

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 12, 2004

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *PS*

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO # 42: TRANSPORTATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (MAYOR EUILLE, COUNCILMAN KRUPICKA, AND COUNCILWOMAN WOODSON'S REQUESTS)

This memorandum is in response to questions from Mayor Euille, Councilman Krupicka, and Councilwoman Woodson on the Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES) budget and other issues.

Q: What is the (extra) cost for brick sidewalk installation and maintenance versus concrete sidewalks? (Councilman Krupicka and Councilwoman Woodson)

A: The cost to install brick sidewalk is over twice the cost of concrete sidewalk (\$40.00 per square yard for brick versus \$18.92 per square yard for concrete). The maintenance of the brick sidewalks is estimated to be over four times more expensive than the maintenance of concrete sidewalks. We have some concrete sidewalks that have not required maintenance in over thirty years, whereas, with brick sidewalks, repairs are needed within two or three years after construction. The FY 2005 Proposed Budget includes \$35,000 for one vehicle to allow the current five-member crew to split into two separate crews and increase brick sidewalk maintenance productivity.

Q: Why have we cleaned and checked fewer catch basins in 2003 if we've had more rain?
P. 8-179 (Councilwoman Woodson)

A: Last year our regular catch basin cleaning crew was unable to clean the same amount of catch basins as in prior years due to the amount of time that was spent repeatedly cleaning flood prone areas that were constantly flooded due to the second highest annual rain fall ever recorded for this area. The amount of time used to clean these flood prone areas greatly reduced the number of catch basins that could be worked on.

Q: Where is excess in the budget for things like unused snow removal funds? (Councilwoman Woodson)

A: Historically, the operations budget for the snow account has varied from less than \$300,000 to nearly \$350,000. In FY 2000, FY 2001 and FY 2003, likely due to weather cycles and the frequency and number of snow storms, we overspent the budgeted amount by \$157,203, \$182,607, \$836,066, respectively. When there is an excess of General Fund operating money for one account, funds can be reallocated within a department (with OMB approval) to meet an unforeseen budget need (such as snow budget overages), or can be reallocated to another department with City Council authorization. If excess operating funds remain within a department's budget at year's end when the City's books are closed, those funds lapse from the department's budget and become part of the year-end General Fund balance.

Q: Please provide a status update as to all expenses associated with current year snow removal in comparison to the planned budget. (Mayor Euille)

A: In FY 2004, the City has expended \$616,727 on snow removal. The budget is \$284,740. For FY 2005, in recognition of recent weather trends, the budget includes \$350,270 for snow removal.

Q: Will cleaner bus shelters actually increase ridership or just provide customer service? (Councilwoman Woodson)

A: It is not believed that cleaner bus shelters alone will substantially increase ridership. However, cleaner shelters, coupled with other improvements, should help to improve ridership. The condition of bus stops and shelters is one of the top ten issues raised during the Comprehensive Transportation Policy and Program Transit meetings by riders of DASH and Metrobus. Cleaning shelters is a customer service improvement, designed to improve the overall transit experience. Getting persons to leave the comfort and independence of their single occupancy vehicles is difficult at best, and requires a quality transit experience that includes clean bus shelters.

Q: Why is the through traffic and left turn traffic on Eastbound West Glebe at Mt. Vernon the same with a dedicated right turn lane? (Councilwoman Woodson)

A: The reason the eastbound through and left turning traffic share the same lane is to evenly distribute the traffic. In order to evaluate a lane assignment change, the department performed lane assignment counts. On the eastbound approach, the intersection traffic is comprised of three percent turning left, 56 percent straight through, and 41 percent turning right. If the right turn and through traffic were to share the same lane, 97 percent of the traffic would be in a single lane. This volume of traffic would create a problem because the length of queuing traffic in the right lane would be blocking the driveways to the shopping center. Vehicles desiring to turn right on red could no longer do so because through traffic would be blocking them, which would compound this problem.

In the past, consideration was given to allowing traffic in both eastbound lanes to be able to go straight through the intersection. This change would require that parking be removed from the eastbound departure of the intersection so that a second eastbound departure lane be added and then transition to a single lane. Removing the parking is not feasible because this parking is required by the businesses in that block. Staff recommends no lane change.

Answers to a number of other questions related to T&ES will be provided in separate memos.