

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

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6-25-02

DATE: JUNE 18, 2002

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *PS*

SUBJECT: RECEIPT OF A GRANT FROM THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATIVE SERVICES FOR AN AUDIBLE SIGNALS PILOT PROGRAM

ISSUE: City Council consideration of the receipt of a Rehabilitative Services Incentive Fund (RSIF) grant from the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services in the amount of \$12,332 for an Audible Signals Pilot program.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) approve the grant award from the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services for \$12,322 for an audible signals pilot program; and
- (2) authorize the City Manager to execute all documents as may be required.

BACKGROUND: The Rehabilitative Services Incentive Fund (RSIF) is a non-competitive grant program for local Disability Services Boards. Local Disability Services Boards were created in 1992 when the General Assembly adopted the recommendations of the Beyer Commission Report of the Delivery of Services to Persons with Physical and Sensory Disabilities.

Each year the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services allocates State RSIF grant funds to the 46 local Disability Services Boards in Virginia. The Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities is the City's designated Disability Services Board. Monies are allocated based on a formula that considers the number of persons with disabilities represented by the Disability Services Boards. These monies are to be used to develop and expand community-based service delivery systems. Alexandria has been allocated \$12,232 from the RSIF, to be matched with \$2,159 in local funds available within the existing FY 2002 budget for T&ES. Due to a grant-imposed project deadline, installation was undertaken and has been completed. Staff is in the process of applying for the grant reimbursement from the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services.

DISCUSSION: The RSIF funding has been used to initiate a pilot program at three intersections in the City using the new audible pedestrian signals that can be programmed with voice messages instead of the usual chirping sounds. The three locations are the Foxchase Shopping Center at the corner of Duke Street and Jordan Street, Inova Hospital at Seminary Road and Howard Street, and the Burke Library at Seminary Road and Library Lane. An attractive feature of the audible pedestrian signals is that the volume of the announcement changes automatically to compensate for background ambient street noise present at the intersection. If there is a lot of traffic at an intersection and is very noisy, the volume is increased, conversely if there is no traffic and little noise, the volume is lowered. The requested funds were used to purchase, program, install and monitor the audible signals.

There are several goals that we hope to achieve with this program:

1. Provide a viable option to the current chirping audible signals which are not suitable for all locations.
2. Determine the audible messages that are the most appropriate for those individuals with visual impairments.
3. Increase the mobility of those individuals with visual impairments by expanding their access to what is available in the City of Alexandria.

Audible pedestrian signals are a priority of the Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities, the sponsoring Disability Services Board for this grant. Therefore, the Commission is fully supportive of the use of these grant monies for a pilot program of audible pedestrian signals which at its completion will include an evaluation and recommendations concerning the use of audible signals in the City of Alexandria.

FISCAL IMPACT: The Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services will provide \$12,332 under the Rehabilitative Services Incentive Fund. The remaining matching funds of \$2,159 are available in the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services FY2002 budget.

ATTACHMENTS: None.

STAFF:

Rich Baier, P.E., Director, Transportation & Environmental Services
Doug McCobb, Deputy Director/Transportation, Transportation & Environmental Services
Bob Garbacz, Division Chief/Traffic, Transportation & Environmental Services
Betsy Massie, Division Chief/Transit, Transportation & Environmental Services
Carol Moore, Budget Analyst, OMB