

# *City of Alexandria, Virginia*

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## **MEMORANDUM**

DATE: JUNE 19, 2019

TO: MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

FROM: HILLARY ORR, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, T&ES

SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM # 3 – ITEMS FOR CONSENT

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**ISSUE:** Staff update to Transportation Commission on various ongoing projects.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Commission receive the items for consent.

### **A. DASH Union Agreement**

On May 22, DASH management signed an agreement with the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 689, representing DASH bus drivers, avoiding a strike during the WMATA summer shutdown. Council is slated to ratify the contract in June.

The agreement would make DASH wages and benefits comparable to Metro's. The new agreement will raise starting hourly pay at DASH from \$17 to \$21.32 per hour and top pay from \$29 to \$32.80 per hour. Drivers would also get a 1.5 – 2.75% pay rate increase each year for the next three years. DASH drivers would now be able to reach the top salary level in seven years versus the twenty years it would take under the current pay scale. Under the new agreement, DASH would automatically contribute eight percent of gross wages to full-time drivers' 401(k) retirement accounts. The agreement also includes new measures for post-retirement health care, sick leave cash out, additional vacation days, and employee discipline.

Though City Council's recently adopted FY 2020 budget did not include additional funds for this purpose, Council can make an amendment of allocation outside the budget process.

### **B. Dockless Mobility Pilot Review Process**

The City is approximately half-way through its Dockless Mobility Pilot and presented preliminary data to the Commission last month. Staff has developed the following tentative schedule:

- July – Update to City Council with data reported from the vendors and the process and timeline moving forward

- July/August – Public outreach through various means such as an online survey, focus groups, and intercept surveys. This may also include working with providers on several public education efforts such as events, flyers, etc.
- September/October – Updates to the Transportation Commission, Traffic and Parking Board, the Waterfront Commission, and the business community
- Fall – Pilot evaluation report and staff recommendation for moving forward after the pilot open for comment and feedback
- October – Public Hearing in October on the draft set of recommendations at the Transportation Commission
- November – City Council to consider staff recommendation at a public hearing

Please note that this process is tentative and may change as needed.

### **C. WMATA Metro Platform Improvement Project First Week Review**

Last week, the City provided an [update](#) and sought feedback from the community on the first week of the Metro Platform Improvement Project.

On June 10, Metro also provided an [update](#). Among the key highlights so far:

- Metro is retaining up to 50% of normal rail ridership from closed stations through the shuttle bus operation
- Shuttle buses are moving 21,000-27,000 boardings per day, comparable to the biggest operation of SafeTrack
- DASH Blue Line Shuttles are carrying 6,000 to 7,000 riders per day with up to 100 buses in daily operation
- Bicycle counts on major city trails is up to 80% higher than the same time last year and the water taxis carried 2,274 passengers in the first week
- Travel times on major city north-south streets were generally 15% to 30% higher than usual

### **D. Potomac Yard Metrorail Station Update**

In consultation with Potomac Yard Metrorail Implementation Group (PYMIG), City and Metro staff developed three ideas for providing additional access to the station from the southwest in lieu of the ramp in the current design. These ideas were submitted to the station construction contractor to prepare preliminary pricing and schedule estimates and determine which concepts, if any, could be built within the \$50 million of available state funding. Based on the responses from the contractor received by Metro earlier this month, City and Metro staff analyzed the responses to estimate the total costs associated with each idea. Idea #1, a southwest access pavilion with a bridge to the north entrance would cost approximately \$75 million; Idea #2, a ramp from E. Glebe Road with a moving walkway to the north entrance would cost approximately \$90 million, and Idea #3, a southwest access pavilion with a small mezzanine would cost approximately \$100 million. While either of the first two ideas would likely result in little or no delay to the overall station construction, the third idea could delay the station opening by up to a year.

In a [memorandum to PYMIG](#) on May 31, 2019, the City Manager recommended that the City request that Metro direct its contractor to modify Idea #1 (a southwest entrance pavilion with a bridge to the north entrance, currently estimated to cost \$75 million). Changes would eliminate the escalator from the concept (retaining an elevator and stairs), and make other adjustments, such as a reduced building footprint, with the goal of keeping the cost close to the \$50 million of available state funding.

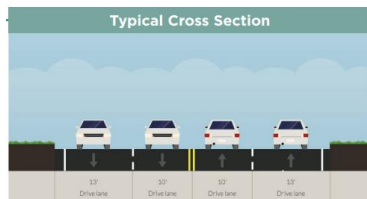
City staff discussed this information at the June 10 PYMIG meeting. PYMIG recommended that the City move forward with refining cost estimates for a Modified Idea #1, as well as refine the cost estimates for the DSUP approved design (extended ramp to E. Glebe Road) in tandem. City Council will hold a public hearing on PYMIG's recommendation as part of its regular meeting on June 22 which begins at 9:30 a.m. in City Hall (301 King St.). City Council is scheduled to further consider the issue and take action at its regular meeting in City Hall on June 25, which begins at 7 p.m.

### **E. Seminary Road Complete Streets Project**

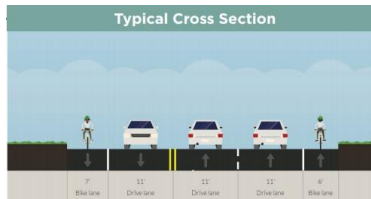
The City held a public meeting for the Seminary Road Complete Streets project on May 30 to present the staff recommendation for the corridor and to solicit feedback from the community. The presentation and meeting materials are available on the [Seminary Road Complete Streets Project page](#). A link to the recording of the meeting is also available on that page.

Staff initially considered three design alternatives for Seminary Road between North Howard Street and North Quaker Lane:

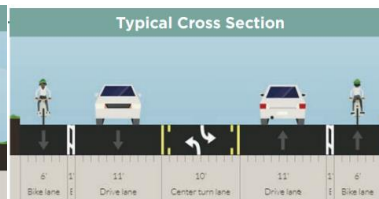
Alternative 1



Alternative 2



Alternative 3

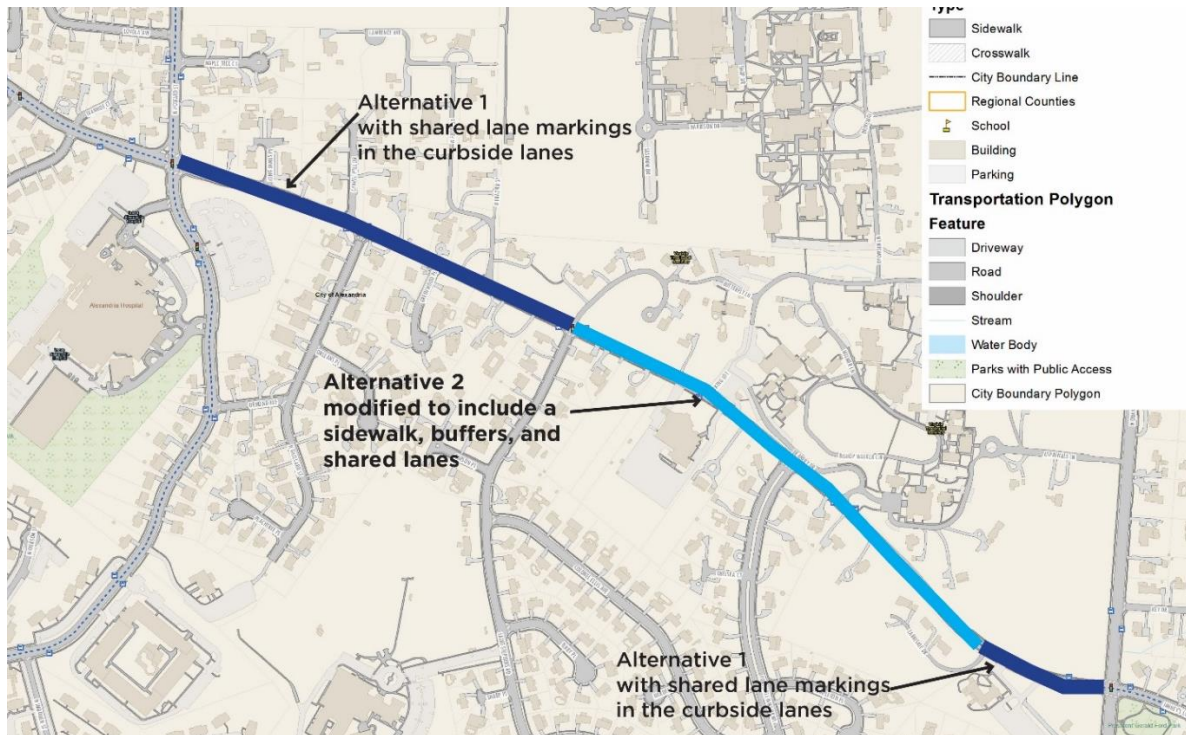


After considering the public input, data, and the City's adopted plans and policies, staff developed a recommendation for a hybrid approach between Alternative 1 and Alternative 2. These specific changes are listed below:

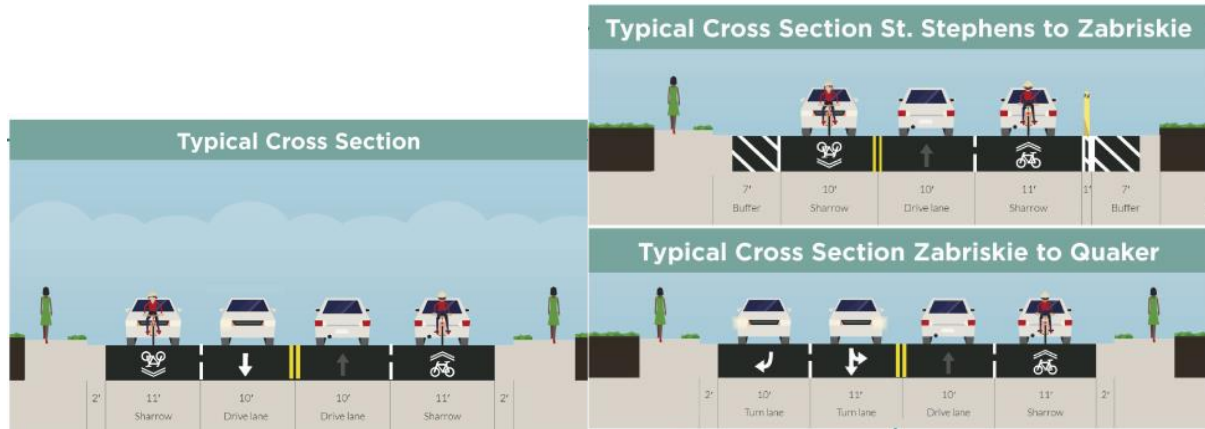
- Eliminate a travel lane in the eastbound direction on Seminary Road between St. Stephens Road and Zabriskie Drive (a distance of less than ½ mile) to allow space for construction of a sidewalk on the north side of Seminary Road where one is currently missing
  - Convert the second eastbound lane to a right-turn only on the approach to St. Stephens
- Install a pedestrian hybrid beacon, or HAWK signal, at two locations:
  - On Seminary Road at Chapel Hill Drive

- On Seminary Road between St. Stephens Road and Fort Williams Parkway
- Remove the slip lane on the southbound Howard Street approach to Seminary Road
- At the intersection of Seminary Road and North Quaker Lane:
  - Remove the pedestrian-only signal phase and install a Leading Pedestrian Interval (LPI) with No Turn on Red restrictions
  - Convert the existing lane configuration (left-turn only lane and through/right-turn lane) to a left-turn/through lane and right-turn only lane

**Staff Recommendation: Overview**



The proposed typical cross section for Howard Street to St. Stephens Street (Modified Alternative 1) is to the left below. To the right is the typical cross sections for St. Stephens Road to Quaker Lane.



## Guiding Plans and Policies

Several Council-adopted City plans and policies were considered throughout the project process and when building the alternatives and Staff Recommendation. The Staff Recommendation meets some portions of these plans and policies with prioritizing the missing sidewalk gap and making crossings safer, enhancing access to transit, and providing a more comfortable pedestrian environment over existing conditions. These relevant plans are listed below in chronological order with relevant details presented as excerpts:

- Transportation Master Plan (2008)
  - “The City of Alexandria envisions a transportation system that encourages the use of alternative modes of transportation, reducing dependence on the private automobile ... The City will promote a balance between travel efficiency and quality of life, providing Alexandrians with transportation choices, continued economic growth, and a healthy environment.”
- Environmental Action Plan (2009)
  - Develop a holistic transportation system that puts the health, mobility, and accessibility of “people first” by implementing development and transportation programs and projects consistent with the following level of precedence: pedestrians, bicyclists, public transportation, shared motor vehicles, and private motor vehicles
  - By 2020: Beginning in 2012, reduce the number of daily Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) on a per capita basis by 5% every five years. Increase the number of commuters who use public transportation by 25%.
- Complete Streets Policy (2011, reenacted in 2014)
  - “Every street project shall incorporate to the extent possible Complete Streets infrastructure sufficient to enable reasonable safe travel along and across the right-of-way for each categories of users”
  - “If the safety and convenience of users can be improved within the scope of resurfacing, restriping, or signalization operations, such projects shall implement Complete Streets infrastructure to increase safety for users.”

- Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan (2016)
  - Recommends Seminary Road as one of the City’s top 10 priority on-street enhanced bicycle facilities
  - Recommends Seminary Road as one of the City’s top 10 sidewalk projects
- Vision Zero Action Plan (2017)
  - Eliminate all traffic deaths and severe injuries by 2028
  - Build safe streets for everyone by prioritizing safety treatments that reduce fatal and severe injury crashes

The staff recommendation incorporates many improvements that provide benefits consistent with the City’s plans and policies:

- Improved safety at pedestrian crossings in accordance with the Complete Streets Policy and the Vision Zero Action Plan.
  - Leading Pedestrian Intervals, No Turn on Red restrictions, and high-visibility crosswalks on Seminary Road west of North Howard Street enhance visibility of people crossing the street.
  - HAWK signals, Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacon (RRFB), and pedestrian refuge islands enhance driver yielding behavior and allow people walking to cross one direction of traffic at a time.
  - Lane reduction reduces the crossing distance for people who walk.
- Improved access to transit in accordance with the Complete Streets Policy and Vision Zero.
  - New sidewalk and pedestrian crossings make it easier and safer for people to walk and access bus stops along the corridor.
- Enhanced pedestrian mobility, access, and comfort in accordance with the Pedestrian Chapter of the Transportation Master Plan.
  - Lane reduction allows space to fill a sidewalk gap on the north side of Seminary Road, which was identified in the Transportation Master Plan as a priority sidewalk gap.
  - The buffer on the south side improves comfort for people walking on the south side.
- Potential traffic calming effect in accordance with Vision Zero
  - Narrower lanes, lane reduction, and median islands visually narrow the roadway and may calm traffic.
- Modified signal timing improves operations and reduces vehicle delay in accordance with the Transportation Master Plan’s vision of balancing travel efficiency and quality of life.

However, the staff recommendation does not address the following plan recommendations:

- Lack of dedicated bicycle infrastructure as recommended in the Transportation Master Plan.

- The staff recommendation will only marginally reduce speed, and primarily in the eastbound direction. Reducing speed is a primary goal of Vision Zero, and designing the street to the posted speed limit is a goal of the Complete Streets Design Guidelines.
- Lack of left-turn lane will likely not reduce related crashes, a goal of Vision Zero.
- This recommendation does not “focus on systems-level changes” as recommended by Vision Zero.
- In order to reduce vehicle-related impacts, the street has not supported the Environmental Action Plan’s goal to “Aggressively promote vibrant, human-scale city streets that prioritize people’s access and mobility.”

The staff recommendation represents an attempt to reconcile some of the key themes and feedback from public input with City plans and policies as well as national best practices. Additional supporting documentation from all public meetings is available on the [Seminary Road Complete Streets Project page](#). A link to the recording of the meeting is also available on that page.