



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 3, 2019

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

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

DOCKET TITLE:

Consideration of a Resolution to Temporarily Modify Hours and High Occupancy Vehicle Restrictions for Commuter Lanes along Washington Street, East Abingdon Road and West Abingdon Road. [ROLL-CALL VOTE]

ISSUE: Whether to temporarily modify hours and high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) restrictions on Washington Street, East Abingdon Road and West Abingdon Road during the Washington Area Metropolitan Transportation Authority Summer Platform Improvement Project.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council adopt the resolution (Attachment 1) to temporarily change restrictions and hours, which will revert to normal operations after the Metrorail Platform Improvement Project. The following changes will be in place from May 20 to no later than September 30:

1. Change Washington Street HOV lanes from HOV 2 to HOV 3.
2. Extend northbound Washington Street HOV lane hours to 6 AM to 10AM from the current 7AM to 9AM.
3. Extend southbound Washington Street HOV lane hours to 3PM to 7PM from the current 4PM to 6PM.
4. Change East and West Abingdon Drive high occupancy vehicle lanes from HOV 2 to HOV 3.
5. Extend northbound East Abingdon Drive HOV lane hours to 6AM to 10AM from the current 7AM to 9AM.
6. Extend southbound West Abingdon Drive HOV lane hours to 3PM to 7PM from the current 4PM to

6PM.

BACKGROUND: The Washington Area Metropolitan Transportation Authority (WMATA) will close all Metrorail Stations citywide between May 25 and September 2 as part of the Platform Improvement Project. During that period, WMATA will run shuttle buses with very high frequency between the King Street Old Town Metrorail Station and Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport using Washington Street. In addition to the shuttle, there will be additional bus service on Washington Street to enhance service on the 10A, 10E, and 11Y routes. The shuttles, which will include articulated buses with a capacity of 120 persons per vehicle, will allow movement of large numbers of people through this congested corridor. WMATA has requested changes to the HOV lane requirements to increase person throughput (Attachment 2).

DISCUSSION: Section 10-3-2 of City Code states that City Council designates by resolution the hours of operation and occupancy requirements for high occupancy vehicle lanes. Therefore, changing the existing requirements, even temporarily, will require Council action.

Currently, all HOV lanes along Washington Street and East and West Abingdon Drive are HOV 2. Northbound lanes operate between 7AM and 9AM, and southbound lanes operate between 4PM and 6PM. In non-HOV hours, the Washington Street portion reverts to parking in most locations. This proposal includes three changes to Washington Street and East and West Abingdon Drives:

- Northbound lanes will operate from 6AM to 10AM.
- Southbound lanes will operate from 3PM to 7PM.
- Both Northbound and Southbound HOV lanes will move from a minimum occupancy of two persons to a minimum occupancy of three persons.

These changes are necessary to help Metrobus and DASH buses move through Washington Street during the summer Platform Improvement Project. During that time, both DASH and WMATA will move displaced Metro riders by bus. The shuttles and bus lines planned to use Washington Street include:

- **Metrorail Blue Line Replacement Shuttle** - This shuttle will run between King Street-Old Town Metrorail Station, and Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport via Washington Street north of King Street. Headways will be once every five minutes during the enhanced HOV lane periods and may move up to 860 persons per hour. Should buses move up to once every two minutes, as both WMATA and DASH can do if platforms overcrowd, buses will carry up to 2,000 people an hour. This represents a fivefold increase in bus travel from what it represents today. Buses will run from 5:30 AM to midnight, and will use general purpose lanes when HOV lanes are not open.
- **Enhanced 10A and 10E**, which will run on Washington Street both south and north on King Street.
- **Enhanced 11Y service (Old Town to National Mall)**, which will run on Washington Street both south and north on King Street. This bus service will be especially important for tourists, given that it runs from Old Town Alexandria to the National Mall in DC.

The changes will also allow for an increase in carpooling, which will assist moving commuters and travelers from outside the City through the corridor.

Should changes be implemented, signage will need to be temporarily modified or replaced. HOV lane hours

will revert to existing conditions after the platform improvement project is complete, which is expected by September 2. A September 30 date is included in the recommended Council Action so as to provide ongoing legal authority for these changes in the not expected event that WMATA's project exceeds its planned September 2 date. Staff is coordinating with the Alexandria Police Department on enforcement coordination, including additional resources to enforce parking restrictions.

Staff has conducted outreach on the project via the ongoing Platform Improvements Project effort, which has included citizen surveys that have generated over 3,200 comments and multiple outreach initiatives. The changes have been included in the City's mitigation plan and have been identified in multiple media reports. Staff distributed fliers (Attachment 4) to occupied dwellings and businesses along the Washington Street/Abingdon corridor, between Church Street and Slaters Lane. In addition, staff has met with several different stakeholder groups to discuss the overall project including the proposed HOV changes (Attachment 5).

The project was noticed by sign and discussed at the Traffic and Parking Board on March 25, 2019. The Board approved the changes by a vote of 4 to 2. The two Boardmembers who voted against the changes had concerns with increasing the occupancy requirement from HOV 2 to HOV 3. However, they were generally supportive of the changes to the hours.

FISCAL IMPACT: If approved, the City will spend no more than \$15,000 on sign replacements, road paint, and other measures that increase capacity. The City will also increase enforcement of new HOV restrictions as part of the entire Platform Improvement Project. City staff is budgeting enforcement expenses at \$700,000 and expects 80% (\$560,000) to be reimbursed by a grant from the Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transit. The remaining \$140,000 will come from General Fund monies set aside to support the City's response to the platform improvement project.

STAFF:

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ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Resolution

Attachment 2: Letter from Washington Area Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Attachment 3: Map

Attachment 4: Flier

Attachment 5: Outreach Summary