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City Council Public Hearing

September 17, 2011

Mayor Euille and Honorable City Council Members

My name is Alex Wolz, and I am a junior at T.C. Williams High School. I am a member of the soccer team, and of the marching band. And everyday, I bike to school. To me, it is not a big deal, because I have done this the past two years. But the look on people's faces when I tell them I bike to school is one of shock, disbelief, and skepticism. I wonder why this occurs; why it is so out of the ordinary for someone to bike to school, or to work, or to the grocery store in the City of Alexandria. The answer to this question is in the many paved roads throughout the city, where traffic is dominated by cars in the two lane streets, and where bicyclists are pushed to the shoulder and eventually the sidewalk. The city has done an excellent job with many streets, but some of the most important roads, including King Street, Mount Vernon Avenue, and Janney's Lane, still have no bike lanes.

With an undeniable increase in car pollution, rush hour traffic, and sedentary lifestyles, biking is a growing form of transportation and way of life. From the 2010-2011 school year at TC, there were on average five bikes parked in the school bike racks. This school year, I have consistently seen 10-15 bikes, and ACPS has purchased a new rack to accommodate the influx of cyclists. While these numbers may be small, they show us that more students are realizing that their habits of transportation will affect the earth. For some, cycling to school or work is not possible. But for many,

and possibly some people in this room today, the only thing holding them back from riding a bike is the easiness of a car, the perfect temperature of air conditioning or heating, the speed of the gasoline powered engine, and the lack of bike related services provided by the city. For those of you who may have these thoughts, I encourage you; try commuting to work, or school, or to the grocery store on your bike. You will feel the bliss of riding as the wind rushes past you, the satisfaction that you are positively impacting the world, and leaving it better for next generations.

With these words of encouragement, I also have words of urgency. The main routes to the schools of Alexandria need bike lanes. This will show people that the City of Alexandria supports cycling, and looks towards a bright, cleaner future. I have biked all across the city, and to school every day, and I know that with bike lanes, people will take notice, and people will accept biking as not a mode of transportation, but their mode of transportation. And when this happens, we will know that the great City of Alexandria is peddling in the right direction.