



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

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MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** MARCH 17, 2021

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

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

**DOCKET TITLE:**

Consideration of a Two-Way to One-Way (southbound) Conversion of the Access Street in Front of the George Washington Masonic National Memorial.[ROLL-CALL VOTE]

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**ISSUE:** Should the access street in front of the George Washington Masonic National Memorial convert from two-way to one-way (southbound) to enable implementation of the King-Callahan-Russell intersection safety and congestion mitigation improvements project?

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council approve the resolution (Attachment 1) for conversion of the access street from two-way operation to one-way (southbound) operation.

**BACKGROUND:** Consideration of this conversion is the only Council-level action necessary to implement the King-Callahan-Russell Intersection Improvement Project, which was approved by the Traffic & Parking Board in December. After considering the community input received throughout the fall and the resulting positive testimony at the public hearing on this project, the Board unanimously approved a motion intended to mitigate traffic congestion and improve safety for people walking to the King Street Metro station (Attachment 2).

This request originated when the Federal Transit Administration awarded the City a \$1.2 million grant to improve safety at this intersection based on community-generated concepts from the Council-adopted Transportation Master Plan. Community engagement began in 2015. Staff in 2016 to 2017 collected and analyzed data and developed options for consideration. However, delays arose due to the combination of staff capacity and implementation of the King Street Metro Improvements Project and the 2019 Metro Summer Shutdown. In 2019, staff collected updated data, conducted a detailed traffic study using different modeling tools and prepared reports comparing the existing conditions with the various options.

Staff in 2020 kick-started the public outreach process. In February 2020, staff presented at a Rosemont Civic

Association meeting to provide project updates, answer questions, and hear community concerns. In March 2020, staff met with neighbors at the intersection to discuss signal timing and options. Shortly after this meeting, the COVID-19 crisis hit, and public meetings were put on hold. In October 2020, staff held multiple meetings with neighborhood leadership and stakeholder groups prior to kicking off a virtual open house period that ran from October 19, 2020, to November 9, 2020. The community spoke about their concerns during the public comment portion of multiple Traffic and Parking Board meetings in fall 2020, and staff provided oral updates and discussed the project at length with the board. Staff made interim signal timing adjustments requested by the community at the intersection to address some of their immediate concerns. A letter from those residents most involved throughout this process to their neighbors can be viewed in Attachment 3.

**DISCUSSION:** Staff developed several options for the intersection and the access street that connects King Street to the Masonic Memorial. All three options work with the approved operational changes for the intersection. During the virtual open house, the community provided input on changes to the access street to the Masonic Memorial (change the configuration to one-way southbound operation; close the access only to allow emergency vehicles; or make no changes). Slightly more than half (51%) of participants preferred the one-way southbound option, while 38% preferred no changes, and approximately 11% preferred it to be open to emergency vehicles only. The public input summary is found in Attachment 2, page 9.

The proposed one-way configuration addresses the project goals by improving pedestrian safety with a shortened crossing distance and slows vehicles turning through the crosswalk. It also slightly reduces delay and provides options for drivers at the intersection by continuing to permit right-turning vehicles to use this roadway. The Alexandria Fire Department participated on the design review team throughout the planning process and the design satisfies all the department's technical requirements.

In February, staff deferred this docket item to discuss questions and concerns about the staff recommendation with the Masonic Memorial leadership. Staff have worked with the Masonic Memorial leadership to respond to questions and have made minor adjustments to the design plans that address their concerns. Attachment 4 is a letter stating the Masonic Memorial's perspective on the project. Notably, the Masonic Memorial preferred an option to make the access road open to emergency vehicles only. While this would be the safest option for pedestrians, it increases traffic at the intersection and therefore adds delay for motorists. Therefore, since professional traffic engineering staff believe conflicts can be appropriately mitigated, staff recommends the one-way (southbound) alternative to balance pedestrian safety and reduce congestion.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** There is no fiscal impact as this project is funded through grants.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Resolution
2. Traffic and Parking Board Docket Item and Meeting Minutes
3. Letter of Support from Resident Group shared with Staff
4. Letter from George Washington Masonic National Memorial Association
5. Presentation

**STAFF:**

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