


City of Alexandria, Virginia

14
9-25-01

MEMORANDUM

DATE: SEPTEMBER 21, 2001

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: STAFF REPORT ON CLOSURE OF BRENNAN PARK DRIVE IN BEN BRENNAN PARK

ISSUE: City Council consideration of staff report regarding closure of Brennan Park Drive in Ben Brennan Park.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- 1) receive this report, which includes a preliminary recommendation that Brennan Park Drive continue in its current configuration as a two-way road open to vehicular traffic; and
- 2) request the City Manager (a) to obtain the views of the Cameron Station Civic Association, the Cameron Station Community Association and the Park and Recreation Commission on the report, and (b) provide a supplemental report at the second legislative meeting in November that addresses any issues raised by the associations and contains a final recommendation on whether Brennan Park Drive should continue in its current configuration as a two-way road open to vehicular traffic.

BACKGROUND: During the public discussion period at the May 13, 2000, public hearing, three speakers commented on whether the portion of Brennan Park Drive that goes through Ben Brennan Park at Cameron Station should be open or closed to vehicular traffic, even though Ben Brennan Park had not yet officially opened to the public.

Roland Gonzales, President, and Randal Joyner, Board Member, representing the position of the Cameron Station Civic Association, favored keeping this section of Brennan Park Drive for pedestrians, and only available for emergency, maintenance, or police surveillance vehicles. Hugh Wetherland, a resident of Cameron Station, said he could not oppose the two-way road because he had not seen a traffic study or other reports on the impact of not having the road, specifically closing one of the four ingress/egress points in the development. He did, however, favor as many speed controls (bumps, stop signs, low speed limits) as possible on this road, as well as through Cameron Station.

After considerable discussion, City Council decided that staff would continue with current plans for the park and would make Brenman Park Drive a two-way road open to vehicular traffic until May 31, 2001, at which time the road would revert to pedestrian use only unless Council expressly determined to keep the road open to vehicular traffic. The Council felt that this time frame would give everyone an opportunity to assess how the two-way configuration worked using traffic calming measures.

On May 11, 2001, staff reported to City Council that while the dedication of Ben Brenman Park occurred in June 2000, the park was not officially opened until the fall of 2000 with a limited schedule of activities. As a result, staff did not initiate the traffic and pedestrian study in 2000 because an accurate count of pedestrian and vehicular traffic was not possible given the limited schedule. Based on this report, Council approved the staff recommendation that Council defer making a decision on the status of the portion of Brenman Park Drive that runs through Ben Brenman Park until staff returned to City Council in September 2001 with the results of a traffic and pedestrian study.

DISCUSSION: Below is a discussion of the results of the staff vehicular and pedestrian study that has been undertaken to date. Attachment 1 shows the area under discussion.

- 1) Vehicular traffic on Brenman Park Drive is relatively light and does not interfere with pedestrian safety.

The volume of vehicular traffic on Brenman Park Drive is relatively low and does not impact pedestrian activity in the park. As part of the traffic study two one-week volume counts on Brenman Park Drive were performed. The first count was performed during the week of May 21st and the second was performed during the week of August 6th. As Table 1 below shows, the total number of vehicles over a 24-hour period is less than 600 cars traveling eastbound and less than 400 cars traveling westbound.

During the average of the peak hours for the two weeks, the traffic flow is 96 vehicles per hour (composite of both directions). (Peak hour is defined as the 60 minute increment within each 24 hour period that has the highest number of vehicles.) During peak hour conditions, pedestrians, on average, have 38 seconds to walk across Brenman Park Drive between vehicles. Using nationally accepted walk stride rates, staff calculated that the average pedestrian requires 10 seconds to cross this street. As a practical measure, staff also interviewed the security officer at the park who verified the low volume of vehicular traffic, and the lack of pedestrian crossing difficulty.

Table 1--Traffic Flows on Brenman Park Drive

	Week of May 21 st		Week of August 6 th	
	Eastbound	Westbound	Eastbound	Westbound
24 Hour Average Flow	564	332	551	377
Average Peak Hour	42	44	50	46

Vehicular turning movement counts were also taken at the intersection of Brenman Park Drive and Sommerville Street. As shown in Table 2, these counts indicate the level of vehicular activity at this intersection during an event (June 28) and during a time with no event (August 15). The count on June 28 was for two consecutive hours during the event. The second count on August 15 was during the morning and evening peak hours. The data taken from these counts show that westbound Brenman Park Drive traffic turning left onto Sommerville Street was the heaviest movement during the event on June 28th (an average of 66 vehicles per peak hour). This works out to just slightly over one vehicle per minute. The traffic volumes for the other movements at this intersection on June 28 were all under 17 vehicles per peak hour making them relatively insignificant.

The second count, taken on August 15 for two hours in the morning and two hours in the late afternoon, shows relatively little activity, no more than 15 vehicles per hour on any given approach.

Together, these counts show two things: (1) that there is generally light to moderate traffic at the intersection of Sommerville Street and Brenman Park Drive; and (2) that without Brenman Park Drive in the park, traffic would be going through the Cameron Station neighborhood to get into the southern half of the park.

Table 2--Average One Hour Turning Movement Traffic Volumes

	Sommerville St. Southbound			Brenman Park Dr. Westbound			Sommerville St. Northbound			Brenman Park Dr. Eastbound		
Date	Rt	Thru	Lt	Rt	Thru	Lt	Rt	Thru	Lt	Rt	Thru	Lt
6/28 4-6 PM	6	1	10	17	3	66	11	0	3	9	0	13
8/15 7-9 AM	5	0	2	6	1	4	5	1	4	4	1	10
8/15 4-6 PM	7	3	2	7	1	11	3	0	2	4	1	3

Table 3 below lists the results of the three 24 hour long radar speed surveys performed on Brenman Park Drive.

Table 3--Speed in Miles-Per-Hour

Date	Average Speed
6/27/01	17
6/28/01	16
8/09/01	18

The results of the radar speed survey listed in Table 3 indicate that speeds are not excessive and are close to the posted speed limit of 15 miles-per-hour. Because staff worked with the developer, Greenvest, on the application of proper pavement markings, the installation of signs, and the installation of traffic calming devices, the speeds are in line with the posted speed limit.

Table 4 below shows the results of the pedestrian counts taken for pedestrians entering and exiting the park from Sommerville Street. The data from these counts show very little pedestrian activity entering and exiting the park at this location.

Table 4--Pedestrians Per-Hour From Sommerville Street

Date	Entering Park	Leaving Park
6/28/01	0	1
8/15/01 7-9 AM	10	4
8/15/01 4-6 PM	1	0

Finally, Table 5 below shows the counts taken for pedestrians entering and exiting the park using the pedestrian bridge crossing Holmes Run. Two separate counts were taken, one on Thursday, August 30th, and the other on Labor Day, September 3rd. The pedestrians using the bridge were counted to provide an indication of the number of patrons accessing the park by the bridge. The pedestrians already in the park were also counted to compare the level of activity in the park to the number of patrons crossing over the bridge. It should be noted that roughly 25 percent of the pedestrians using the bridge come from the high rise building at 4600 Duke Street.

Table 5--Pedestrians Crossing Holmes Run

Date	Pedestrians Crossing Bridge	Total Pedestrians in Park
8/30/01, 6-8 PM	80	60
9/3/01, 12-4 PM	40	175

- 2) Closing Brenman Park Drive separates the east and west sides of the park and eliminates direct access to eastbound and westbound Duke Street from the entire park.

As shown in Attachment 1, Brenman Park Drive provides a connection between the eastern and western sides of the park allowing park users on both sides of the park to: (a) enter and exit the park from eastbound and westbound Duke Street; and (b) drive freely from one side of the park to the other without going onto Duke Street.

If Brenman Park Drive is closed to traffic, persons using the east side of the park could continue to enter the park from westbound and eastbound Duke Street, but they could only exit on to westbound Duke Street; they could not exit the park to go east on Duke Street. Park patrons wishing to go east on Duke would have to exit the park heading west on Duke and, at some point, turn around and head east.

Also, with Brenman Park Drive closed to traffic, persons using the west side of the park could only enter that area, via Sommerville Street, from the eastbound lane of Duke Street and could only exit via Sommerville onto eastbound Duke. Persons using this part of the park and arriving from westbound Duke Street would have to go through the Cameron Station community both to enter and to exit the park.

- 3) There is little cut through traffic in Cameron Station as a whole and the majority of the traffic using Brenman Park Drive appears to be destined for the park or places within the Cameron Station community.

The February 2001 traffic study authorized by the City and prepared by Greenvest's consultant for the proposed Archstone project revealed that there was very little cut through traffic from Duke Street to South Pickett Street (e.g., only five vehicles during the p.m. peak hour). The study also showed that intersections outside of and within Cameron Station continue to be well under the design volume. For example, outside of Cameron Station, the intersection of Cameron Station Boulevard, Edsall Road and South Pickett Street and the intersection of Sommerville and Duke Streets are operating at a service level C or better. Within Cameron Station, all intersections are operating at service level A, the highest and best level.

The traffic surveys taken this summer in Ben Brenman Park indicate that cut through traffic is minimal. About half of the traffic traveling both ways along Brenman Park Drive was originating from or going to the Sommerville Drive area or on to Brenman Park Drive in Cameron Station. The use of Brenman Park Drive for traffic conveyance is one of the reasons staff supported and City Council approved the inclusion of Brenman Park Drive as part of the overall roadway network for the Cameron Station development in the late 1990s.

FISCAL IMPACT: None

ATTACHMENT: Map showing Ben Brenman Park area, including Brenman Park Drive.

STAFF: Richard J. Baier, P.E., Director, Transportation and Environmental Services
Sandra Whitmore, Director, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
Douglas McCobb, P.E., Deputy Director, Transportation and Transit Services

BEN BRENNAN PARK

