

City of Alexandria, Virginia

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6-25-02

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 19, 2002

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *PS*

SUBJECT: VDOT GRANT TO FUND SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS TO THE RAILROAD CROSSING LOCATED IN THE 700 BLOCK OF SLATERS LANE

ISSUE: City Council consideration of an application for a grant from the Virginia Department of Transportation to assist the City with the cost of making safety improvements to the railroad crossing located in the 700 block of Slaters Lane.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) approve applying for a grant from the Virginia Department of Transportation to assist with the cost of making safety improvements to the railroad crossing in the 700 block of Slaters Lane; and
- (2) authorize the City Manager to execute the necessary documents.

DISCUSSION: The railroad crossing, located in the 700 block of Slaters Lane, crosses Slaters Lane just west of the George Washington (GW) Memorial Parkway, near the entrance to Potomac Greens (Attachment 1). There are approximately two to four train crossings per day, four to five days each week. The City has received several complaints from local residents regarding the potentially hazardous conditions of the tracks and regarding the noise caused by the trains moving along the tracks.

Slaters Lane provides a connection for those vehicles traveling between the George Washington Memorial Parkway, and areas in northern Alexandria and Route 1. The current Average Daily Traffic count (ADT) at the railroad crossing, which covers a 24-hour period, is 13,160 vehicles. This count does not include the large number of bicyclists, rollerbladers and pedestrians who use Slaters Lane to access the trails along the GW Parkway. Both the ADT count and the bicyclist/foot traffic count will increase as the housing and business developments along Slaters Lane and at Potomac Yard are completed.

Although there have been no accidents reported to the Police Department within the last three years, there are potential hazards for those who have to cross the tracks. There are no devices in

place to alert traffic of the location of the tracks or of oncoming trains. In addition, the asphalt and the wooden ties along the tracks have worn away creating noisy and bumpy conditions. The potential for damage to property and person caused by these conditions will increase as development in the area continues and Slaters Lane becomes more heavily used.

The crossing is owned and maintained by Norfolk Southern Railroad. Norfolk Southern policy dictates that they are responsible for all design and construction costs if a new railroad crossing is installed across an existing street or highway. Due to the fact that the crossing has been in place for a long period of time, Norfolk Southern policy dictates that safety upgrades are the responsibility of the local jurisdiction.

With the development of Old Town Greens in 1998, the City and the developer entered into an agreement with Norfolk Southern Railroad that indicates that the railway will, at the expense of the developer, make necessary repairs and/or improvements to the crossing, including the installation of warning devices. At the completion of the Old Town Greens project, the developer contributed \$80,500 to the City for the completion of this crossing upgrade as intended at that time.

As part of the agreement, Norfolk Southern would provide the design and construction for the upgrades and, at the completion of the upgrades, Norfolk Southern would continue to maintain, repair, renew and operate its railway along the crossing. The engineers for Norfolk Southern Railroad estimate that the total project cost will be \$228,500, itemized as follows:

- \$150,000 for the installation of safety devices, including warning lights and gates.
- \$78,500 for the installation of a concrete base and ties to smooth out the grade along the railroad tracks and to minimize the noise caused by trains moving along the tracks.

The City can apply for a grant from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to assist in making the above safety improvements. Even though VDOT is experiencing budget cutbacks, staff understands that this grant program is still funded. Of the \$228,500 in project costs, the VDOT grant will provide funding for 90% of the project costs (\$205,650) and the City's required match is 10% (\$22,850).

The proposed project schedule is:

Complete Design	October	2003
Advertise for Bids	November	2003
Begin Construction	February	2004
Complete Construction	April	2004

FISCAL IMPACT: The total project cost is \$228, 500. The VDOT grant would cover \$205,650 and the City's required share is \$22,850. The \$22,850 will come out of the \$80,500 given to the City by the developer of Old Town Greens. The remaining balance will be applied to railroad crossing safety upgrades at other locations in this vicinity.

ATTACHMENT:

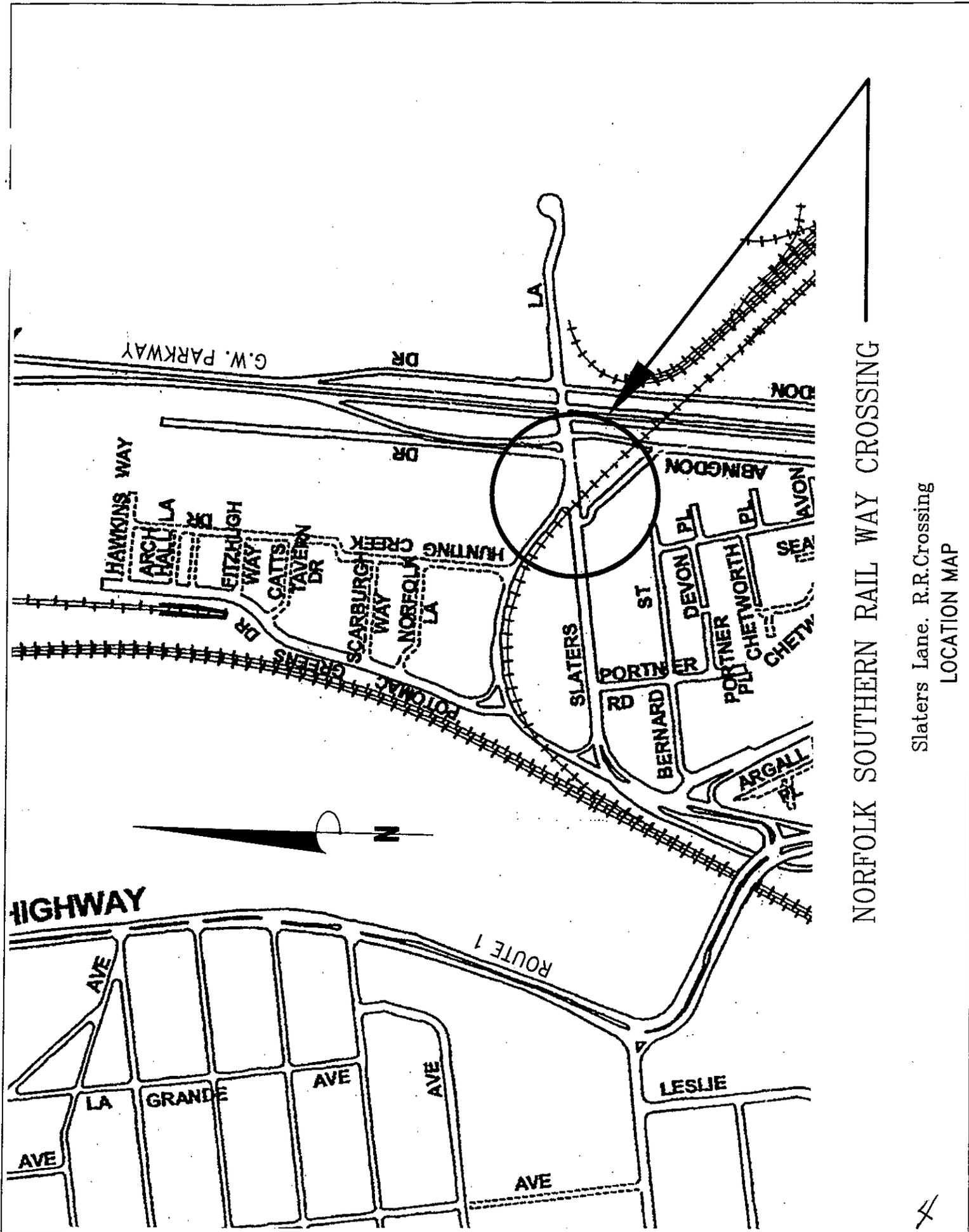
Attachment 1. Location Map

STAFF:

Richard J. Baier, P.E., Director, T&ES

Emily A. Baker, P.E., City Engineer, T&ES

Douglas McCobb, Deputy Director of Operations, T&ES



NORFOLK SOUTHERN RAIL WAY CROSSING

Slaters Lane. R.R. Crossing
LOCATION MAP