

## City of Alexandria, Virginia

9-28-04

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: SEPTEMBER 23, 2004

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *ps*

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF RECOMMENDATION TO PROHIBIT THROUGH TRUCKS IN THE 300 BLOCK OF SOUTH HENRY STREET

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**ISSUE:** City Council consideration of a Traffic and Parking Board recommendation to prohibit through truck traffic in the 300 block of South Henry Street.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council support the Traffic and Parking Board recommendation and add the 300 block of South Henry Street to the list of streets in Section 10-1-15.1 of the City Code on which through trucks are prohibited.

**BACKGROUND:** The Southwest Quadrant of Old Town Civic Association, the Old Town Station Owners Association, and the Old Town South Homeowners' Association jointly requested that the Traffic and Parking Board prohibit through traffic in the 300 block of South Henry Street (commonly referred to as "old" South Henry Street). This request was based on the desire of these communities to reduce the amount of cut-through traffic in this predominately residential area.

The Traffic and Parking Board considered this request at its May 24, 2004, meeting. Following a public hearing on the matter, the Board voted to (1) deny the request as presented, (2) request a follow-up study of alternatives to address the communities' concern with less impact to the surrounding areas, and (3) recommend a prohibition of through truck traffic in the 300 block of South Henry Street (Attachment 1). As a traffic control action affecting truck routes in the City, Council approval is required to limited through truck traffic.

**DISCUSSION:** The southwest quadrant of Old Town presents a complex and somewhat unique neighborhood traffic management situation. Located next to two of the busiest commuters' corridors within the City (Duke Street and Henry Street), this section of South Henry Street routinely experiences increased traffic volumes as a result of cut-through traffic. Particularly during evening commuter periods when southbound traffic exiting the City is heavy, severe congestion and slow-moving traffic queues regularly extend from well north of Duke Street to the I-95/Route 1 interchange. During these periods, both residents and staff have observed vehicles southbound on Route 1 (Henry Street) divert to South Henry Street and travel through the

neighborhood to rejoin Route 1 (Patrick Street) at Franklin Street in order to avoid some of this recurring congestion. This cut-through phenomenon also occurs at other times, such as during heavy weekend traffic periods, whenever traffic congestion develops on southbound Route 1.

This neighborhood and the surrounding areas are also characterized by several one-way streets, a number of discontinuous streets and numerous intersection turning movement restrictions, the combined effects of which include a funneling of both neighborhood and commuter traffic to the Route 1 corridor and the need to travel via indirect routes in order to access various destinations in the surrounding area. For example, since left turns are prohibited from southbound Patrick Street onto eastbound Franklin Street, southbound vehicles needing to access the Franklin Street corridor immediately east of Patrick Street and areas to the south must (1) use South Henry Street and "cut through" the neighborhood in order to access Franklin Street via a left-turn movement, or (2) proceed on Route 1 past Franklin Street, make a U-turn south of I-95 and return to Franklin Street to turn right, or (3) turn left onto Duke Street (or similar intersecting street north of Duke) and right onto an intersecting north-south street such as Alfred, Columbus or Washington to reach Franklin Street, potentially traveling through residential areas east of Route 1. Recognizing the broader potential impacts of the requested traffic prohibition, the Board asked that staff initiate a study to determine the extent to which these issues affect traffic in this neighborhood and identify actions that could be taken to reduce cut-through traffic in the neighborhood with less impact to the surrounding area. This study will be completed in 2005.

In response to concerns expressed at the public hearing that an increasing number of through trucks, often traveling at excessive speed, was also a problem in the neighborhood, the Board recommended that through trucks be prohibited from traveling in the 300 block of South Henry Street, an action that requires Council approval. Staff has no objection to this action. It should be mentioned that there are several nonresidential destinations immediately adjacent to this neighborhood for which daily truck access is essential and would have to be maintained. These include City facilities, such as Lee Center, the K-9 and fire training centers and the print shop, the water treatment plant, and private businesses. Any truck traffic prohibition in the neighborhood would have to provide for reasonable truck access to these destinations, thus not removing this portion of the associated truck traffic from the neighborhood streets.

Currently available traffic data indicate that trucks represent only a small proportion of the cut-through traffic in this neighborhood. Field observations made after the May 24 Traffic and Parking Board meeting found only eight trucks traveling on South Henry Street between the hours of 4:00 and 6:00 P.M., four of which were destined to locations within or immediately adjacent to the neighborhood. The daily traffic volume on South Henry Street varies between 2,000 and 2,500 vehicles, while during the one-hour PM peak period, the volume is about 400 vehicles. These data are preliminary, having been collected during summer months when traffic volumes are typically lower than average. Additional data are being collected to reflect post-Labor Day conditions when more typical traffic patterns and volumes can be observed. These results will be shared with the community at an October community meeting being scheduled at the time this docket item was prepared. Further, the outcomes and recommendations of such meeting will be shared with Council under a separate memorandum and docketed for public hearing as needed to discuss any community-wide impact.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** The cost of posting recommended truck restriction is minimal.

**ATTACHMENT:** Traffic and Parking Board Motion

**STAFF:**

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

Thomas Culpepper, P.E., Deputy Director, T&ES

Robert M. Garbacz, P.E., Division Chief, Transportation

## Attachment

The specific action taken by the Traffic and Parking Board on May 24, 2004 with respect to the request for a No Through Traffic restriction on South Henry Street has been questioned. During consideration of this item, discussion included No Through Traffic, No Through Trucks and No Trucks restrictions. The following was transcribed from the audio record of that meeting.

*Following closure of the public hearing:*

Chairman West - "Mr. Laychus, are you ready with a motion?"

Member Laychus - "I move that we defer this item pending a comprehensive review of that whole quadrant."

Chairman West - "Mr. Laychus moves to defer this item for future study."

Member Johnson - "John, can we also put for right now no thru trucks ? Yes, let's do that and also do the study and see whether or not they qualify for traffic calming."

Member Laychus - "Yes."

Chairman West - "Are you seconding that then?"

Member Johnson - "I'll second that with his part and my part."

Chairman West - "Defer the whole project for further study and no thru trucks."

Discussion among members and with staff.

Chairman West - "We have a motion made and seconded. Does everyone understand the motion?"

Affirmation from members.

Question called and vote taken.

Chairman West - "Okay, it's a unanimous vote to defer and recommend to City Council no trucks."

The City Attorney's Office has reviewed this transcript and has determined that the only motion made was to defer the project for further study and to have no thru trucks. That motion was voted on and passed unanimously, therefore the result is to defer the project for further study and to recommend that City Council make this portion of the street no thru trucks.

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9-28-04

Old Town South HOA  
Lynn Selander, President  
514 South Henry Street  
Alexandria VA 22314

Mayor Euille and City Council Members  
301 King Street  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

September 27, 2004

Dear Mayor Euille and Council Members,

As president of the Old Town South Homeowners Association, I am writing to you to express our homeowners vigorous **support** of a **NO TRUCKS** sign at the intersection of Duke and South Henry Streets. We see this as a first step in addressing the cut through traffic which is endangering the residents of our community.

The 4 Associations in the Southwest Quadrant (Old Town South, Old Town Station, The South West Quadrant and Old Town Village) have been working together for the past two years to address the overwhelming cut through traffic which occurs on the 400, 500 and 600 blocks of South Henry Street day and night, particularly from 6-9 AM and again from 3:30 TO 7 PM. Our informal traffic study indicated a 900% increase in traffic during these hours. Cut through truck traffic careens through the neighborhood 24 hours a day.

We have held individual association meetings and community sessions at the Lee Center with TES representatives. Residents are unanimous in requesting traffic abatement. (Meeting notices/notes attached).

On May 24, 2004, The Associations presented our request for traffic calming to the Transportation Board. The Board supported our request with a 7-0 vote.

Rather naively, we expected these NO TRUCKS to appear in a timely manner. It was only after much ado this summer that the Associations found out that this item had to go before Council for approval.

**Please support our community efforts by APPROVING a NO TRUCKS sign at the intersection of South Henry and Duke Streets.**

Although I realize the September 28th Council meeting is legislative, I will be there with other Association Reps and I will be happy to address any questions you may have.

Thank you for your support.

  
Lynn Selander  
703-683-9889

Old Town South HOA  
514 South Henry Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314

May 24, 2004

Traffic and Parking Board:  
CONVERSE WEST  
THOMAS JOHNSON  
LAWRENCE RUGGIERO  
PATRICK WARREN  
JOHN LAYCHUS  
TOM WALCZYKOWSKI  
AMY SLACK

Dear Board Members,

Associations in the Southwest Quadrant have been working toward eliminating the horrendous CUT THROUGH TRAFFIC we get along "Old" South Henry Street particularly from 6 till 9:30 AM and 4 till 7 PM. Trucks are also using our residential street at all hours of the day and night. A large number of these vehicles are ignoring stop signs and speeding.

On December 1st., 2003, Association representatives from the Southwest Quadrant met Mr. Baier of the TES Department so the we could make our concerns know n. ( attachment 1)

Three Associations then petitioned the City of Alexandria to stop the improper use of our residential street , classified as a local roadway, and restore peace and safety to our neighborhood. In December, we asked Transportation and Environmental Services to perform a traffic study to determine the extent of this problem. This has not been accomplished, even with 6 months of lead time and follow up phone calls to Mr. Baier and Mr. Gorbacz.

In the absence of a TES traffic survey, I performed a random sampling myself. My count reveals a count of 350 to 400 vehicles per hour during the evening rush hour passing the 500 block of South Henry Street. In the same location at the same time on a weekend, there were about 40 cars per hour. this represents a **900% increase in traffic during rush hours.**

The Staff of TES has recommended denial of our petition. They cite a 2 year old traffic study which is not only outdated, but does not anticipate the impact we will feel when PTO vehicles are added to the mix.

TES has not only failed to provide an accurate vehicle count, but they failed to understand the impact on the safety of our neighborhood created by large numbers of cars and trucks running stop signs.

According to TES, our residential street is expected to be the thoroughfare for ALL TRAFFIC GOING SOUTHBOUND ON FRANKLIN STREET, including construction vehicles and 18 wheelers.

This is in direct contradiction to the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program which states goals of keeping neighborhood street use within the classification defined in the transportation chapter of the Master Plan and that the culture of a neighborhood should be changed from "cars first" to "people first". (attachment 2)

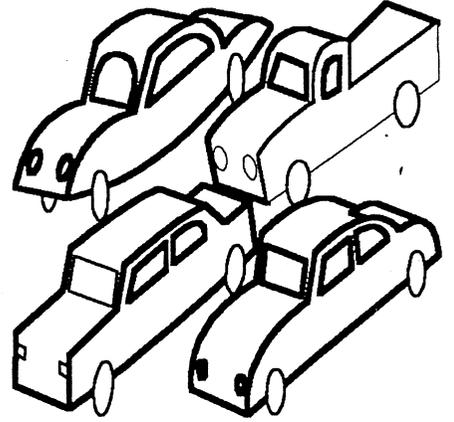
We are asking for signs at the corner of Duke and Patrick Streets to stop cut through traffic. This request is well within the scope of the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Project. (attachment 3) We have identified the problem and met the community support needed to implement the requests for signs and implementation of heavy truck restrictions on South Henry Street.

We are asking you to approve our request for signs and heavy truck restrictions at the intersection of Patrick/Duke/South Henry Streets to reduce the cut through traffic through our residential neighborhood streets.

Sincerely,

Lynn Selander, President  
Old Town South HOA





## Dear Neighbors in the Southwest Quadrant

By now, you have probably noticed the signs posted along South Henry Street by the City of Alexandria.

Associations in the Southwest Quadrant have been working toward eliminating the horrendous CUT THROUGH TRAFFIC we get along South Henry Street particularly from 6 till 9:30 AM and 4 till 7 PM. Also, trucks are using our residential street at all hours of the day and night. A large number of these vehicles are ignoring stop signs and speeding.

Three Associations petitioned the City of Alexandria to stop this improper use of a residential street and restore peace and safety to our neighborhood. In December, we asked Transportation and Environmental Services to perform a traffic study to determine the extent of this problem. We are currently asking for signs at the corner of Duke and Patrick Streets to stop cut through traffic.

The Staff of TES has recommended denial of our petition. They cite a 2 year old traffic study which is not only outdated, but does not anticipate the impact we will feel when the 10,000 PTO vehicles are added to the mix. TES has not only failed to provide an accurate vehicle count, but they failed to understand the impact on the safety of our neighborhood created by large numbers of cars and trucks failing to stop at stop signs. According to TES, our residential street is expected to be the thoroughfare for ALL TRAFFIC GOING SOUTHBOUND ON FRANKLIN STREET, including construction vehicles and 18 wheelers. In short, they are telling us we do not have a problem.

Please come out on Monday night to voice your opinion on cut through traffic on South Henry Street to the Traffic and Parking Board. We live with this problem daily and your voice relating your experiences will make a difference. Even if you don't wish to speak, numbers of interested citizens will let the Board know how serious this issue is to us.

# Traffic and Parking Board Meeting

## Monday, May 24, 7:30 PM

Questions? Contact Lynn Selander at 703 683-9889 or TES at 838-4411



December 1st 7:30  
Lee Recreation Center

# Neighborhood Meeting

## TES

Representatives from Transportation and Environmental Services (Rich Bear) will be at the Lee Center Monday night at 7:30 to discuss the impact of traffic on the Southwest Quadrant with residents.

Please plan to attend to make TES aware of the impact of cut through traffic on our neighborhood from rush hour traffic to the heavy trucking which takes place at all hours.

If you have any questions, please contact Lynn Selander at 703-683-9889.

SEE YOU THERE.

