


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 8, 2006

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION TO EARN BICYCLE FRIENDLY COMMUNITY STATUS BY 2009

ISSUE: Proposed Action Plan for Bicycle Friendly Communities resolution.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council receive this report and docket the resolution for Council action at the June 27 legislative meeting.

BACKGROUND: The proposed Action Plan for Bicycle Friendly Communities resolution (attached) provides an expanded bicycle-related policy vision and goals for the City as it implements the Community Pathways program. The Action Plan, which is general in nature and consistent with the Community Pathways resolution adopted by Council on February 14, 2006, reinforces Council's Strategic Plan Goal of providing "An Integrated, Multimodal Transportation System That Efficiently Gets People from Point 'A' to Point 'B.'"

Staff from Transportation & Environmental Services, Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities, Planning & Zoning, the Alexandria Police Department and Alexandria Health Department are currently coordinating a comprehensive plan called "Spin City 2009." If Council decides to adopt the attached resolution, the goal would be to have the City of Alexandria recognized as a Bicycle Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists by 2009 and to implement "Spin City 2009."

If Council chooses to adopt the attached resolution and proceed with a "Spin City 2009" program, the City of Alexandria will focus on bicycling-related engineering, education, encouragement, and enforcement action items. The City may consider a month-long celebration of bicycling each May to include family fun rides, Council-led "Community Spins," school safety visits, commuter lessons, Bike-to-Work Day, and possibly a professional bicycle race and bicycle giveaway component.

What is a "Bicycle Friendly Community" and why would Alexandria participate?

The Bicycle Friendly Community Campaign is an accreditation-style program administered through the League of American Bicyclists.

It recognizes municipalities that provide safe accommodations for cycling and encourage residents to ride for transportation and recreation. The League of American Bicyclists recognizes four award levels: Platinum, Gold, Silver and Bronze.

Arlington County, Washington, DC and Rockville, Md. are Bronze-level Bicycle Friendly Communities. Silver award winners include Chicago and Tempe, Arizona. Gold award winners include Portland, Oregon and Boulder, Colorado. There is one Platinum level Bicycle Friendly Community in Davis, California.

As part of the "Spin City 2009" initiative a logo contest and subsequent adoption of an official logo for this program by the City is planned as a kickoff event and program marketing tool.

How do we become a Bicycle-Friendly Community in three years?

Alexandria must exhibit commitment, focused investment in infrastructure and policies, and broad community involvement.

The following Action Items below provide a possible framework for the "Spin City 2009" initiative, which could earn Alexandria Bicycle Friendly Community status:

Engineering Action Items

- Add 2 miles of new bicycle lanes or shared lane marking projects every year and pilot new/innovative bicycle projects on an annual basis
- Coordinate maintenance with Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities and provide an on-line forum for notification of maintenance and safety hazards
- Add 500 bicycle racks (including ample covered parking sites)

Education Action Items

- Integrate Safe Routes to School improvements with the City's existing Traffic Calming program
- Update the City Bicycle Trail and Recreation Facility Map every other year and create a website which is updated regularly and provides a feedback option for citizens

Enforcement Action Items

- The Alexandria Police Department (APD) could address traffic enforcement in targeted areas such as Union Street and on the Mount Vernon Trail to encourage bicyclists to ride using the Rules of the Road
- Implement commuter safety programs, improve bicycle registration

Encouragement Action Items

- Similar to its transit subsidy, the City could consider providing stipends for employees who bicycle or walk to work at least four times per week.
- The City could organize and sponsor a month long promotional effort and ride series to encourage bicycling

Evaluation Action Items

- An annual Benchmark report would be presented to City Council with input from web-based surveys on the City's progress in: Security, Amount and Location of Parking, Bicycle Facility Location, and Maintenance

FISCAL IMPACT: There is no anticipated fiscal impact by adopting the general Action Plan for Bicycle Friendly Communities. If Council chooses to kickoff "Spin City 2009," staff from Transportation & Environmental Services, Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities, Planning & Zoning, the Alexandria Police Department and the Alexandria Health Department will develop a comprehensive program and identify associated resources for future Council consideration so that the program could be considered for funding as part of the upcoming FY 2008 budget.

For example, several outstanding grants and existing CIP items may support the initial phases of "Spin City 2009." Also, T&ES could potentially accomplish road re-striping by capitalizing on planned road overlays currently in the City budget. Additionally, the City currently allots \$77,000 annually to bicycle trails in the RP&CA budget. The existing funding has been earmarked to match grants and provide maintenance of key bicycle trails. This funding may be proposed to be increased to accommodate the high use of the bicycle trails, and to create and improve trail facilities along key trails such as Holmes Run.

With respect to adding bicycle racks throughout the City, staff could develop partnerships with business and community groups to seek sponsorship and funding for added bicycle racks.

Safe Routes to School projects may be identified in the current Traffic Calming program and FY2007-2008 Safe Routes grants may provide additional funding. The City has several outstanding grants that will contribute to this effort:

- \$120,000 in VDOT State Transportation Pilot Program funds for a Mobility Needs Assessment of Infrastructure for Bicyclists
- \$400,000 in VDOT Safety Improvement funds for the Holmes Run Stream Crossing/Chambliss Connector
- \$835,000 for the Eisenhower Avenue Multi-Use Greenway (includes \$167,000 in prior years' CIP of which a portion is matched through RP&CA)
- \$150,000 Tareyton/Holmes Run trail improvement grant (includes \$50,000 of CIP matching from RPCA)

Any new funding proposed for Council consideration in FY 2008 for bicycle races, giveaways and promotional activities will planned to be supplemented by grants, private sponsorship and/or match components.

Staff will return to Council with a proposed make-up of the City-wide, multi-disciplinary committee discussed in item 10 of the attached resolution.

ATTACHMENT: Action Plan for Bicycle Friendly Communities Resolution

STAFF:

Richard J. Baier, P.E., Director, Transportation & Environmental Services

Eileen Fogarty, Director, Planning and Zoning

Kirk Kincannon, Director, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

Charles Samarra, Police Chief

Tom Culpepper, PhD, P.E., Deputy Director, Transportation & Environmental Services

Yon Lambert, Pedestrian and Bicycle Coordinator

Action Plan for Bicycle Friendly Communities Resolution
of the
Alexandria, Virginia City Council

Resolution No. _____

Whereas, we, the undersigned Mayor and Members of the Alexandria City Council, Virginia, make decisions every day affecting the health and safety of our residents, the efficient conduct of commerce and delivery of government services, and the long term quality of life in our communities; and

Whereas, cities across the globe are managing diverse issues such as pollution, congestion, traffic safety, accessibility, social inclusion, and economic growth. Increasing urbanization and sprawl is generating extra demand for quality public spaces and recreation opportunities. A renewed emphasis on security and the costs of dealing with the emerging epidemics of obesity and physical inactivity are stretching limited resources even further; and

Whereas, solutions to these many challenges are equally diverse and complex. This Charter recognizes one policy initiative that addresses these challenges and contributes to many of the solutions necessary to improve the quality of life in cities: increasing the percentage of trips made by bicycle by making communities more bicycle friendly; and

Whereas, we recognize that increasing bicycle use can:

- Improve the environment by reducing the impact on residents of pollution and noise, limiting greenhouse gases, and improving the quality of public spaces;
- Reduce congestion by shifting short trips (the majority of trips in cities) out of cars. This will also make cities more accessible for public transport, walking, essential car travel, emergency services, and deliveries;
- Save lives by creating safer conditions for bicyclists and as a direct consequence improve the safety of all other road users. Research shows that increasing the number of bicyclists on the street improves bicycle safety;
- Increase opportunities for residents of all ages to participate socially and economically in the community, regardless of income or ability. Greater choice of travel modes also increases independence, especially among seniors and children;
- Boost the economy by creating a community that is an attractive destination for new residents, tourists and businesses;
- Enhance recreational opportunities, especially for children, and further contribute to the quality of life in the community;
- Save city funds by increasing the efficient use of public space, reducing the need for costly new road infrastructure, preventing crashes, improving the health of the community, and increasing the use of public transport;
- Enhance public safety and security by increasing the number of "eyes on the street" and providing more options for movement in the event of emergencies, natural disasters, and major public events; and
- Improve the health and well being of the population by promoting routine physical activity.

Now, therefore, I, William D. Euille, Mayor of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, and on behalf of the Alexandria City Council, am committed to taking the following steps to improve conditions for bicycling and thus realizing the significant potential benefits of bicycling in our community. We hereby adopt the following Action Plan for Bicycle Friendly Communities:

1. Adopt a target level of bicycle use (*e.g.* percent of trips) and safety to be achieved within a specific timeframe, and improve data collection necessary to monitor progress;
2. Provide safe and convenient bicycle access to all parts of the community through a signed network of on- and off-street facilities, low-speed streets, and secure parking. Local cyclists should be involved in identifying maintenance needs and ongoing improvements.
3. Establish information programs to promote bicycling for all purposes, and to communicate the many benefits of bicycling to residents and businesses (*e.g.* with bicycle maps, public relations campaigns, neighborhood rides, a ride with elected officials);
4. Make the City a model employer by encouraging bicycle use among its employees (*e.g.* by providing parking, and establishing a city bicycle fleet);
5. Ensure all city policies, plans, codes, and programs are updated and implemented to take advantage of every opportunity to create a more bicycle-friendly community. Staff in all departments should be offered training to enable them to complete this task;
6. Educate all road users to share the road and interact safely. Road design and education programs should be combined to increase the confidence of bicyclists;
7. Enforce traffic laws to improve the safety and comfort of all road users, with a particular focus on behaviors and attitudes that cause motor vehicle/bicycle crashes;
8. Develop special programs to encourage bicycle use in communities where significant segments of the population do not drive (*e.g.* through Safe Routes to Schools programs) and where short trips are most common;
9. Promote intermodal travel between public transport and bicycles, *e.g.* by putting bike racks on buses, improving parking at transit stops, and improving access to rail and public transport vehicles;
10. Establish a citywide, multi-disciplinary committee for non motorized mobility to submit to the Mayor/Council a regular evaluation and action plan for completing the items in this Charter.

WILLIAM D. EUILLE MAYOR
On behalf of the City Council
of Alexandria, Virginia

ATTEST:

Jacqueline M. Henderson, CMC City Clerk