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The Council Connection

your connection to City Council by:

Vice Mayor Justin M. Wilson

Alexandria, Virginia

June 1, 2018

In This Edition

[Council Initiatives](#)

[Upcoming Metro Closure](#)

[Eco-City Alexandria](#)

[Working with our State](#)

[Opportunity Zones](#)

[The End of Car Decals?](#)

[Potomac Yard Metro](#)

[Jefferson Davis Highway](#)

[Host a Town Hall](#)

[Upcoming Issues: Vision Zero & 230KV Transmission Line](#)

Quick Links

[E-Mail Me](#)

[Past Newsletters](#)

[City of Alexandria Website](#)

[Pay City Taxes Online](#)

[Review Real Estate Assessments](#)

[Crime Mapping & Statistics](#)

[Call Click Connect](#) (Submit Service Requests to City Agencies)

[Board & Commission Vacancies](#)

[Alexandria Health Department Restaurant Inspections](#)

[Report Potholes](#)

Two weeks from tomorrow T. C. Williams High School will graduate the Class of 2018.

Congratulations to the graduates for their academic achievement, and best wishes for success in whatever path they have chosen.

This month also marks the last month of the Council term as we head into our summer recess.

Important issues await the Council before we recess and we will be back in the fall with a full docket.

[Contact me anytime.](#) Let me know how I can help.

Council Initiatives

Metro Closures

Planning efforts to prepare for needed repairs on Metrorail have commenced at the staff level, and we will require ideas from our residents as we work to prevent this from being a disaster for our City.

Once the crown jewel of the Washington, DC region, Metrorail is experiencing a very difficult time. While the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) has numerous challenges, the most serious and pressing are related to safety.

Metro is a basic building block of our region's economy. If there is a perception that the system is unsafe, then that awareness can be crippling to the region.



[Schedule Child Safety Seat Inspection](#)

[Smoke Detector Installation Request](#)

[Real Estate Tax Receipt Calculator](#)

[License Your Dog or Cat](#)

[Report a Street Light Outage](#)

Events/Updates

The Next Campaign

[In November, I made a significant announcement about my political future: I announced that I will be running to be Alexandria's next Mayor.](#)

I try to keep politics out of this monthly newsletter.

If you have not been receiving my campaign updates and you wish to receive updates on this new campaign, [please drop my campaign a line](#) and we'll get you on the list for campaign updates.

Voting in Primaries

Tuesday June 12th all of the City's polling places will be open from 6 AM until 7 PM.

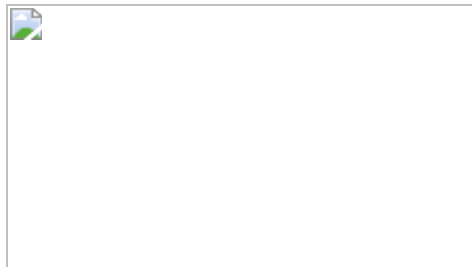
The Republicans will be holding a primary to nominate a candidate for United States Senate. [The sample ballot for the Republican primary is available online.](#)

The Democrats will be holding a primary to choose a candidate for Mayor and 6 nominees for City Council. [The sample ballot for the Democratic primary is available online.](#)

Voters will be asked to choose which primary they wish to participate in.

The relatively new General Manager of WMATA, Paul Wiedefeld, is aggressively working to tackle these challenges. [WMATA finalized the SafeTrack Plan, which concentrated three years of work into one year.](#)

Advancing this work required expanded time when the system is not operating. To make this happen, extended weekend hours were discontinued, new mid-day maintenance was scheduled, and most importantly, a series of "surges" occurred across the system.



[Working with WMATA, DASH, and other local partners, we came up with a series of alternatives to assist Alexandria riders in their commutes.](#)

During the surges, bus ridership in the corridor doubled and ridership on the Route 1 Transitway tripled. The shuttle bus operation carried 17,000 trips a day during Surge 3 and 25,000 trips a day during Surge 4. On DASH, ridership increases were between 26-31%.

We saw a 92% increase in usage of the Potomac Yard Trail, an 89% increase for the Mount Vernon Trail. Those were coupled with a 27% increase in Commonwealth Avenue bike traffic.

While these shutdowns certainly had negative impacts on our residents, they also allowed the City and its partners to experiment in our responses.

[We will now have to put those lessons to the test as WMATA has announced a new set of closures for next summer.](#) This time, the closures will be to rebuild outdoor station platforms that are past the end of their usable lives. The first phase of this work will involve closing down the Braddock Road, King Street and Eisenhower Avenue stations. This will mean that there will no rail service south of the airport expected from Memorial Day to Labor Day in 2019.

This will require a dramatic regional response. Far beyond the impact of the SafeTrack, this closure holds the potential to cripple our region. While we do have the luxury of a year to get ready, this closure will require the City and its regional partners to identify transit alternatives, teleworking options, economic development planning, and more.

Let us know your thoughts as we prepare.

Eco-City Alexandria

How can Alexandria take meaningful climate action? How should we best handle solid waste and manage recycling? Can we expand the use of renewable energy in our community? Can more sustainable building practices become universal in Alexandria?

Alexandria's Environmental Policy Commission is pushing our City to make new commitments in our quest towards environmental sustainability.

Led by an incredibly motivated and knowledgeable group of residents, the City vaulted to the lead among local governments by adopting the [Eco-City Charter](#) a decade ago. The charter defined a comprehensive vision for our City to improve environmental sustainability.

The Eco-City Charter then led the City to adopt the [Environmental Action Plan](#). The plan laid out specific actions the City should

[Absentee voting will continue through this week and next, Next Saturday is the last day for in-person absentee voting.](#)

Mulch, Delivered

In April the City began mulch deliveries.

Mulch is available in a full or half truckload, and each delivery ranges from \$50 - \$100.

[For the first time this year, deliveries can be scheduled online.](#)

Real Estate Assessment Appeals

Any appeal of 2018 Real Estate Assessments must be filed by today for hearing by the Board of Equalization.

The [form is available online](#) and can be submitted by mail.

D-Day Commemoration

On Saturday the Alexandria-Caen Sister City Committee will be hosting the 8th Annual Commemoration of D-Day.

[The event will be held from 2:30 PM until 5:00 PM at Market Square in front of City Hall.](#)

Taste of Del Ray on Sunday!

[This Sunday from 1 PM until 3 PM the Taste of Del Ray returns.](#)

Twelve Del Ray restaurants will provide a taste of some of the best food on the Avenue.

[Tickets are \\$15 for adults and \\$5 for children and can be purchased in advance online.](#)

Mason Speakers

Is your club or organization interested in having a

undertake. It detailed how we should measure success and it began to define the next phase of our Eco-City evolution.

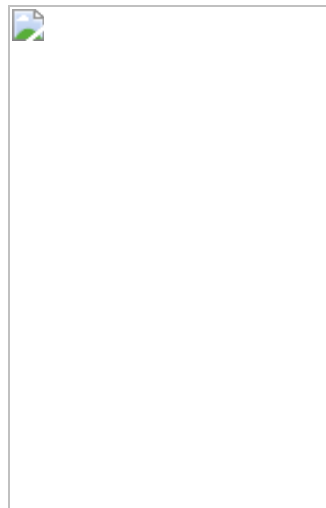
With a decade under our belt, it is now time to take our plan to the next level. We recently commenced an effort to revise our Environmental Action Plan. [At City Council's last legislative meeting, our Environmental Policy Commission provided a first glimpse at the recommendations of this new effort.](#)

[You can watch the presentation and discussion online.](#)

With any plan the City adopts, the test is not simply whether we will accomplish what we laid out in the plan (although that is an important test). The City plans that have transformative impact are the plans that end up cutting across multiple City policy priorities. The Eco-City Environmental Action Plan has had that impact. It has fundamentally transformed City operations in numerous policy areas.

With the Federal government now choosing to decline its traditional global leadership role in climate policy, the responsibility falls to local and state governments to lead the way.

[In April of last year, the City staff released the latest report detailing our progress in achieving the items defined in the plan.](#)



We have seen great progress in the City in furtherance of our goals:

- The City government has reduced energy usage and greenhouse gas emissions.
- The percentage of new construction utilizing green building components has increased.
- The City's tree canopy has increased.
- We have protected over 100 acres of new open space.
- We have doubled our solid waste recycling rate.
- We have increased transit ridership.
- We have adopted smart-growth oriented residential parking standards.
- We have improved the walkability of our neighborhoods.
- We have implemented stormwater infrastructure around our City.

Despite a constrained revenue environment, we have used non-General Fund revenues to continue to make progress.

In recent years we created and sustained a very successful farmers market compost program.

In adopting last year's budget the Council funded a new program to provide proactive maintenance of the City's urban forest.

We are bringing a new Metro station to Potomac Yard and a new dedicated Transitway to the West End.

We recently created a new stormwater utility to address our obligations to the Chesapeake Bay.

We identified hundreds of millions of dollars to address combined sewer modernization to address our obligations to the Potomac River.

speaker?

The George Mason University speakers program is comprised of over 100 faculty and staff who provide lectures and guest presentations on hundreds of topics to organizations and businesses free of charge.

Contact Sarah Gallagher at 703-993-8761 or [via email](#) for more information.

First Thursday Returns!

Thursday is the "First Thursday."

[The Del Ray Business Association continues the tradition from 6 - 9 PM on Mount Vernon Avenue in Del Ray.](#)

Real Estate Tax Payment Due

The first half payment of the 2018 real estate tax is due Thursday June 15th.

[Payment can be made in six different ways, including online.](#)

Last year's approved budget included a new Sustainability Coordinator position.

Our approved Housing Master Plan recognizes the importance of energy conservation as a component of housing affordability.

Our Complete Streets investments have continued to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety and accessibility throughout the City.

Our recently approved [Eisenhower West](#) and [Old Town North](#) Small Area Plans included substantial sustainability chapters. As these plans are implemented, the City will have opportunities to achieve more significant sustainability initiatives, including district energy and other large-scale efforts.

[On the recommendation of our parking standards task force we recently adopted an ordinance to "right-size" our commercial parking standards .](#)

Yet, we can do more.

We have now begun a process of [updating our Green Building standards](#). These standards set the obligations of developers for incorporating sustainability into their new construction.

Our planned municipal facilities work gives us an opportunity to raise the bar for sustainability practices in our own facilities construction.

We are now working to update our landscape guidelines to reflect the Environmental Action Plan and the City's Urban Forestry Master Plan.

The Commission's recommendations push the City to make new commitments in renewable energy, climate change, green buildings, land use and open space, and solid waste.

Constrained budgets make it more challenging for our City to continue its leadership in sustainability practices, but we can and should work to lead the region in this policy area. These efforts are critical given recent Federal policy changes, but are also good for our economy and our quality of life. I look forward to working to see them to reality.

The Commonwealth Giveth and Taketh Away

Virginia is a [Dillon Rule state](#), which is the opposite of a Home Rule state. Simply, the Dillon Rule means that local governments in Virginia cannot do anything that is not specifically authorized by the General Assembly and the Governor.

As a consequence, what occurs in the annual General Assembly session is significant for the City and how it operates. The 2018 session is shaping up to be more consequential than most (in addition to being longer than most).

One of the major pieces of legislation being debated during this



General Assembly session relates to the potential expansion of Medicaid under the Federal Affordable Care Act (ACA). The proposed expansion would extend healthcare coverage available to low-income residents. This extension would

provide coverage for residents up to 138% of the Federal poverty level.

In Virginia, the proposed expansion would provide coverage to 400,000 additional Virginians. With 13% of Alexandria residents currently uninsured, [there are approximately 5,900 Alexandrians who could benefit from this expansion.](#)

In addition to the benefit to individual Alexandria residents, City government and the Alexandria City Public Schools are able to draw on Medicaid resources. In 2017, the City government received \$3.2 million in reimbursements from Medicaid, and the Alexandria City Public Schools received another \$2 million.

In past years, efforts to expand Medicaid have failed in the Virginia General Assembly. Due to the changes brought by last November's election, there has been optimism this would change.

During the regular session, efforts to expand Medicaid failed in the State Senate. However, similar efforts passed in the House of Delegates. [The version of the state budget adopted by the House of Delegates includes amendments expanding Medicaid.](#)

Ultimately, the General Assembly adjourned "sine die" without the adoption of a budget.

In April, the General Assembly reconvened in a [Special Session called by Governor Northam](#). The Commonwealth's fiscal year begins on July 1st. If there is not a budget adopted prior to then, there would have been a state government shutdown.

In the Special Session, as in the regular session, it is the House of Delegates that has been supportive of a budget including Medicaid expansion, and it is the Senate that has been opposed.

Finally on this past Wednesday evening, in dramatic fashion, both houses adopted a budget that included the expansion of Medicaid. [This is an important step forward to expand healthcare coverage to so many low-income Alexandrians and Virginians](#) .

During the regular session, the General Assembly also adopted legislation to provide Virginia's share of money to support the stabilization of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA).

The legislation that was adopted was [a bill from Delegate Tim Hugo](#). This bill is decidedly imperfect, but it does acknowledge the important need to protect Metro as the linchpin of the region's economy.

The key flaw in this Metro funding legislation is that while it does come up with \$154 million of money for WMATA, [it does so by removing \\$100 million of Northern Virginia Transportation Authority \(NVRTA\) resources](#). For Alexandria, these funds are used primarily for transit initiatives, including Potomac Yard Metro, the [West End Transitway](#), and DASH Service expansions.

While the Governor offered amendments to try to correct this flaw, they were rejected in the House of Delegates.

With this legislation now enacted, NVRTA has been called upon to do the [difficult work of winnowing down the project list of what will be funded](#). Unfortunately, the draft that is continuing through the process removes most of the funding from the West End Transitway and all of the funding from a request to improve bicycle and pedestrian trails.

At the very same time as the General Assembly was potentially moving closer to making Medicaid expansion and state transit money finally happen, they also removed funding Governor Terry McAuliffe proposed in his final budget [to address the City's Combined Sewer System \(CSS\)](#).

Last year, the General Assembly adopted a much more aggressive timeline for remediation of the City's Combined Sewer System. With



remediation expected to require **hundreds of millions of dollars**, the City requested funding from state coffers to assist in this challenge. Other jurisdictions in Virginia with similar systems have benefited from such funding.

[Then-Governor McAuliffe proposed \\$20 million to assist the City in addressing these challenges.](#) Unfortunately, both the Senate and the House of Delegates have removed this funding.

This is now the second time that Virginia's Governor has recognized the importance of state funding assistance for Alexandria to tackle this significant clean water initiative by providing funding. But now Governor McAuliffe and previously Governor Bob McDonnell have both had the General Assembly remove that funding.

I'm hopeful that this pattern will change in the near future to support the burden of these costs.

Opportunity Zones

One of the more positive components of the recently adopted tax cut legislation, officially called the "Tax Cuts and Jobs Act," [was the creation of "Opportunity Zones."](#)

The legislation allows states and localities to designate areas where the Internal Revenue Service will provide favorable tax treatment for those who make investments.

The Governor of Virginia solicited for nomination of these areas by localities. Ultimately the City submitted four areas: Landmark Mall, Mark Center, Beauregard corridor and Arlandria.

[The Federal government just recently affirmed the designation for 212 Virginia opportunity areas](#), including these four areas in Alexandria.

While some of the rules applying to these zones are still remaining to be written at the Federal level, I'm happy to see this proposal move forward and I am hopeful that this designation will prove a useful tool in advocating for new economic growth in our community.

Car Tax Stickers

[Almost 11 years ago, during my first stint on the City Council, I proposed that the City consider eliminating the windshield decal used to enforce payment of the vehicle Personal Property Tax.](#)

I cited the diminished efficacy of the windshield decal as a tool for enforcement of payment, and the improved customer service by eliminating the decal. At the time, Fairfax County had just scrapped the decal for their vehicles, which was forcing consideration of the change throughout the region.

Now, over a decade later, Prince William, Manassas, Vienna and others have all transitioned away from the windshield decal. Loudoun County will be making the transition on July 1st of this year.

While concerns around potential lost revenue prevented the City

from pursuing this change back in 2007, it is now believed the the revenue impact would be negligible.

[Our staff recently returned with new analysis of the option and the financial impact.](#) They will return this fall with a formal recommendation.

I do believe the City has alternate enforcement mechanisms that we can and should utilize to ensure payment of the Personal Property Tax.

Potomac Yard Metro

On the front page of the [Final Environmental Impact Statement](#) for the Potomac Yard Metro Station are the seals of four entities: Federal Transit Administration, Department of the Interior, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) and the City of Alexandria. Later in the report there is additional input from the US Army Corps of Engineers, the US Environmental Protection Agency and the National Capital Planning Commission.

The breadth of the entities involved clearly demonstrates the complexity of the project.

[The Potomac Yard Metro project will facilitate the creation of up to 26,000 new jobs and will bring up to \\$2 billion of new tax revenue to the City \(over 30 years\). It removes thousands of vehicles from one of the most crowded corridors in our City. It promotes the creation of the kind of walkable community our City has long desired in Potomac Yard.](#)

For decades, the City has discussed, planned, and just plain hoped for a Metro Rail station at Potomac Yard.

In 2008, along with then-Councilman Rob Krupicka, I proposed a new start to efforts to bring Metro to Potomac Yard. [We included language in the City's Transportation Master Plan](#) explicitly calling for a new station at Potomac Yard. We also tied the construction and funding of Metro to the development occurring in the Yard.

The result is [a funding plan for Potomac Yard Metro](#) that not only leverages the development activity in Potomac Yard, but also does so without requiring the contributions of General Fund taxpayers.

The largest environmental, [economic development](#), and transportation initiative in our City's history is being accomplished using [one of the most innovative funding mechanisms used anywhere in the country.](#)

The funding package today consists of a [special tax district](#), tax increment funding, [Northern Virginia Transportation Authority regional funding](#), a [Virginia Transportation Infrastructure Board loan](#), and a developer contribution. Council recently voted to remove one of the special tax districts if a portion of money from the proposed Dominion 230KV transmission line easement can be used to replace the resources.

While the funding is generated by the City of Alexandria, the procurement agency is WMATA. It is being handled as a reimbursable project.

At the end of 2016, [WMATA issued the pre-solicitation notice to hire the contractor to design, construct, test and commission the new Potomac Yard Metro station.](#) The formal solicitation was released shortly thereafter and we are now closer than we have ever been to bringing Metro to Potomac Yard.

As the sealed bids came back it became clear that the responses were significantly above the budget for the project.

At this point the City government had a choice. The City government could have cancelled the procurement, restarted the public process and modified the scope. We could have cancelled the project altogether. Ultimately, the City chose to keep the project moving, and our staff worked with WMATA staff to make changes to the project scope within the existing procurement to bring the cost down.

Ultimately, [the budget was increased to \\$320 million](#) and the southern mezzanine was proposed to be removed. An award of a contract to build the station is now expected in the middle of this year.

I am deeply disappointed to see the scope of the project change. I do believe that the design was a good one. Yet, the last thing this project needed was any further delay.

The City will work with the selected bidder to improve the connectivity between the actual northern entrance and where the southern entrance would have been.

The new design will provide the ability to construct the additional southern entrance at a later date, if the need is demonstrated and the funding established.

The new schedule is for the station to open in late 2021/early 2022.

Confederate History

In the aftermath of the tragic murders in Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina, communities across the nation have reexamined their representations of Confederate history. None was more visible than the removal of the Confederate battle flag from the grounds of the South Carolina state capitol.

Here in Alexandria, we have received similar requests from residents to reexamine examples of such representations in our community.

[A few notable examples in Alexandria:](#)

Since 1970, the City has displayed the first flag of the Confederacy (not the battle flag) on Robert E. Lee's birthday and Confederate Memorial Day.

There are at least 30 streets named for prominent leaders of the Confederacy. The most significant one is Jefferson Davis Highway (Route 1).

[The Appomattox Statue, owned by the United Daughters of the Confederacy, at South Washington and Prince Streets honors the dead soldiers of Alexandria who fought for the Confederacy.](#)

Until very recently, a plaque on the [Marshall House](#) (now The Alexandrian Hotel) told the story of the shooting of a Union officer from a Confederate perspective.

My view is that there is little gained for Alexandria to re-fight a war that concluded 150 years ago. However, our community has changed over 150 years.

At the end of September 2015, the Council made the decision to end to flying of the flag of the Confederacy. We also created a community group to take public comment and advise the Council on other potential changes.

After five meetings, [the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on Confederate Memorials and Street Names made its recommendations to the City Council.](#)

While the report goes into considerable detail, the group recommended that the Appomattox Statue remain in place. Jefferson

Davis Highway be renamed, and other potential street re-namings be initiated individually using the existing process.

[A new advisory group was designated to make recommendations to the City Council as to the new name for Jefferson Davis Highway.](#) To promote consistency with Fairfax County, [the group recommended that this road section be renamed Richmond Highway.](#) Last month City Council directed the City Manager to docket an ordinance to make this change this month.

Honors and commemorations that seemed appropriate a century or even 40 years ago, may no longer be appropriate in a modern Alexandria. Furthermore, a modern Alexandria should focus not just on what should be removed or renamed, but how to portray a more accurate and fair telling of our history.

In my view, that would be a just reaction to the events in Charleston, and indeed many other injustices and tragedies in our country's history.

Host a Town Hall in Your Living Room!

My regular series of Town Hall Meetings continue!



You supply the living room and a bunch of your friends and neighbors. I will supply a member of the Alexandria City Council (me) with the answers to any of your questions about our City.

Just [drop us a line](#) and we'll get a Town Hall on the calendar! Thanks for the interest!

Upcoming Issues

Vision Zero

In 2012, [a drunk driver killed a child walking along the road near Landmark Mall.](#) His mother was also seriously injured.

In 2013, [a pedestrian was struck and injured while crossing Mount Vernon Avenue at Four Mile Road in the crosswalk.](#)

In 2013, [another child, while trick-or-treating, was hit by a vehicle on Russell Road.](#) While seriously injured, he fortunately survived.

In 2014, [a mother pushing a stroller with an infant was hit while walking on the sidewalk near Cora Kelly Elementary School.](#)

In 2015, [a resident was hit and suffered serious injuries while crossing the street at Duke and Ingram.](#)

Also in 2015, [a long-time City resident was hit and killed at an intersection in Del Ray.](#)

In 2016, [a biker was hit and seriously injured on Duke at West Taylor Run.](#)

Also in 2016, [a parking attendant was hit by a vehicle and killed in Old Town.](#)

Near the end of 2016, [a resident was hit and killed while crossing Yoakum Parkway on the West End.](#)

A few days later, [a pedestrian was hit by a drunk driver in Old Town.](#) The pedestrian died a little over a month later.

Late last year, [another pedestrian was hit in the crosswalk and killed walking home from work on West Glebe Road.](#)

Late last year a [3 year old boy was killed in Arlandria after running into the street.](#)

[The data shows that vehicle crashes have trended downward over the past five years, peaking at 1,713 in 2012 and dropping since. Overall crashes involving pedestrians have stayed steady at roughly five or six per month. Last year we had 22 crashes that resulted in death or serious injury. While that number is down from 55 in 2011, the four pedestrian deaths last year was the highest count in years.](#)

Each of these tragic incidents change the lives of the victims and their families in dramatic ways. But for each tragedy, there are also countless close calls and near misses that don't get reported.

In Alexandria, we are fortunate to have pedestrian scale, walkable neighborhoods with urban amenities throughout our City. Yet if residents do not feel they can safely traverse the streets of our City, then all the urban amenities are for naught.

The City [has invested millions of taxpayer dollars to improve pedestrian safety throughout our community.](#) Those resources have included improving pedestrian access to schools, building and improving sidewalks, crosswalks, traffic calming efforts, bike lanes, new signalization, and more.



With the recent large increases in road resurfacing budgets, [the Council has also steered new dollars into our "Complete Streets" efforts, the City's program for improving non-vehicular transportation infrastructure.](#)

Yet there are still areas of our City where sidewalks are non-existent or unusable, intersections are unsafe and unsafe driving is rampant. We must improve the safety of our streets for all users. Doing so requires changing the behavior of all users of our roads.

[In the budget the Council adopted last month, the Council added 6 new sworn traffic safety officers.](#)

Our Police Chief has worked to increase the focus of existing resources on traffic enforcement efforts.

Two years ago, [the Council adopted an overhaul of the City's Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan.](#)

We kicked-off a [Vision Zero initiative](#) for Alexandria. While this initiative will involve significant resources and planning, it simply means that we would design road spaces, traffic regulations and operations to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries. [At the end of last year, the Council approved our Vision Zero Action Plan.](#)

My view is that in order to significantly improve pedestrian safety in our City, we will have to be willing to make trade-offs in the pursuit of safety. The data show that the changes that will most significantly improve safety are also the most controversial in our community. We have to follow the research.

For instance, [the first phase of the King Street Complete Streets](#) effort involved the removal of parking, narrowing of travel lanes, improved crosswalks, signage, new bike lanes, etc., to reduce

speed and improve safety. [The initial analysis showed that the project has reduced speed, reduced crashes and improved safety.](#)

[The second phase of the work on King Street](#) was an even more dramatic overhaul of the corridor, including reductions of travel lanes, pedestrian islands, crosswalks, etc. [In September the City Council and Traffic & Parking Board received the initial analysis of those changes.](#) As with the first phase, crashes have been reduced, average speed has been reduced.

On Seminary and Quaker, the City reduced speed limits to improve safety. [The initial review of this action has indicated a reduction in speed and accidents.](#)

We have also looked at signalization efforts that can improve safety. At a few problem intersections, the City created a "[Leading Pedestrian Interval](#)" to allow residents to get a head-start crossing before traffic can move.

We have also explored the creation of additional "[pedestrian scrambles](#)" to create an "all pedestrian" phase at problematic intersections.

[We have HAWK \(High Intensity Activated crossWalk\) signals in place](#) to ensure high visibility of pedestrians in high traffic corridors.

In response to concerns among several neighborhoods in the center of the City, the City just conducted an extensive data collection effort to help guide future traffic mitigation response.

[The Central Alexandria Traffic Study](#) involved the collection of origin and destination data, traffic volume and speed data in numerous locations around the City.

[The data that was collected was presented to the community task force and it provides a clear depiction of the impact of cut-through traffic on our neighborhoods.](#)

The [initial set of remediation efforts](#) were published late last month. Some of the [proposed turn restrictions were brought before the City's Traffic & Parking Board](#) shortly thereafter, and they were approved.

I do believe there is more we can do.

The research shows that [speed is closely linked with the lethality of a pedestrian crash](#). Lowering speed limits where appropriate will likely be in our toolbox around the City.

[Reducing traffic lanes, or so-called "road diets," can improve safety](#). As we approach future road resurfacing, removing lanes will likely be an option we consider.

[Allowing right turns on red was pushed by the Federal Government during the 1970s as a response to the energy crisis.](#) Some [communities in the country are banning right turns on red to improve pedestrian safety](#).

It has been the City's practice to [announce enforcement efforts for intoxicated driving in advance](#), as well as [announce the results afterwards](#). We should do the same with our traffic enforcement. I believe greater transparency will help get the message out and improve safety throughout our City.

We need your input!

Are there particular areas of our City that you feel are unsafe and need attention? Are there intersections that are unsafe? Are there incomplete sections of sidewalk? Are there places where signage

can be improved? [Please use the Alexandria Vision Zero Safety Map to report these areas.](#)

Alexandrians should be able to use our streets safely. We will have to take ourselves out of our comfort zone to make that happen. Let me know your thoughts.

230 KV Transmission

About 3 years ago, [I wrote about Dominion Virginia Power's proposal to construct a new 230 KV transmission line through the northeast corner of our City](#) in order to alleviate forecasted deficiencies in the regional grid.

In June of 2014, the [City formed a community group to begin reviewing Dominion Virginia Power's proposal](#) and offering feedback to the Council and directly to Dominion Virginia Power on their proposed routes.

The most important occurrence at the first meeting was the release of Dominion Virginia Power's [proposed routes](#). Each of these routes have negative impacts for our community.

The group concluded its work at the end of 2014 [with a series of recommendations to the City Council, State Corporation Commission and Dominion Virginia Power.](#)

As this process concluded, Dominion believed that the urgency behind the proposed transmission line had subsided. The process was then delayed for some time to allow them to further prepare their request.

Ultimately, the decision about the necessity of this transmission line and its routing will be made by the State Corporation Commission. However, the City and its residents will have some opportunity to help shape that decision.

The City reconvened the community group and a series of meetings were again held.

[The group returned to the City Council in May of 2016 with a recommendation of the "least objectionable" routes](#) as well as a request for opposition to any above ground route.

The Council adopted a resolution opposing any above ground routing, and identifying the "least objectionable" routes as ones that either:

- Used the existing CSX railroad right of way
- Used waterways, both Four Mile Run and the Potomac River
- Used the George Washington Parkway

All were deemed not viable or unlikely to be accepted by the State Corporation Commission.

Dominion then formally notified the City that they will finally file with the State Corporation Commission.

Yet that did not happen.

[In November, Dominion returned to the City with another update.](#) Given the extensive costs of utilizing the CSX railroad right of way, Dominion wanted the City to consider whether we could support their utilization of a route along or near Potomac Avenue. In exchange for this change, Dominion indicated a willingness to increase the compensation they will provide to the City from \$15 million to \$43.3 million given the much larger required right-of-way.

Use of Potomac Avenue would potentially have severe adverse impacts to the City that need to be considered carefully.

[To consider the potential trade-offs associated with such a change we again convened the community group.](#) The group returned to City Council with a recommendation that [we add Potomac Avenue to the list of acceptable routes.](#)

Last month, the City Council affirmed that decision. [You can watch Council's discussion online.](#)

Dominion is now expected to file with the State Corporation Commission. When that occurs, the City will be fully engaged in the process, determining whether Dominion has substantiated the need, and whether there are demand reduction alternatives that can avoid construction of the line.

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