in time savings from using Cameron Station Boulevard and the fact that Cameron Station Boulevard is a longer, more circuitous route, there would be no incentive for drivers to use Cameron Station Boulevard as an alternative route more than they do today. Therefore, the project team does not anticipate a notable increase in traffic on Cameron Station Boulevard. Staff hosted a virtual open house to respond to resident concerns and answer questions on October 17.

During similar roadway reconfiguration projects on Seminary Road and King Street in 2016 and 2019, respectively, some community members also cited concerns regarding cut-through traffic on neighborhood streets. However, based on traffic data collected before and after project implementation, City staff evaluated outcomes of both projects and found that concerns related to cut-through traffic did not materialize. The project team commits to performing a post-project evaluation of the South Pickett Street project by monitoring traffic volumes and speeds on Cameron Station Boulevard. Staff would also work with the community to perform any mitigation that may be warranted.

There is not data to support the presumption that this project would have a negative impact on businesses. Patron access to these businesses on South Pickett Street and in Cameron Station is expected to continue with minimal to no changes to vehicle delay. Residents would have additional options for accessing these businesses, either by walking, biking, scooting, or taking the bus. Trucks would also continue to be able to access their respective destinations, including Home Depot and the auto dealerships. The recommended design would, however, discourage trucks servicing the auto dealerships from parking on South Pickett Street as they do today, which is already not permitted. Instead, trucks are encouraged to service the auto dealerships on site per their approved site plans. The recommended design would also make truck access somewhat easier, since the presence of the protected bicycle lane between the travel lane and the curb would enable wider right turns, and the proposed left-turn lane would provide trucks a place to queue without obstructing other traffic.

This docket item for the November 12, 2024, Legislative Meeting is a staff presentation regarding this matter. At the November 16, 2024, Council Public Hearing there will be a public hearing on the appeal, after which Council will decide whether to retain, remove, or change the roadway safety design changes on South Pickett Street pursuant to City Code § 5-8-6(c).

FISCAL IMPACT: Depending on the final design, the project cost is estimated to be approximately \$500,000, which would be funded through existing funds from the Complete Streets CIP Program.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Adopted Plan Recommendations (Excerpts)
2. Community Engagement Summary
3. July 22 Traffic & Parking Board Docket Memo for South Pickett Street Project and Additional Community Comments Received for the July 22 Public Hearing
4. Petition to Appeal the July 22 Traffic & Parking Board Decision
5. Community Association Call to Action & Town Hall Presentation
6. Presentation

STAFF:

Emily A. Baker, P.E., Deputy City Manager
Hillary Orr, Deputy Director, Transportation Planning & Mobility, T&ES
Christopher Ziemann, Division Chief, T&ES

Alexandria Carroll, Complete Streets Program Manager, T&ES