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The Council Connection

your connection to City Council by Mayor Justin M. Wilson

June 1, 2022

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This Saturday, [the Class of 2022 will walk across the stage and accept their diplomas as graduates from Alexandria City High School.](#)

A class that has seen tumult and disruption throughout their high school years is ready to go out into the world and change it for the better. This class is accomplished and they are resilient.

Congratulations to all of the graduates and I look forward to celebrating with you on Saturday.

Unfortunately, the last week has been a difficult one for our ACPS families and

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our entire Alexandria community. [Last week, we lost an ACPS student in a horrific act of violence a few blocks from our high school.](#)

Our Police Department is working around the clock to investigate the incident and those responsible. They are also working closely with ACPS, business owners and other stakeholders to keep our community safe in the aftermath of this incident.

As the Police continue their work, the City must work with our schools, non-profits, community organizations, other public agencies, educators and the broader community to expand, adjust and redouble existing efforts to protect our youth from the violence we saw last week. Whenever our children see this violence as the answer to disputes, we have failed them.

There will be more conversations to come over the weeks and months ahead as we work through this complicated issue and seek the support of Alexandrians.

There have also been new developments in our efforts to address COVID-19.

[Alexandria's case numbers and testing positivity rate have increased again, but hospitalizations and deaths have remained low over the past month.](#)

In February, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) released a [new tool to gauge a community's COVID risk](#) and assess the need for mitigation strategies going forward.

Based on this new tool, Alexandria's risk recently went up to "medium," due to the higher volume of new cases.

While it is not 2020, or even 2021 again, [high-risk individuals should continue to take reasonable precautions to protect themselves and their family.](#)

We will continue to work to vaccinate every resident in our City. [ANYONE who is aged 5 or older is eligible to be vaccinated and we have a dose waiting for you.](#)

Starting last month, boosters are now authorized for children 5 - 11.

If you are 5 or older and received the second dose of Pfizer or Moderna or the single dose of Johnson & Johnson you are eligible for a booster dose.

For those 50 or older, or immunocompromised, you are now eligible for a second booster if you are more than 4 months since your last one.

Additionally, if you received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine and booster over 4 months ago, you may now received a booster of either Moderna or Pfizer.

For more information or to sign-up for a booster dose, please head to our vaccine website.

For those who have already been vaccinated, you may now download your vaccination record from the Virginia Department of Health.

COVID testing is widely available throughout our City. Additionally, if you have not requested your free at-home test kits from the Federal government, you can request it online today.

The latest updates will continue to be posted regularly on the City's Coronavirus website.

The Virginia Department of Health posts data daily online regarding positive tests, hospitalizations and deaths.

After two years of doing virtual town-hall meetings, including weekly sessions during most of 2020, I am moving back to in-person, "Living Room Town Hall" meetings. If you would like to host a town hall in your neighborhood, please drop me a line and we'll get it on the calendar!

Contact me anytime. Let me know how I can help.

Initiatives and Updates



New Fire Stations

Last year, the City Council gathered with the men and women of the Alexandria Fire Department to ceremonially open the [new Station 203 on Cameron Mills Road in North Ridge](#).

In 2009, the City opened Station 209 in Potomac Yard, which was the first new Alexandria Fire Station in 40 years. Together with the 2015 opening of Station 210 on Eisenhower Avenue, these three stations have represented a new era of investment in the infrastructure supporting the provision of emergency medical services and fire suppression.

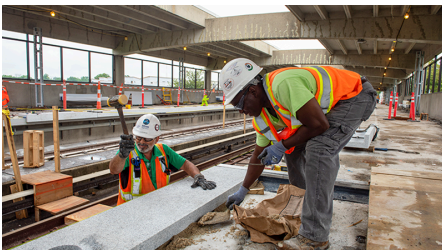
The approved Capital Improvement Program for 2023 - 2032 includes \$57.5 million of renovation and maintenance funding for the remaining Alexandria fire stations, including [a replacement of Fire Station 205 on Cameron Street](#) and a replacement of Fire Station 208 currently on N. Paxton, with a new station on the existing Landmark Mall site.

With the scale of investment envisioned for our fire stations, five years ago the City Manager [directed an internal analysis to review existing station locations and determine the appropriate priorities for this substantial public investment](#). The study reviewed the previous City plans, the newly proposed plan, and created an "optimized" plan.

The study did show that response times could be reduced as a result of moving four of the existing fire stations further westward.

This proposal is just that: a suggestion for how the City might be able to optimize public safety response time around our City. Implementation will involve land acquisition and costly construction activities.

As we move forward, however, this data can assist us in prioritizing how we invest in our fire stations, as well as take advantage of development and redevelopment activities to improve our infrastructure supporting these critical services.



Another Metro Shutdown

Almost three years ago, Alexandria's Metro Rail stations reopened after a difficult summer of platform improvement work cut the City off from the rest of the system. [We spent part of a September 2019 City Council meeting looking back at the mitigations that we had put in place and how they had fared](#).

It was a challenging period for our City, its residents, our visitors, and our businesses and their employees.

With a year of planning and regional collaboration, we were able to throw nearly everything we had at the shutdown.

While riders settled into new, slower routines, there were still challenges that impacted our City. The shuttle buses had issues with capacity and traffic flow. Some Metro Bus and DASH routes had similar problems as well. Traffic impacts exacerbated existing congestion. Some businesses saw reductions in revenue.

Unfortunately, we now need to do it again as **WMATA has announced large infrastructure work that will again impact the transit connectivity of our City.**

The first impact is one that we expected. In order to connect the newly-constructed Potomac Yard Metro Station, rail service south of the National Airport station will need to be shutdown for 6 weeks from September 10th until October 22nd.

The second impact was not anticipated. The rehabilitation of the Yellow Line bridge and the adjacent tunnels, will require a shutdown of the bridge for 8 months, also beginning on September 10th.

These closures will again cut Alexandria off from the rest of the system and significantly impact Alexandria transit riders at a time where the City and its regional partners will be working to bring our residents back to transit.

Fortunately, we know what works. In 2019, the City worked closely with WMATA, DASH and other regional partners to ensure that the shutdown did not become a disaster for our residents and our businesses. We must again do the same.

Last month, representatives from WMATA attended our City Council meeting to discuss the ongoing planning for the upcoming shutdown. **You can watch the discussion online** or **view the slides from the presentation.**

After last month's meeting, **I wrote to WMATA Interim General Manager Andrew Off** detailing the City's requests for mitigation, as well as reiterating the City's position that this major infrastructure work cannot occur unless WMATA has completed their **work to bring the 7000 series cars back into service.** Recent **lapses by WMATA** have only affirmed this position.

The work to restore Metro back to the level required to support this region continues. In the short-term, additional sacrifice will be required. As a regular Metro

rider myself, I know the service challenges first-hand. With **new leadership** and major infrastructure investment, I am optimistic that these efforts will result in a more reliable system for Alexandria and the entire region.



Saying Goodbye to Landmark Mall

Last week, Foulger-Pratt, the private development partner spearheading the redevelopment of Landmark Mall began **demolition on the existing site**. Construction activity will begin shortly, **under the aggressive schedule they have presented to the community**.

Late last year, the **Alexandria Industrial Development Authority (IDA)** closed on **the purchase of an 11-acre parcel on the site of the former Landmark Mall**. The purchase of this property was immediately followed by IDA's issuance of a 99-year ground lease of the property to **Inova Health System**.

After two decades of discussion about how to redevelop Landmark Mall, the City of Alexandria is finally redeveloping Landmark Mall!

In July of last year, the City Council unanimously approved the plan to reshape the most significant redevelopment site in our City.

Long sought, this arrangement was named by the Washington Business Journal as the 2020 Real Estate Deal of the Year.

Days before Christmas 2020, **the City joined with a few partners, some familiar and some new, to announce the future of the Landmark Mall site**. The new development plan will move **Inova Alexandria Hospital** from its home for **the past 60 years** on Seminary Road to a new modern facility on the site of Landmark Mall.

The location, one of the largest sites inside the Beltway awaiting redevelopment, will see a billion dollars of new investment, including a new Level II trauma center, medical office buildings, residential, retail, parks, a new fire station replacing **Fire Station 208**, new committed affordable housing and a new transit hub anchoring the City's new bus rapid transit network, DASH and Metrobus.

This will not only revitalize a site that many had given up on, but will also provide a catalyst for redevelopment and enhancement throughout the West End of our City.

A year ago, the City Council unanimously approved **a master plan amendment and rezoning of the site of**

the existing Inova Alexandria Hospital. This land-use decision was the first legislative action required to bring this plan to reality.

Despite over two decades of decline, it is not a mystery why we had been unable to spur redevelopment on this site in the past. It is a complicated site, with a complicated ownership structure requiring significant infrastructure investment.

Conquering those obstacles requires a unique partnership and financial arrangement. A local firm, **Foulger-Pratt** is leading a joint venture in partnership with **Howard Hughes Corporation**, the current owner of the mall site, and **Seritage Growth Properties**, the owner of the Sears site. They were able to bring **Inova Health System** into the arrangement to anchor this redevelopment.

The City will finance some of the infrastructure improvements required on the site and we have purchased the future hospital site to lease back to Inova. Inova's proceeds from selling their existing site on Seminary Road is financing their expenses related to the move.

We have finally assembled a partnership, financing and a plan to revitalize this site. Landmark Mall redevelopment has been complicated from the beginning, but this exciting partnership is making things happen on this site for the first time in decades. I look forward to now watching this vision come to fruition.



Expanding our Tree Canopy

As a dense urban community, Alexandria has long valued its tree canopy. Critical to our ecosystem and our quality of life, trees have been threatened as our City has grown and changed over the years.

Eighteen years ago, the City Council appointed an Urban Forestry Steering Committee to help the City chart a different future for our City's trees. As they collected information, they learned that in 2001, the City's tree canopy covered 34% of the City. By 2007, that was down to 30%.

The committee's efforts led to the adoption of the **Urban Forestry Master Plan in 2009**, which included policies and procedures designed to bring our tree canopy coverage to 40% of our City.

Those efforts are working! From 2014 until 2018, thanks to the work of the City, private civic groups, landowners and other public entities, **Alexandria's tree canopy grew from 26.6 to 32.5%**. That is 569 acres of net tree canopy gain.

The budget the City Council approved last month includes **the largest-ever budget for tree planting and maintenance, including funding to plant an average of 428 trees per year for the next few years.**

Half of the City's tree canopy is on private residential properties. You can help the City by **planting native trees** on your property and **requesting new tree plantings on adjacent public property.** You can also **donate to our Living Landscape Fund.** Money raised in this fund is used to plant new trees throughout our City.

The City's analysis has also shown considerable inequities in tree canopy coverage around our City. Future City tree-planting efforts must focus on ensuring that every part of our City has the benefit of a green tree canopy.



Budget Adoption

At the beginning of last month, the City Council adopted our annual Operating Budget and our Capital Improvement Program for the next decade.

Last year, the City Council was able to adopt the first reduction in the real estate tax rate in 15 years, bringing the rate from \$1.13 to \$1.11. This year, the City Council's approved budget retains the current \$1.11 rate.

That means 2022 will be the 6th straight year without a real estate tax rate increase in Alexandria.

Yet, with the impacts of average assessment increases included, this means the average single-family homeowner will pay \$601 more in 2022 than in 2021. The average condo owner will pay \$120 more in 2022 versus 2021.

The most important decision the City Council makes each year is the adoption of the annual operating budget and capital improvement program. The operating budget generally funds the on-going costs of government (primarily personnel), while the capital budget funds one-time expenditures that provide the community with an asset (new schools, new roads, new playing fields, transit buses, etc).

In February, the City Manager presented **his proposed Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2023 (July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023) and his proposed Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for Fiscal Year 2023 through Fiscal Year 2032.**

Every budget has a "story." The City Manager's proposed budget:

- Invests significant new money in employee compensation, with over \$22.8 million proposed to add to employee compensation and benefits (the City Council is prepared to add even more)
- Invests in new staffing capacity, with 52 new FTE (over half of which are in Public Safety agencies) proposed to be added to the City workforce
- Fully-funds the approved Operating and Capital budgets of the Alexandria City Public Schools, totaling over \$12.7 million for an increased operating transfer and debt service for ACPS capital projects
- Commits new resources to support the infrastructure proposed as part of the Capital Improvement Program.

Given the amount of time between the proposal of the budget (February) and the adoption of the budget (May), the assumptions used to build the budget can change. Usually a few weeks prior to the adoption, the City Manager provides a series of "Technical Adjustments" reflecting further refinement of revenue estimates and expenditure expectations, as well as correction of any errors. Oftentimes, these adjustments are nominal.

This year, conservative forecasting prompted by the uncertainty of the pandemic, has resulted in a very significant series of adjustments as we prepared to conclude this process. **The City Manager's adjustments ultimately provided a net increase in projected revenues of \$7 million.** This did provide the City Council with some additional flexibility as we worked to conclude the process.

Prior to final adoption of the budget, the City Council held our "Preliminary Add/Delete" worksession. This is where most of the "sausage-making" work of budgeting is completed, as City Council worked to decide what would be in and what would be out of the budget we are poised to adopt. **You can watch this full session online.**

Per the Council's budget rules, budget modifications must have the support of at least 3 members to be considered during this process. **There were 24 different proposals submitted by individual councilmembers to be considered in this year's process.**

Ultimately, the budget adopted included the following amendments from my colleagues:

- An amendment for an additional ACORP (Alexandria Co-Response) team (1 police officer

and 1 DCHS therapist) proposed by Vice Mayor Jackson

- An amendment to increase dedicated revenue for affordable housing development to the equivalent of 1 cent on the real estate tax proposed by Councilwoman Gaskins
- An amendment to increase funding for body-worn cameras in our Police Department proposed by Councilwoman Gaskins
- An amendment to fund professional development for our City Clerk's office proposed by Councilman Aguirre
- An amendment to fund an array of climate change initiatives proposed by Councilmember Bagley
- An amendment to fund expansion of DASH routes proposed by Councilmen Aguirre and McPike
- An amendment to expand early childhood education funding that I proposed
- An amendment to provide new incentive pay for Advanced Life Support providers in our Fire Department proposed by Councilman Chapman
- An amendment to fund new language proficiency pay for employees proposed by Councilman Aguirre
- An amendment to improve the quality and accessibility of out-of-school (after-school and summer) time services that I proposed along with Councilwoman Gaskins
- An amendment for an additional 0.5% salary increase for all employees a separate 0.5% salary increase for public safety employees proposed by Councilman McPike
- An amendment for additional police patrol staffing that I proposed
- An amendment for additional staffing for our Race and Social Equity office proposed by Councilman Aguirre
- An amendment for funding to support 5 speed cameras in school crossing zones that I proposed
- An amendment for additional staffing in support of Vision Zero proposed by Councilmember Bagley
- An amendment for to fund minority business incubation proposed by Councilwoman Gaskins
- An amendment for expanded food waste collection that I proposed
- An amendment to reduce planned borrowing in support of the ACPS capital budget by applying surplus operating funds that I proposed

The budget was built around some of the healthiest revenue growth we have seen in over fifteen years, but also with numerous deferred investments awaiting tax dollars.

From 2002 until 2009 the City was enjoying the run-up in the residential real estate market. Our General Fund budget increased by an average of 6.5% per year. The work force in City Government grew from 2,229 Full Time Equivalents (FTE) to 2,660 FTEs during that period.

In Fiscal Year 2010, a little over a decade ago, the bottom fell out as the Great Recession took hold. The City adopted its first negative budget in at least 40 years, reducing spending from Fiscal Year 2009 to 2010 by over 2%. From 2010 to 2020, the General Fund budget increased by an average of 3.2% per year.

The budget that Council adopted two years ago, at the beginning of the COVID crisis, shrunk spending 1.6% from the previous year. Last year, as we began to return to normal, the budget we adopted grew spending by 2.3%.

The authorized work force in City Government is now at 2,700 FTEs, essentially what it was 13 years ago. That's in spite of the fact that our population has grown significantly during that period of time.

In addition the budget documents linked above, **all questions asked by members of Council during the process are posted, along with answers, online for the public to review**. Any request to change the proposed budget must be initiated with a budget question, so it is a good window into the thoughts of your elected representatives.

There is no more important process than the adoption of our annual budget. The budget is a reflection of the values of our community and I have appreciated the input of our residents to ensure that we craft a budget that is reflective of those collective values.

Let me know your thoughts!

Voting Under Way

Early voting began in May and **Alexandria Democrats can vote to choose their nominee for the United States House of Representatives**.

Alexandria Republicans have chosen a party process and they have selected their nominee.

Due to **legislation adopted by the General Assembly in 2021**, Virginia's primary date has moved from the second Tuesday in June to the third Tuesday in June.

As such, on Tuesday June 21st, all City polling places will be open from 6 AM until 7 PM for the Democratic Primary.



Two years ago, Virginia introduced "no-excuse" early voting, so voters have three choices to vote in the June primary:

1. **You can request a ballot by mail online now.** Ballots will be mailed upon request. The ballot can be mailed back or dropped 24/7 at the drop-box located in front of 132 N. Royal Street.
2. You can vote in person at the Alexandria Registrar's Office, Monday - Friday from 8 AM until 5 PM. On June 6th, 7th, 15th and 16th, these hours will be extended until 8 PM. Voting will be available on Saturday the 11th and 18th from 8 AM until 5 PM. Sunday voting is available on the 12th from 11 AM until 3 PM.
3. You can vote in person **at your precinct** on the Primary Day of June 21st.

I'll see you at the polls!



Freedom House Reopens

Last week, **the City's Freedom House Museum reopened, with three new exhibitions designed to unlock the history of this important site.**

Between 1828 and 1861, over 100,000 enslaved African-Americans passed through 1315 Duke Street in the City of Alexandria. This building was the headquarters for one of the largest domestic slave trading operations in our nation.

As of March of 2020, the City of Alexandria owns the building, having purchased it from the Northern Virginia Urban League to ensure the preservation of this important historic resource. While the purchase was **locally funded**, the Commonwealth's approved budget in 2020 included **\$2.4 million of state funding** to support the rehabilitation and development of the historic resources on the site.

In furtherance of this effort, the City commissioned a comprehensive Historic Structures Report (HSR) to formally document the history, plan future interpretation and prioritize rehabilitation. Last fall, the firm commissioned to perform the study **formally presented their findings** and the **final report**.

Operating from a prominent location, this human trafficking operation brought enslaved African-Americans from the Chesapeake Bay area to a holding pen surrounding the building, where they were then forced by foot or by ship to Natchez, Mississippi or New Orleans.

This property is a significant piece of Alexandria and our nation's history. The history depicted in the museum today, and the history yet to be unlocked in the building is a story that must be told. I believe we must work to ensure this history remains accessible to the public.

Additionally, private fundraising efforts are working to support this important resource. [Please join me in donating to support this effort.](#)

I am excited about the opportunity that this acquisition presents for the City to better discover, interpret and educate the public on a vital part of American history. I am excited to see this museum open and serving the public again.

495 Southside Express Lanes

Late last year, the Virginia Department of Transportation notified the City that they intended to study the expansion of the [Express Lanes system that currently is on sections of Interstates 495, 395 and 95.](#)

The current proposal is to [expand the system by 11 miles, from the Springfield interchange across the Wilson Bridge into Maryland.](#)

From now until June 21st, the Commonwealth is accepting public comment on the proposal. You can [review the details of what VDOT is proposing and submit your comments online.](#)

The City has generally had a "cautiously skeptical" stance towards similar proposals in the past. We have worked with the Commonwealth to ensure that these projects generate revenue for transit initiatives and include protections to prevent such efforts from exacerbating cut-through traffic on City streets.

As the City provides formal input on this proposal, we will work to incorporate resident concerns.

Alexandria's Waterfront

Our Potomac River waterfront is the reason Alexandria exists as a community. [The history of our waterfront](#) is the history of Alexandria. It is what has brought people and commerce to our community for generations.

Only a few years ago, [the future of our waterfront was the source of disagreement and vigorous debate.](#) Today, it is the source of vitality, excitement and a place for all of those in our community to gather. Yet, we are just getting started.



Work remains on Robinson Terminal North and the expansion of the open space that has now replaced warehouses and derelict buildings that previously filled our waterfront.

On June 17th, the [Portside in Old Town Summer Festival](#) returns to Waterfront Park. This year, the festival merges with the Alexandria Jazz Festival, marking an incredible weekend of music and more on the City's waterfront.

Starting last week, [the unit block of King Street and the northern end of The Strand has joined with the 100-block of King Street in being closed to vehicles, expanding our pedestrian-only zone.](#)

Last fall, we were reminded of some of the unfinished work that remains, [as tidal waters closed several streets and businesses.](#)

Eight years ago, the City Council approved [Phase One of the Waterfront Landscape and Flood Mitigation Design](#). This exciting design married the vision of the Olin Group and the input of hundreds of residents who participated in the planning efforts. It also received input from the [Art and History Report](#) to ensure our history is a key component of the future of our waterfront.

[The City Council's approved Capital Improvement Program includes over \\$83 million to accelerate the implementation of the infrastructure elements of the plan,](#) specifically the flood mitigation. The City has also applied for \$50 million of Federal funding from the FEMA BRIC program. While these funds are highly sought after, if they are awarded to the City, they will enable us to accelerate this work.

Last month, the City's Waterfront Commission [endorsed the latest approach to implement the flood mitigation vision.](#) Later this summer, the City will advertise to select a design-build firm to begin advancing the design and plans for this important work.

The current schedule assumes that construction will begin late in 2024.

We are on the verge of realizing the vision for Alexandria's waterfront that so many shared. The economic vitality must be paired with flood resiliency to ensure our success.

Please [let me know your thoughts](#) on these concepts as we work to achieve the vision of a more vibrant and accessible waterfront for our City.

DASH Ridership Recovers



At the beginning of September, Alexandria implemented the new route structure for Alexandria's DASH bus system. **Existing routes changed and new ways to get around our City were established.** This is the most significant rethinking of our DASH route structure since 1984.

To coincide with the implementation of this new route structure, City Council unanimously approved my proposal for DASH to become the first transit system in the DC area to eliminate fares. Free transit will expand ridership by an estimated 23%, bring riders back to transit following the pandemic, help achieve the City's environmental goals and **disproportionately benefit our lower-income residents.** With ridership depressed due to the pandemic, the initial cost to implement this change is dramatically reduced.

Now that we have had some experience with these changes, we are now beginning to assess the impacts. So far:

- In March, DASH experienced 297,508 systemwide boardings. This exceeds the monthly totals from each of the 4 months prior to the pandemic (November 2019 - February 2020).
- Total DASH ridership increased by 50% between August and October.
- Our March ridership represents about 95% of pre-pandemic ridership.
- West End ridership presently exceeds pre-pandemic volume.

In approving the most recent budget, the City Council included funding to improve the service on the current **DASH Line 30.** The expanded funding will extend all weekday peak trips from King Street Metro to Braddock Road Metro, which will provide 10 minute peak headways in Old Town. These enhancements will also extend all weekend trips from Landmark Mall to Van Dorn Metro, to provide 30 minute frequency on South Van Dorn Street, instead of the current 60 minute service.

Prior to COVID, on an average weekday, about 14,500 people board Metrorail at one of our four stations (Braddock Road, King Street, Eisenhower Avenue and Van Dorn Street). It is certainly an important part of transportation in our City.

Yet our four Metrorail stations (soon to be five) serve only a small portion of our 15.5 square miles. On an average weekday, almost 24,000 people board a bus, either **DASH** or Metrobus.

The tool our City has used for decades to serve the transit needs of most of our neighborhoods has been the bus.

The Alexandria Transit Vision Plan was the City's effort to rethink our buses. At the end of 2019, **DASH approved this significant "re-imagination" of its route structure.**

The route structure approved has a short-term vision and a longer-term 2030 vision. This restructuring is designed to:

- Increase the number of Alexandrians near frequent transit (a bus or train arriving every 15 minutes or better) from 27% to 79%.
- Increase the number of jobs in Alexandria near frequent transit from 40% to 75%.
- Increase the number of jobs accessible by transit (within 45 minutes) to Alexandrians by 18%.
- Increase the number of residents in poverty near frequent transit from 29% to 89%.
- Increase the number of seniors near frequent transit from 23% to 74%.

Earlier last year, DASH celebrated 35 years of serving Alexandria. What started with 17 buses and served less than a million passengers, today serves over 4 million passengers with 85 buses. While new routes have been added, and existing routes tweaked at times, the basic construct of DASH's route network has largely been unchanged.

Communities around our nation have done the difficult work of rethinking their bus route networks to improve frequency of service, reduce route duplication, and ultimately serve more riders. **Houston's overnight route network transformation helped spur growth in ridership at a time when transit ridership was dropping elsewhere.**

Our effort is similar, designed to re-imagine our bus routes and ultimately increase ridership and route efficiency.

To provide a factual basis for this effort, **a "Transit Choices Report" was developed.** This report is a compendium of data on our existing transit network, designed to support this significant undertaking.

This effort was an important step forward as we create a transit system that serves more of our community with more efficient and relevant service. So far, it looks like it's working.

Get Solar Power At Home

Are you interested in harnessing solar power for your home?



From now until the end of this month, you can sign up to participate in Solarize Alexandria.

Solarize Alexandria is a partnership between the City, the **Northern Virginia Regional Commission**, and **LEAP**.

The goal is to increase the deployment of solar power generation in our residential communities. In addition to reducing emissions and reducing your power bill, **the City of Alexandria provides a real estate tax exemption for qualifying solar installations.**

Alexandria is currently leading the region in sign-ups for this year's program. Let's keep it up!

The program begins with a free assessment from the program installer. Sign up today!

Power Plant Redevelopment

Two decades ago, persistent resident activists, led by Elizabeth Chimento and Poul Hertel, began questioning the health impacts of the coal-fired **Potomac River Generating Station, which began operation on Alexandria's waterfront in 1949.**

Eventually, they got the support of the City government, and through years of work, led by my former colleagues Paul Smedberg and Del Pepper, the plant shut down for good almost over a decade ago.

Now, it's time for what is next.

Hilco Redevelopment Partners, a national entity specializing in the redevelopment of aged industrial sites, **took control of the property with plans to see redevelopment to fruition.**

Hilco **has made concept plan submissions** and they are preparing to come to the Planning Commission and City Council in June and July.

Last month, Hilco hosted their 10th community meeting to provide updates on their plans and obtain feedback from the community. You can **watch the full community meeting video** and **view the slides.**

With the closure of the station, this site became one of the higher priority sites for redevelopment in the City. As the City's focus on the waterfront has led to new public access, increased open space and new economic vitality, the power plant site is a critical missing piece as we work to ensure the connection of the northern end of the waterfront.

Fortunately, Hilco is welcomed to Alexandria with an adopted community vision to guide them. In 2017, City Council approved [the Old Town North Small Area Plan](#). This planning document codified a redevelopment vision for the 20-acre power plant site and the area surrounding it.

With the progress of this planning, I am excited to see an ideal partner for the City to turn this former industrial polluter into the [sustainable uses of the City's future!](#)



Federal Funding Update

[Last summer, the City Council unanimously adopted Alexandria's plan to allocate the first tranche of \\$29.8 million](#), from the City's allocation in the American Rescue Plan.

Last month the City Council received [another update on the status of implementing each of the projects that have been funded](#).

As of the end of April, the City has expended or encumbered \$9.9 million of the initial tranche, a third of the money.

In his proposed budget, the City Manager [proposed an allocation for the second tranche of money, which was received by the City last month](#). Of the \$29.8 million in the second tranche, \$8.7 million was already pre-allocated by City Council for emergent needs, including employee bonuses and other initiatives. With the approval of the budget, another \$6.1 million remains un-allocated for future use.

Over a year ago, President Biden [signed the American Rescue Plan into law](#). This sprawling and comprehensive piece of legislation provides significant resources to Alexandria's residents, our businesses, our schools and our local government.

[After surveying the community, we received an enormous amount of ideas and concepts](#) for how Alexandria could best deploy these resources to improve our City.

[Alexandria's government will receive a total of \\$59.4 million from the legislation, divided into two allotments, one that was received in May of 2021 and the other we received last month](#). All funds must be spent by December 31, 2024.

Beyond what the City will receive, the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) received \$34.8 million from this legislation. This is in addition to the \$15 million ACPS received from the [Federal legislation that was enacted before the end of 2020](#).

Tomorrow evening, beginning at 6:30 PM, the Alexandria School Board will be accepting public testimony on [their proposed allocation of the ESSER III funds](#). You can [sign-up to speak prior to noon today](#).

The American Rescue Plan included three criteria for how the local government funds may be used:

- To respond to the public health emergency with respect to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) or its negative economic impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses, and nonprofits, or aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel, and hospitality
- For the provision of government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue of such metropolitan city, nonentitlement unit of government or county due to such emergency
- To make necessary investments in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure.

The Treasury Department released [an "Interim Final Rule," which ultimately provides detailed \(151 pages!\) guidance to localities as to how we can expend these dollars](#).

This is a "once in a generation" infusion of money for Alexandria's City government and our school system. We must ensure that we not only spend every penny that the Federal government has provided to our community, but we also must use these resources wisely and to the long-term benefit of our community.

[I believe we should continue to use this money to create sustainable structures that will not only help us recover, but benefit the City for decades to come](#). Furthermore, given the substantial resources that ACPS, the Commonwealth and many Federal programs will be receiving, I believe that Alexandria's expenditure of these combined resources should be closely coordinated to ensure the maximum benefit for our community.

While we continue our focus on the resources that will be directly appropriated to our local government, we must also commit resources to ensuring that each of our residents and our businesses avail themselves of portions of the legislation that might benefit them. The Rescue Plan is a large piece of legislation and our government can assist our residents and businesses in navigating its complexity.

From the beginning of this crisis, it has been clear that the two levels of government, local and state, who are required to balance our budgets annually, could not address the immense financial need that has been

created. Only the Federal Government could provide a sufficient amount of money to address some of these challenges.

As we put COVID-19 behind us, the hardship faced by our residents and businesses will continue for a while to come. The City will continue to find ways to provide the support required. I am hopeful we will take this opportunity to use these resources to wisely shape our future.

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