

# City of Alexandria, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 21, 2004

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *PS*

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO #74 : PEDESTRIAN SAFETY INITIATIVES

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This memorandum is in response to Councilman Smedberg's questions about pedestrian safety initiatives.

The attached memorandum from T&ES addresses plans for implementing future pedestrian safety initiatives.

Funding for a pedestrian safety coordinator position is not included in the FY 2005 Proposed Budget. Adding a position in T&ES to coordinate pedestrian safety initiatives would cost an estimated \$69,000 per year in employee salary and benefits, plus one-time start-up costs of approximately \$5,000 for office supplies and equipment.

Attachment: Pedestrian Safety Improvements (Council Request #04-52S) memorandum of April 16, 2004

*City of Alexandria, Virginia*

**MEMORANDUM**

DATE: APRIL 21, 2004

TO: COUNCILMAN PAUL C. SMEDBERG

THROUGH: ROSE WILLIAMS BOYD, DIRECTOR, CITIZEN ASSISTANCE *RWB*

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

SUBJECT: PEDESTRIAN SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS (COUNCIL REQUEST #04-52S)

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This is in response to your request for information on pedestrian initiatives to promote safe, attractive and convenient pedestrian access and mobility. Specifically, you requested information on the following items:

- ▶ What is T&ES planning to do to continue improving and expanding pedestrian improvement projects; and what coordinated activities are there with the Police Department to develop and promote a long-term pedestrian safety program.
- ▶ What ideas T&ES might have for future initiatives and programs such as the following:
  - 1) formulating a list of the top 15 locations in need of significant pedestrian improvements;
  - 2) expanding engineering, education, technology, signage, striping, and geometric redesign initiatives;
  - 3) all-pedestrian clearance zones;
  - 4) pedestrian and traffic calming projects in and around school zones; and
  - 5) the feasibility of a pedestrian bike and trail coordinator position in light of major transportation, traffic, and open space initiatives the City is about to undertake.

**Improving and Expanding on T&ES Initiated Pedestrian Improvement Projects**

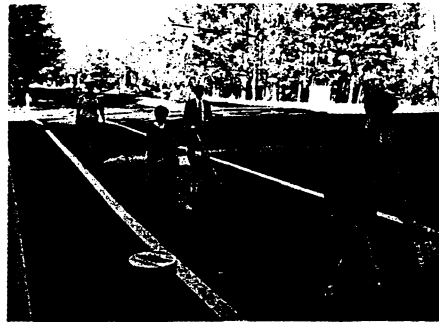
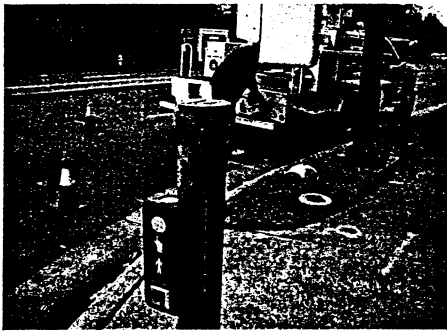
T&ES is undertaking a number of projects to promote safe and convenient pedestrian mobility.

- Sidewalks - There are numerous locations with missing sections of sidewalks in the City, and pedestrians have to fend for themselves in the roadway or on an unimproved shoulder. Missing sidewalks create dangerous and unacceptable situations that must be corrected. Over the next three years T&ES will invest \$938,000 in Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) and City funds to construct missing sidewalks sections and new sidewalks. This funding will focus on high pedestrian activity areas, particularly around Metro stations and bus stops.



- Over the next two years, T&ES will invest \$530,000 in CMAQ and City funds to provide improved pedestrian facilities on the Duke Street Bridge located east of the Beatley Library crossing Duke Street at Ben Brenman Park. Presently this section of Duke Street has no pedestrian crossing points for over a half of mile. The modified bridge will provide a convenient link between the Library and the Park and will improve the accessibility of both.
- Over the next two years, T&ES and Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities are investing \$828,000 in Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP) and City funds to expand and improve the Eisenhower Avenue multi-use trail. The proposed improvements will enhance the accessibility of the Eisenhower Valley by pedestrians and bicyclists, as well as eliminating the at-grade crossing of Eisenhower Avenue. This trail connects to the Holmes Run bike trail, thereby, providing convenient access of the trail by a large number of residents.
- T&ES is aggressively installing countdown pedestrian signals throughout the City, a significant enhancement to the traditional WALK/DON'T WALK displays at intersections. Staff recently surveyed the City's pedestrian signals to target other needed improvements, and is also participating in Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) sponsored research investigating ways to further improve the operation of pedestrian signals.
- T&ES is developing a new policy on pedestrian crossing times at signaled intersections. For years, the City has based the calculation of pedestrian crossing times on guidance provided in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). To encourage greater pedestrian activity and enhance safety, T&ES is expanding on the MUTCD guidance to provide more generous crossing times for pedestrians. The longer crossing times are particularly helpful when there are large numbers of pedestrians crossing the road.
- T&ES is installing accessible pedestrian signals for handicapped pedestrians. Accessible pedestrian signals enhance mobility for the City's handicapped citizens and visitors. Additionally, these signals are beneficial to non-handicapped pedestrians by improving push-button locations and providing audible cues to supplement the visual signals.

Alexandria is one of the first communities in the area to install accessible pedestrian signals. T&ES continues to work with the Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities to target future locations to install these devices. This is a good program to expand because installing accessible pedestrian signals helps all pedestrians by improving push-button locations and removing other obstacles. In addition to the modest City funding available for accessible pedestrian signals, staff has secured grant funding to install accessible pedestrian signals and other improvements at 19 intersections between Walker Street and Dove Street on Duke Street.



- Alexandria is also one of the first jurisdictions to install in-pavement flashing beacons at a crosswalk. This device consists of a series of flashing yellow lights that are recessed in the road surface to alert motorists of the presence of pedestrians. These devices are particularly effective during times of poor visibility when pedestrians might not otherwise be seen by drivers. The first installation is located on Stevenson Avenue at Yoakum Parkway. The second set of flashing beacons will be installed across Braddock Road at the Metro station. T&ES is working with the FHWA on research to study the effectiveness of this device.
- T&ES and Planning and Zoning rigorously review development site plans to ensure pedestrian needs are met. Many pedestrian accommodations are being incorporated into the final plans as a result of the Departments' diligence, including wider sidewalks, bulb-outs, enhanced crosswalks, buffers between traffic and pedestrians, and more.
- The City is contributing \$5,000 toward the Council of Government's (COG) Street Smart Pedestrian Safety Campaign. The goal of this program is to make motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists more aware of each other's needs. The bulk of these funds are spent on radio advertising during the spring, complemented by posters on transit shelters, buses, Metro stations, and Metro brochures and public service announcements.
- In order to help educate pedestrians, T&ES developed an informative pedestrian safety brochure filled with important safety tips. This brochure provides a comprehensive approach to educate pedestrians and includes pedestrian laws and all relevant topics.
- The City of Alexandria has been selected to participate in the Walkable Communities Initiative. This is a pilot program offered in only eight communities in the Washington Metropolitan Area. The pilot, which is part of an effort to make our City more

pedestrian friendly. The initiative is being funded by a grant from the National Center for Bicycling and Walking and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG).

T&ES will invest \$80,000 for on-going bus shelter maintenance. Many of the bus shelters in Alexandria have never been properly maintained. This investment will help clean up and repair the shelters, thus, making the transit experience more enjoyable and encouraging greater transit and pedestrian travel.

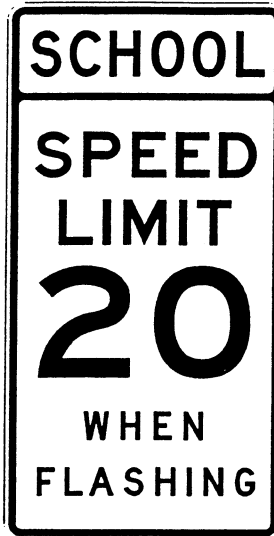


### **Coordinating Activities with Police Department**

T&ES and the Police Department continue to coordinate efforts to identify pedestrian safety issues and develop comprehensive solutions on pedestrian initiatives. One of the areas the two departments regularly work on is selecting, implementing and operating traffic control devices to facilitate safe pedestrian movement. The departments are presently working together to develop pedestrian improvements at the Braddock Road Metro station. This process has identified several unique and innovative potential solutions that are being evaluated.

The departments are also working together to develop pedestrian enhancements on Eisenhower Avenue. Recently staff from T&ES and the Police Department met with representatives from the Hoffman complex to develop a pedestrian action plan, including pedestrian improvements as well as enforcement strategies. Pedestrian travel routes are being evaluated for safety as well as convenience. A number of related issues have been identified for improvement.

A joint project between T&ES and Police is underway to improve pedestrian safety along Duke Street near the King Street Metro Station. This project is in conjunction with the construction of the pedestrian concourse. The joint effort has identified several pedestrian safety enhancements that will be implemented when construction is completed.



T&ES and the Police Department are evaluating school zone speed limits. Currently, the speed posted in most schools zones is the same as the regular roadway speed limit. An initiative under evaluation is to install new speed limit signs in school zones that reduce the speed when the sign is flashing. This will require Council approval.

T&ES and the Police Department will continue to work together and explore opportunities to develop and promote a long-term pedestrian safety program.

#### **Future Initiatives and Programs**

There are a number of other initiatives and programs that have significant potential and deserve thorough consideration. You identified the following five areas:

Formulating a list of the top 15 locations in need of significant pedestrian improvements. One approach to formulating a list of top locations in need of pedestrian improvements is for T&ES to work with the Police Department. Developing such a list will require a ranking scheme that promotes safe, attractive and convenient pedestrian access and mobility. Past initiatives have relied on accident statistics along with other quantitative data to prioritize safety enhancement projects. This methodology alone, however, is not sufficient because qualitative measures such as perceived safety, convenience, and desirability to the user should also be considered. Ideally, staff would review an entire area which allows for a comprehensive plan to include things such as lighting, streetscape improvements and other items to enhance the pedestrian experience.

Once a list is established and prioritized it would be presented to the Traffic and Parking Board for a public hearing. Given adequate funding, T&ES would be pleased to take the lead and initiate such a program.

Expanding engineering, education, technology, signage, striping, and geometric redesign initiatives. New infrastructure standards could be developed to enhance the pedestrian experience. These standards could include items such as street furniture, sidewalk widths, lighting, open-air markets, etc., to enhance the pedestrian experience.

- **Lighting** – A possible pedestrian initiative that is often overlooked, is nighttime illumination of the City’s streets, sidewalks, and bike trails. Most pedestrian accidents occur during times of poor visibility. Poor illumination reduces safety for pedestrians, joggers, and bicyclists. The City’s pedestrian and bicycle facilities need good lighting if they are to be used. Better lighting can also help to reduce criminal activity and promote more pedestrian use. Improved lighting would be a long term project that requires increased funding levels both in the capital improvements and operations budget.
- **Pedestrian Signals** – Installing pedestrian displays at many of the older traffic signals in another initiative. Most traffic signals were constructed before pedestrian signals were in large use. Though outfitting these signals with pedestrian displays is expensive because it requires installing conduit beneath the street, a capital improvement program could be developed to accomplish this task over several years.
- **Bike Lanes** – An aggressive bike lane construction program could be implemented along the City’s arterial streets. Such program may be difficult to implement because of right-of-way issues and parking, however, it would encourage more bicycle commuting and is worthy of consideration.
- **Pedestrian Fencing** - There are some locations in the City where pedestrians are crossing streets at unsafe locations, although there may be an established crosswalk a few yards away. To avoid such ventures, the Europeans have successfully used fencing to better control pedestrian crossing locations, a practice that may have application in Alexandria.



- **Standards** - Other new standards to enhance the pedestrian experience include items such as street furniture, adjusting sidewalk widths, lighting, open air markets, etc., to enhance the pedestrian experience. Sections of streets could be closed to create pedestrian malls.

- **Snow Removal - A program to remove snow on primary pedestrian facilities could be funded and implemented. Presently, property owners are required to remove the snow on the sidewalks abutting their property, and not all property owners comply with this City Code requirement sidewalks. Consequently, many pedestrian routes and bus stops are not accessible. The City could take over this task with increased funding and the use of contractors.**

**An all-pedestrian clearance zone is an area that is specifically designed and reserved for pedestrian use only. This concept originally appeared as pedestrian malls. The concept of closing off a street to vehicular traffic must be carefully evaluated and alternatives thoroughly investigated. Recent increase in vehicular traffic and greater environmental awareness may have again created opportunity to reconsider this concept.**

**T&ES has completed a number of pedestrian and traffic calming projects at Charles Barrett, Douglas MacArthur, Patrick Henry, and James K. Polk elementary schools. Staff coordinated all projects with school staff and members of the PTA to exchange experience and work closely together to accomplish the "joint venture". Staff is presently working on projects at George Washington Middle School and Jefferson Houston Elementary School. This program should be continued in conjunction with other school area pedestrian initiatives.**

**Finally, creating a pedestrian, bike and trail coordinator position offers exciting possibilities and would be a good fit within the T&ES organization. The duties of this position could include planning for facilities, promoting pedestrian and bicycle use, writing grant proposals for initiatives, coordinating projects, developing standards, and coordinating with other departments. There are some overlapping areas of responsibility, as the Department of Parks and Recreation oversees the recreational bike trails that are in the City's parks. An alternative approach would be to use existing T&ES staff to accomplish the duties of a pedestrian and bicycle coordinator. As the program evolves, a full-time position could be included at a later date if needed.**

**If you have questions, or need further information, please contact me or Tom Culpepper at 703-838-4966.**

**cc: The Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council  
Philip Sunderland, City Manager  
Thomas Culpepper, Deputy Director/Transportation & Transit, T&ES  
Robert Garbacz, Division Chief/Transportation, T&ES**