


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 19, 2009

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TRAFFIC AND PARKING BOARD IN REGARD TO MOTORCOACH PARKING AND THE CONVERSION OF THE UNIT BLOCK OF KING STREET INTO A ONE-WAY STREET

ISSUE: Motorcoach parking, Unit Block of King Street.

RECOMMENDATION: That Council consider the forthcoming recommendations of the Traffic and Parking Board related to:

1. Permanently designating the Unit Block of King Street one-way westbound to allow for safer traffic flow and provide better transportation management;
2. Designating the south side of Jamieson Avenue between Holland Lane and South West Street as short-term (2-hour) motorcoach parking between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. Spaces on Jamieson Avenue would provide new short-term motorcoach parking in addition to existing short-term parking on North Union Street at Robinson Terminal and on the 900 block of North St. Asaph Street; and
3. Designating new 30-minute motorcoach parking spaces in the following locations:
 - a. Two spaces at 112-118 North Washington Street, and
 - b. Two spaces at 110-112 South Washington Street.

BACKGROUND: On March 14, Council held a public hearing regarding the recommendations of the Motorcoach Task Force and adopted seven recommendations (Attachment I), referred three Task Force recommendations to the Traffic and Parking Board for consideration, and in part due to concerns expressed by some of the public hearing speakers, requested that once the Traffic and Parking Board acted, that those recommendations be brought back to Council for consideration. The Traffic and Parking Board is scheduled to meet on March 23, and staff will prepare a report to City Council on March 24 for Council to consider at its meeting that day. As background for this docket item, the text from the March 14 docket item is repeated below. For

interested persons, a full copy of the voluminous Motorcoach Task Force Report can be found on the City's web site docket listing for the March 10, 2009, meeting item #10.

Tourism is vital to Alexandria's local economy, and motorcoaches and tour buses perform functions that benefit the City in many respects. However, motorcoach operations at times conflict with residential neighborhoods and the City's important historic fabric. This report outlines the recommendations of the City's Ad Hoc Motorcoach Task Force, which was established by the City Manager in April 2008 to develop a proactive approach to motorcoach management and present its findings to City Council. The report centers around ten recommendations that are actionable by Council and can be implemented in the short term. The report also includes an outline for a long-term process that will allow the City to legally and proactively manage motorcoach transportation in the future. The Task Force wishes to emphasize that it is essential for the short-term recommendations contained within this report to be coupled with institutional strategies that will provide the City with the capacity and regulatory authority necessary to permanently manage motorcoaches in Alexandria.

DISCUSSION: To help the City address issues related to motorcoach transportation, the City Manager appointed an Ad Hoc Motorcoach Task Force in April 2008 comprised of five residents, five business/industry representatives, one representative from the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission and five staff/City Council members, including staff from Transportation & Environmental Services and Police.

Working collaboratively, the Task Force's goal was to develop a proactive approach to motorcoach management that recognizes the economic value of the industry and balances its operational needs with measures to limit intrusive effects on Alexandria's neighborhoods, the environment, quality of life, traffic and parking. The Task Force reviewed best practices and sought to build consensus on measures that balance the multiple interests of the City.

The Motorcoach Task Force incorporated community input into its regular meetings throughout the process. Members of the Motorcoach Task Force made periodic updates to community groups, including meetings of the Old Town Civic Association and the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce. A community-wide meeting was held at Lyles-Crouch Traditional Academy on January 26, 2009.

At the beginning of its efforts, the Motorcoach Task Force established a web page (www.alexandriava.gov/motorcoach) and established an eNews group that provided regular updates via eNews to citizens interested in the group's progress. Task Force meeting notes, minutes, presentations and reports were posted by staff to the City website after each meeting. Many comments were received from residents at the meetings, which contributed to formulating the recommendations.

Motorcoach Task Force Recommendations: The Motorcoach Task Force believes it has achieved a consensus on a balanced framework of short-term motorcoach management strategies with a blend of operational measures, enforcement and education. The short-term recommendations contained within the report reflect the recommendations in the *Ad Hoc Motorcoach Task Force Short-Term Recommendations Report*.

Additionally, the Task Force wishes to emphasize that City Council should set a firm goal of 2011 to acquire the regulatory authority from the Commonwealth of Virginia to either change the Code of Virginia (§46.2-1304) so that Alexandria may locally restrict the operation of nonscheduled buses over designated streets in its jurisdiction, or to seek a Charter Amendment to enact more specific local regulation. The methodological approach to acquire the legal authority to regulate motorcoaches in the long-term is outlined in Appendix A of the report. Additional community outreach before the Traffic and Parking Board public hearing is being planned.

In the interim, the Task Force believes that an incremental approach to motorcoach management is a practical and cost-effective solution to issues related to motorcoach traffic without having to resort to radical changes that may inadvertently harm tourism.

FISCAL IMPACT: The immediate fiscal impact of this program will be \$25,000 to conduct traffic counts of motorcoaches during representative weeks in 2009. This cost is to be funded through the Department of Transportation & Environmental Services existing FY 2009 professional services budget. The work program includes a category for transportation studies that was intended to be a catch-all for this type of study.

Implementing the on-line registration system recommendation will require funding of approximately \$25,000. This \$25,000 will be obtained from FY 2009 savings in the T&ES snow plowing and de-icing budget resulting from less-than-projected snow removal activity this winter.

The Task Force recommendation related to police transportation management at the Unit Block of King Street will require approximately \$80,000 annually to cover Alexandria Police Department overtime. In FY 2009, the City added \$80,000 to the Police Department's overtime budget for the National Harbor initiative, which supports transportation management in the Lower King Street area. To continue this effort in FY 2010 and beyond, the Police Department would need to have those funds budgeted annually. These funds are included in the FY 2010 proposed budget.

ATTACHMENT: Motorcoach Task Force recommendations adopted by Council on March 14

STAFF:

Richard J. Baier, P.E., Director, Department of Transportation & Environmental Services
David Baker, Chief, Alexandria Police Department
Yon Lambert, Pedestrian/Bicycle Coordinator, Transportation & Environmental Services

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MOTORCOACH TASK FORCE
ADOPTED BY CITY COUNCIL
ON MARCH 14, 2009

1. Approve the concept of voluntary on-line motorcoach registration, and request staff to create, for future Council consideration, such a registration system including fees and daily limitations on certain types of motorcoach trips for implementation by March 2010;
2. Create the on-line registration system, and allocate \$25,000 from Council's FY 2009 Contingent Reserve;
3. Request that the City Manager instruct Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES) staff to conduct counts of motorcoach operations in 2009;
4. Request that the City Manager reconvene the Ad Hoc Motorcoach Task Force as currently constituted to review long-term motorcoach management strategies;
5. Request that the City Manager instruct T&ES to provide quarterly motorcoach updates to the Task Force and to Council, including progress reports on motorcoach counts, development of walking tours and a registration system;
6. Request that the City Manager instruct the Police Department to enforce existing City ordinances more aggressively with respect to motorcoach traffic and parking, and request that the Police Department collect and report data on motorcoach enforcement activity; and
7. Request that the City Manager instruct the Police Department to continue its transportation management efforts on the Unit Block of King Street.

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3-24-09

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 24, 2009

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: RICHARD J. BAIER, P.E., DIRECTOR, T&ES 

SUBJECT: RESULTS OF TRAFFIC AND PARKING BOARD ACTION REGARDING FINDINGS OF MOTORCOACH TASK FORCE

MIDAPRIL

After a staff presentation and much public testimony, the Traffic & Parking Board, at the March 23 meeting, voted unanimously to approve a request to change the unit block of King Street to one-way westbound and to install motorcoach loading and unloading spaces on Washington Street. However, the Board voted to defer the request to install short-term motorcoach parking on Jamieson Avenue.

Specifically, the Board considered and voted on the following requests by the Motorcoach Task Force, which were items #7a, 7b and 7c:

7A. Consideration of a request to change the unit block of King Street from two-way operation to one-way westbound. (**Approved unanimously**)

7B. Consideration of a request to remove 26 parking spaces on the south side of Jamieson Avenue between Holland Lane and South West Street and install Motorcoach Parking signs, 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. (**Deferred to April with the provision that staff would return with at least two alternate locations and a no-park alternative.**)

7C. Consideration of a request to:

1. Remove 6 metered parking spaces on the west side of North Washington Street south of Cameron Street and designate space for 30-minute motorcoach loading/unloading; and

2. ~~Relocate the existing Dash bus stop on the east side of the 100 block of South Washington Street 20 feet and~~ Designate ~~100~~ 45-foot (one-space) of the 100 block of South Washington Street for 30-minute motorcoach loading/unloading. (**Approved unanimously**)

These items are contained in item #14 for consideration by City Council at its Regular Meeting on Tuesday, March 24.

As Cherry Blossom season starts, and likewise peak motorcoach time (now thru end of June), the lack of additional short-term parking could certainly be problematic due to circulating motorcoaches so staff will present some ideas on this issue. Note only one parking place was presented and approved south of King on Washington St. as this was a compromise position due to Dash and Citibank concerns. We will monitor this space usage to determine how it is working. A next meeting of the Motorcoach TF will be set up for mid April.

If you have any questions, please call me or Yon Lambert at 703-838-4966.

cc: James K. Hartmann, City Manager
Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager
Michele Evans, Deputy City Manager
Yon Lambert, Pedestrian/Bicycle Coordinator

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3-24-09

C i r c e™

AVEDA

Circe
123 North Washington Street
Alexandria, Va.22314
703.683.7777

Dear Yon Lambert,

I would like to take this opportunity to voice my opposition to the City's Ad Hoc Motor Coach Task Force recommendation to remove 6 parking spaces on the west side of North Washington Street . Additionally, I strongly oppose the designation of 30 minute motor coach loading/ unloading in the following locations;
2 spaces at 112-118 North Washington Street
Two spaces at 110-112 South Washington Street

I have been owning and operating a business in the city of Alexandria since 1982.
My current location is at 123 North Washington Street, directly in front of the proposed bus loading and unloading location. I object to this proposal due to the following reasons:

1. Noise
2. Pollution
3. Deletion of Parking Spaces

I operate a spa and salon where many people come to relax and be nurtured. Our respective clientele spends time and money to relax-they do not need to hear or experience the load noise or fumes from the engines of the buses.

We already have challenges with parking in Alexandria-why take away street parking which allows my customers convenience to my store?

I am appalled that the city would entertain such an idea that would not only inhibit business on the Washington Street corridor –an area already slow with foot traffic but cause unnecessary noise and clutter to an already high trafficked area with both rush hours in the am and pm.

I would rather the city entertain opportunities that would encourage small business growth by rewarding small businesses with, for example, additional parking by adding parking stickers that would allow employees to park freely all day.

Now that would be my tax dollars at work!

Respectfully,
Sheila Mc Gurk
CEO/Founder
Circe Salon Spa

Brahm & Powell Opticians

113 N.Washington Street

Alexandria, Va. 22314

703.549.2828

Dear Yon Lambert,

I would like to take this opportunity to voice my opposition to the City's Ad Hoc Motor Coach Task Force recommendation to remove 6 parking spaces on the west side of North Washington Street . Additionally, I strongly oppose the designation of 30 minute motor coach loading/ unloading in the following locations;
2 spaces at 112-118 North Washington Street
Two spaces at 110-112 South Washington Street

I have owned and operated my business in Old Town since 1993.

Parking is already a commodity in town and the number one complaint by customers trying to do business in this city. With the parking situation in Alexandria-why take away street parking which allows my customers convenience to my store?

I am also not happy about the noise and pollution that parking these buses would create. We are all striving for a greener more conscientious city and this in my opinion is taking a step backwards, we have enough problems with the congestion and noise pollution as it is!

I am appalled that the city would entertain such an idea that would not only inhibit business on the Washington Street corridor –an area already slow with foot traffic but cause unnecessary noise and clutter to an already high trafficked area with both rush hours in the am and pm.

I am with Ms. McGurk when she states “I would rather the city entertain opportunities that would encourage small business growth by rewarding small businesses with, for example, additional parking by adding parking stickers that would allow employees to park freely all day.”

Now that would be my tax dollars at work!♥

Respectfully,
Rebecca Fertig
Owner/President
Powell of Old Town