

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: SEPTEMBER 5, 2001

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR A PEDESTRIAN ACTIVATED TRAFFIC SIGNAL AT THE INTERSECTION OF NORTH HOWARD STREET AND THE PEDESTRIAN ENTRANCE TO THE INOVA ALEXANDRIA HOSPITAL PARKING LOT

ISSUE: City Council consideration of the installation of a pedestrian activated traffic signal at the intersection of North Howard Street and the pedestrian entrance to the Inova Alexandria Hospital parking lot.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council approve the installation of a pedestrian activated traffic signal at the intersection of North Howard Street and the pedestrian entrance to the Inova Alexandria Hospital parking lot. On April 23, following a public hearing to obtain neighborhood input, the Traffic and Parking Board recommended that City Council approve the installation of a traffic signal (Section 10-2-7 of the City Code directs the Traffic and Parking Board to refer electronic traffic control devices to the City Council for its approval).

BACKGROUND: City staff have received complaints about the difficulty pedestrians have crossing North Howard Street when going between the Inova Alexandria Hospital parking lot on the east side of North Howard Street and Inova Alexandria Hospital. North Howard Street carries all of the vehicular traffic destined for the hospital and considerable additional traffic. Crossing North Howard Street to get to the hospital or its parking lot poses increased safety concerns, particularly at times of heavy pedestrian traffic during hours when visitor traffic is heaviest and when the hospital is changing shifts. Three pedestrian accidents (all hospital employees) have occurred at these times of high pedestrian usage within the last six months.

The Director of Transportation and Environmental Services has been working with INOVA Hospital staff in an effort to reach a solution to the problem. Transportation and Environmental Services recommends, and the Traffic and Parking Board concurs, that we install a traffic signal that can be pedestrian activated on either side of the main pedestrian crosswalk between the parking lot and the hospital. The installation of a pedestrian activated traffic signals meets the pedestrian volume warrant in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), which is the national transportation guide for traffic signal studies.

The traffic signal walk indicators only are in use when activated by a pedestrian. The pedestrian crossing signal timing will be coordinated with the timing of the signal at the intersection of Seminary Road and North Howard Street. When the light at the intersection of Seminary and North Howard is green, the green light is on for traffic to proceed at the pedestrian activated traffic signal on North Howard Street at the hospital parking lot.

The City will remove the two ancillary pedestrian crossings that now exist and the two yellow flashing warning lights and signs for the existing crosswalks. No advance warning signs with flashing lights are necessary with the installation of the new traffic signal, and the hospital, through the planting of shrubbery, will direct all pedestrian traffic to this one main crossing where the traffic signal will be located. Staff has been in contact with METRO, and requested that it relocate the bus stop at this location.

FISCAL IMPACT: The cost for the permanent installation of the pedestrian activated traffic signal is \$56,500, of which 50% will be paid by the hospital and 50% by the City. Funding for the City's share of \$28,250 will be paid for out of the FY 2002 approved budget for traffic control projects.

STAFF: Richard J. Baier, P.E., Director of Transportation & Environmental Services