



Environmental Policy Commission

February 24, 2014

Thomas "Jay" Johnson, Jr.
Chair, Traffic & Parking Board
City of Alexandria
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Chairman Johnson:

I am writing on behalf of the Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission to ask the Traffic and Parking Board to recommend adoption of traffic calming and pedestrian and bicycling access improvements along King Street, in conjunction with a road resurfacing project. In addition to providing better safety for all modes of transportation, the project would help to achieve the City's Eco-City multi-modal transportation goals by improving access to King Street Metro in this important corridor. We ask the Traffic and Parking Board to endorse the original King Street Complete Streets and traffic calming project proposal, including separate designated bicycle lanes along both sides of King Street for the length of the project. The original proposal best addresses the strong concerns for public safety expressed by Alexandrians.

As you know, City Council adopted a Complete Streets policy almost three years ago, with the explicit goal of getting people out of their cars and encouraging walking and biking. The resolution stated that the City "shall incorporate Complete Streets infrastructure into existing public streets", and noted that streets are a "key public space" directly affecting public health and welfare. The resolution also stated that "Council recognizes the importance of Complete Streets infrastructure," and explicitly included sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and narrow vehicle lanes as part of such infrastructure.

Our commission wrote to the Traffic and Parking Board in November of last year, urging support for the King Street Complete Streets project, including the use of designated bike lanes through the length of the project area. Subsequently, our commission endorsed the compromise King Street Complete Streets project as approved by Transportation & Environmental Services Director Rich Baier in December. We believed the compromise project, while not ideal, would have expanded and improved pedestrian and bicycling access and safety for residents, and complied with Alexandria's Complete Streets policy. Due to strong interest among Alexandria's residents, the consideration process has been extended and community and advisory groups have another opportunity for input.

The primary concern expressed by opponents of the project has been its impact on safety. We believe the project will significantly improve, not reduce, safety along this section of King Street. Transportation research shows that:

- narrowing vehicle lanes results in noticeably slower vehicle speeds¹;

(over)

- almost all accidents involving bicyclists occur in environments in which there is not a bicycle lane on the bicyclist's side of the roadway, with more than two-thirds of bicyclist-vehicle accidents occurring when the bicyclist shared a through lane with a vehicleⁱⁱ;
- the presence of designated bicycle facilities, such as on-road marked bike lanes, is associated with the lowest risk of bicycling injuriesⁱⁱⁱ;
- crash risks on major streets are lower without parked cars and with bike lanes^{iv};
- designated bike lanes increase the likelihood of bicycling^v;
- the likelihood that a pedestrian or bicyclist will be struck by a motorist varies inversely with walking and biking rates^{vi}.

The original King Street Complete Streets project proposal, which includes separate designated bicycle lanes along both sides of the length of the project, will maximize users' safety. We believe the increased safety these lanes would provide for pedestrians and cyclists on a daily basis is more important than the occasional parking inconvenience experienced by a few households. By approving full bike lanes for King Street, the Traffic & Parking Board can make Alexandria safer and more liveable for the entire community, helping residents throughout the area—including those who do not have a car—to live healthier and economically productive lives while minimizing their impact on the environment.

The King Street traffic calming and pedestrian and bicycling expansion project is a critical step in meeting Alexandria's commitment to be an Eco-City. We request that you support the full extent of King Street bike lanes as originally proposed between W. Cedar Street and Janneys Lane.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Scott Barstow
Chair, Environmental Policy Commission

CC: Mayor Bill Euille
Alexandria City Council

ⁱ *Highway Capacity Manual, 2010*. Transportation Research Board, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), and Federal Highway Administration. Transportation Research Board, Washington, D.C., 2010.

ⁱⁱ Hallett, I., Luskin, D., Machemehl, R. 2006. *Evaluation of On-street Bicycle Facilities Added to Existing Roadways*. Center for Transportation Research, The University of Texas at Austin. Austin, Texas.

ⁱⁱⁱ Reynolds, C. et al. 2009. *The impact of transportation infrastructure on bicycling injuries and crashes: a review of the literature*. Environmental Health 2009. 8:47.

^{iv} Teschke, K. et al. 2012. *Route infrastructure and the risk of injuries to bicyclists: A case-crossover study*. American Journal of Public Health. vol. 102, issue 12: 2336-2343.

^v Buehler, R., Pucher, J. 2012. *Cycling to work in 90 large American cities: new evidence on the role of bike paths and lanes*. Transportation. 39:409-432.

^{vi} Jacobsen, P.L. 2003. *Safety in numbers: more walkers and bicyclists, safer walking and bicycling*. Injury Prevention. 9:205-209.