



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

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MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** SEPTEMBER 2, 2015

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

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

**DOCKET TITLE:**

Consideration of Acceptance of a Subgrant from the Department of Homeland Security, Urban Area Security Initiative to Install Backup Power Systems at Critical Traffic Signals.

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**ISSUE:** Consideration of acceptance of a subgrant from the Department of Homeland Security on behalf of the National Capital Region (NCR) to purchase battery backup power systems at critical traffic signals.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council:

- (1) Authorize the City Manager to accept a subgrant from the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grant program; and
- (2) Authorize the City Manager to execute all the necessary documents that may be required.

**BACKGROUND:** Traffic signal engineers across the region have identified gaps in traffic signal power backup along numerous regional evacuation routes. The City of Alexandria has no battery backup power systems installed at any of its traffic signals, so during power outages the current practice is to deploy portable gas powered generators to signals without power. Since the majority of the traffic signals in the City do not have a generator transfer switch, extra time is required to disconnect the electrical service and connect the generator. This reduces the efficiency of staff responding to widespread outages.

The region has an interest in the resiliency of traffic signals because an interruption in electrical power at a key traffic signal can have major regional traffic impacts. This is especially true during emergency evacuations.

**DISCUSSION:** The City of Alexandria was notified on June 3, 2015 by the District of Columbia Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (DCHSEMA) which serves a regional grant coordinator role that

the City was eligible for a \$338,000 subgrant through the UASI program to supply battery backup power systems at critical intersections. The subgrant would be available in FY2016 and does not require a City match requirement.

The National Capital Region received Urban Area Security Initiative grant funds from the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to support regional efforts to prepare for and respond to disasters, including terrorism. These funds were allocated to jurisdictions by the NCR Homeland Security Program Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) and Senior Policy Group. The DCHSEMA sent a grant application to DHS on behalf of the entire National Capital Region.

In Alexandria, this funding will provide battery backup power systems at 11 critical intersections on Duke Street, Washington Street, King Street, Seminary Road and South Van Dorn Street. Additionally, it will provide generator transfer switches at 189 intersections enabling intersections to swiftly accept generators. This will allow traffic signals to remain operational during power outages.

The seamless transition to battery backup power improves the safety of all modes of travel including transit, vehicular, bicycles and pedestrians. This will reduce the need to dispatch police officers to direct traffic at critical locations when power outages occur. The battery backup power systems are 70 percent lighter and much smaller than conventional batteries and also allows for easier maintenance. The battery backup system will provide ethernet connectivity with the capability of sending alarms to alert maintenance personnel of power outages.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** The City is responsible for the normal administrative costs associated with this \$338,000 subgrant, including financial and reporting oversight provided by the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services, as well as the Office of Management and Budget, and the Finance Department. There is no cash match requirement. T&ES will be responsible for installing the backup power systems and will monitor the systems once in place. Installation and monitoring can be absorbed through T&ES' approved operating budget. If Council approves the subgrant, it will be included in an upcoming supplemental appropriation.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

None

**STAFF:**

Emily A. Baker, Acting Deputy City Manager

Yon Lambert, Director, T&ES

Earl Cook, Chief, Alexandria Police Department

Sandra Marks, Deputy Director, T&ES/Transportation

Bob Garbacz, Division Chief, T&ES/Traffic Engineering

Matt Melkerson, Division Chief, T&ES/Traffic Operations

Aaron Hope, Acting Emergency Management Coordinator/Fire

Megan Cummings, Acting Division Chief Administrative Services

Maha Gilini, Signal System Engineer, T&ES/Traffic Engineering