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# The Council Connection

*your connection to City Council by Mayor Justin M. Wilson*

October 1, 2022

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Today should have been [Art on the Avenue](#), the fall tradition that brings tens of thousands of people and arts, music, food and children's activities to Mount Vernon Avenue in Del Ray. Unfortunately, the remains of Hurricane Ian will force a reschedule of the festival to Saturday November 12th.

While the weather will move Del Ray's festival, on Saturday October 15th, "Tons of Trucks" will return rain or shine. Seven City departments will bring their heavy machinery out to Chinguapin Park for the community to enjoy. [Pick up your tickets online!](#)

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Also on Saturday October 15th, the City will host our annual clinic for flu vaccinations. The clinic will be held from 9:30 AM until 1:30 PM at the Ramsay Recreation Center (5650 Sanger Avenue) on the West End. Vaccinations are free for all residents.

[The City is continuing to respond to the spread of the Monkeypox \(MPV\) virus.](#) While the virus remains [quite rare](#) in Virginia, anyone who has come into contact with an infected individual can become infected. In the Commonwealth, there have been 481 cases so far, with 62 of those cases here in Alexandria.

The Alexandria Health Department is now working to vaccinate those who meet the [current eligibility criteria](#) (which has recently expanded) against the Monkeypox virus. [If you are interested in getting vaccinated, you can sign-up online.](#)

We continue to work to vaccinate every resident in our City to protect against COVID-19. [ANYONE who is aged 6 months or older is eligible to be vaccinated and we have a dose waiting for you.](#)

Starting in June, vaccinations became available for the youngest children and the [new bivalent booster](#) is now widely available throughout our City.

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 receive 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.](#)

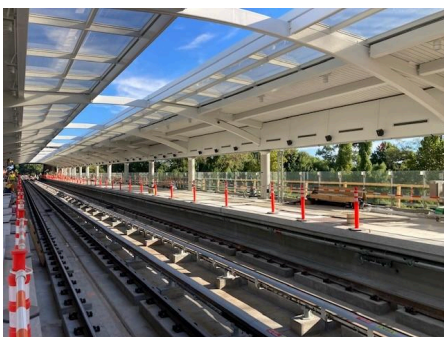
The latest updates will continue to be posted regularly on the [City's Coronavirus website.](#)

[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



### Metro Rail Station Closure

For most of September, the Metro Rail stations that serve Alexandria have again been cut off from the rest of the system.

In June, the [Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority \(WMATA\)](#) released their plan for travel alternatives during the extensive Yellow and Blue Line work that began last month. The plan in place includes new free shuttle routes and reduced Blue Line headways. [The Virginia Railway Express has also been providing completely free service in September and October for trips to and from Alexandria.](#) The City has also worked to supplement these options with [free Capital Bike Share and expanded water taxi service.](#)

The first phase of this shutdown is one that we expected and eagerly anticipated. In order to connect the newly-constructed Potomac Yard Metro Station, rail service south of the National Airport station was intended 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, which also began on September 10th.

Yesterday, **[we were dismayed to learn from WMATA that the first phase of work has been extended for another two weeks, with Alexandria's Metro Stations now scheduled to reopen \(with only the Blue Line\) on Sunday November 6th.](#)**

To make matters even more frustrating, WMATA has also announced an additional delay, of indeterminate length, for the planned opening of the Potomac Yard Metro. While the opening had been scheduled for late November (itself a significantly delayed date), it has now been pushed into 2023.

**[To say that the City is disappointed in WMATA's management of this project would be an understatement.](#)** We have made specific requests of new oversight, new accountability and transparency from WMATA and will push the agency to complete this project as soon as possible, while addressing the significant financial impacts the City has borne as a result of WMATA's failures.

These closures have again cut Alexandria off from the rest of the system and they are significantly impacting Alexandria transit riders at a time when the City and its regional partners have been working to bring our residents back to transit.

In May, 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 the May 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.

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.

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.

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. It is essential that this region have a credible transit system that can serve the needs of our community.



## Winkler Botanical Preserve

In 1979, an act of incredible philanthropy led to the creation of one of the most precious natural green spaces in our City. **The Winkler Botanical Preserve, a 44.6 acre tract of land, in one of the most densely-developed portions of our City, was donated by Catherine Winkler Herman to allow future generations to enjoy this unique space.**

Ms. Herman was the widow and successor to Mark Winkler, the leader of a family-owned real estate firm that developed and managed numerous properties across the region, including Mark Center on the City's West End.

Over 15 years ago, **the firm shed much of its real estate portfolio,** but maintained the Preserve within a non-profit organization.

For decades, this Preserve has been managed by the non-profit, playing host to popular summer camps and youth programs.

Effective today, a new custodian will take the reins of this precious natural resource. **The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NOVA Parks) became the new owner of this tract and will work to maintain and program the space for generations to come.**

With this transfer, the Winkler Organization has provided NOVA Parks with \$1 million for capital investments in this new regional park, \$3 million for an



operating endowment, and an additional \$1 million was provided to the City of Alexandria to advance community engagement and learning in the park for our residents.

This transfer is a big win for Alexandria as NOVA Parks will work to bring more residents to this oasis in our City.



## Lighted Playing Fields

Our parks and open spaces are significant contributors to quality of life, particularly in an urban community like Alexandria. As the pandemic ravaged our City, our open spaces were a refuge, well-loved and utilized. As we eased back into "normal," our children returned to athletic fields around our City, even before most other venues.

Yet, the reality that exists in our City today is that we lack the athletic facilities to fully meet the needs of our youth, and hardly begin to address adult recreation needs. Our most **recent needs assessment** clearly identifies these gaps, and decades of underfunded plans have exacerbated these challenges.

In the face of significant capital needs for schools, sewers, public buildings and transportation, providing resources for significant investment in our parks and recreation infrastructure has not been able to rise to the top of our list of priorities. This must change.

The capital budget approved by the City Council in May contemplates over \$157 million of **new investment in our recreation and parks infrastructure**. The approved budget includes large investments in athletic facilities, including:

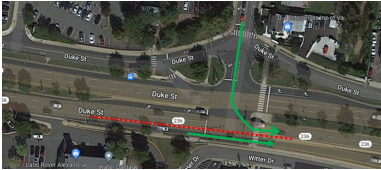
- \$22M for field improvements (including synthetic turf replacement at Witter; turf renovations at Stevenson & Four Mile Run; as well as a large-scale renovation of the diamond fields at Simpson).
- \$17.3M for field improvements at Four Mile Run Park
- \$2.6M to build a new synthetic field at Patrick Henry, once the old school is demolished

To maximize the use of these facilities, **the budget including funding for new athletic lighting at Francis Hammond Middle School, George Washington Middle School, Jefferson Houston K-8 School, Patrick Henry K-8 School and Eugene Simpson Stadium Park.**

**On Thursday evening, the City's Planning Commission will be holding a public hearing to consider approval of the lighting on all 5 sites.**

Public testimony is welcome. If the Planning Commission makes a recommendation this week, the City Council will take final action on all five applications at our Public Hearing on Saturday October 15th beginning at 9:30 AM. Public testimony is again welcome at that session as well.

I look forward to advancing efforts to improve our recreation capacity, to promote our quality of life and the health of our community.



## Reducing Cut-Through Traffic

Last fall, the City Council finalized the recent update of our [Alexandria Mobility Plan](#). During the outreach phase of that update, one of the most consistent areas of input we received were concerns about the impacts of congestion on quality of life.

**The data collection that was performed for the Central Alexandria Traffic Study revealed that a relatively small number of residential streets were carrying inordinate amounts of "cut-through" traffic, mostly using those streets to access the Telegraph interchange with the Beltway.**

Specifically:

- Of the vehicles coming from Seminary Road and Quaker Lane, roughly half use Quaker Lane to access the Telegraph Road ramp and half use local streets, namely Cambridge Road, Yale Drive and West Taylor Run Parkway.
- Of the vehicles coming from Seminary Road, 16% use Jordan Street (5%) or Fort Williams Parkway (11%). Roughly 35% use Quaker Lane and about half use local streets that are east of Quaker Lane.
- Of the vehicles coming from King Street, about 85% use West Taylor Run Parkway with most of the rest using Cambridge Road (13%).

In response to input from the Central Alexandria Traffic Study, the City implemented **a variety of mitigation efforts to reduce neighborhood cut-through and work to keep heavy volumes of traffic on the highways and arterial roads.**

As traffic volumes have returned in the wake of the pandemic, it has been clear that more is necessary.

After work with civic associations, **our staff proposed new mitigation efforts to reduce some neighborhood cut-through traffic.**

At the beginning of the year, the first pilot was implemented and remained in place through April. This

effort changed light timings on Quaker and Duke, as well as on side streets, to focus traffic volumes on the arterial roads.

**The results of this first pilot were very positive:**

- Overall volume on the Telegraph Road ramp was down by 14%
- Travel times for all routes were faster than before, but were about 35% faster using Quaker Lane and 20% faster on West Taylor Run
- Cut through traffic on Quaker Lane increased by 23%
- Cut through traffic on West Taylor Run and Cambridge Road decreased by 47% and 73%, respectively.
- Cut through traffic on Yale Drive, with the new “no left turn” restriction in place, decreased by 96%, from 706 vehicles in the peak to 31
- Cut through traffic on Fort Williams Parkway decreased substantially, by 81%, from 171 vehicles to 32

Last month, the City implemented the second pilot. This pilot has brought back the light timings from Phase 1, but also limited access from West Taylor Run Parkway to Telegraph Road, along with unimpeded ramp traffic on the Telegraph ramp.

This second phase will remain in place through the end of March and **we will evaluate how traffic patterns are impacted by this change.**

With this new pilot now in place, we want your input.

**Please complete our survey to let us know your experience as we work to try new things to reduce the impact of this cut-through traffic.**



## Voting Has Begun

Early voting for our November election began last month. **So far 28 voters have returned ballots by mail, 488 voters have voted in person, and an additional 8,260 voters have received ballots by mail but have not yet returned them.**

On November 8th, Alexandria voters will only have one office on our ballots: election of our representative in the United States House of Representatives.

On Tuesday November 8th, all City polling places will be open from 6 AM until 7 PM for the General Election.

**The sample ballot is now available for your review online.**



Two years ago, Virginia introduced "no-excuse" early voting, so voters have three choices to vote this November:

1. **You can request a ballot by mail online now.**  
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.** Saturdays, Sundays and evenings, as well as voting at Beatley Library (5005 Duke Street) **will be available later in October.**
3. You can vote in person **at your precinct** on the General Election day of November 8th.

I'll see you at the polls!



## Safer Streets For All

Last month a driver was sentenced to three years in jail for **hitting and killing an Alexandria pedestrian on a sidewalk on Glebe Road when his vehicle left the roadway.**

**The data shows that crashes have slowly trended downward over the last few years, while the severity has increased. Overall crashes involving pedestrians have stayed steady at roughly four or five per month. Last year we had 28 crashes that resulted in death or serious injury. We had four individuals lose their lives on our roads last year, all of which were pedestrians.**

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.

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.

Several years ago, 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. **Five years ago, the Council approved our Vision Zero Action Plan**, which specified the actions we would take to see this aggressive vision to reality.

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.

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. **When the City Council and Traffic & Parking Board received the initial analysis of those changes**, as with the first phase, crashes have been reduced and average speed has been reduced.

On Seminary and Quaker, the City reduced speed limits to improve safety. **When that action was reviewed, it also indicated a reduction in speed and crashes.**

Last month, the **City's Traffic & Parking Board approved a request to reduce the speed limit on N. Beauregard and W. Braddock Road from 35 MPH to 25 MPH. The request also included reductions of the speed limit from 25 MPH to 15 MPH in the school zones on N. Beauregard, W. Braddock, N. Howard and Seminary Road.**

On Seminary Road, **the road was narrowed, safer crossings for pedestrians created and new areas for pedestrians and bikers created.** Initial analysis showed similarly positive results. While the pandemic delayed the data collection and analysis, the City will release further analysis of the impact of that effort shortly.

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. **Our current year priorities include**

**implementing these changes at numerous intersections around the City.**

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. **A new one was recently installed on W. Braddock Road near Minnie Howard School.**

I do believe there is more we can do.

**Our Vision Zero Dashboard shows that while we have made progress, the data indicates the need for more work.**

The research shows that **speed is closely linked with the lethality of a pedestrian crash.** There are now only a few streets remaining in the City with speed limits over 25 MPH. I suspect the Council will soon consider a consistent City-wide speed limit of 25 MPH.

Early next year, **the City will be launching an automated speed enforcement program in 5 school zones to enforce speed limits in those areas.**

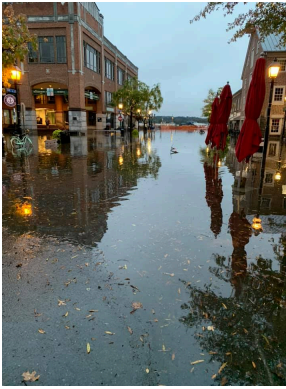
**Allowing right turns on red was pushed by the Federal Government during the 1970s as a response to the energy crisis.** Some **communities in the country are banning right turns on red to improve pedestrian safety by reducing complexity at intersections.**

The ideal condition on our roads is to separate users by mode, particularly when there can be large disparities in speed. That means building new sidewalks and new lanes for bikes. Last month, **the City Council unanimously green-lighted a new sidewalk project on the West End, part of our efforts to complete missing gaps in our sidewalk network.**

Alexandrians should be able to use our streets safely. We will have to take ourselves out of our comfort zone to make that happen. Ultimately, these efforts will not only provide mobility options for our residents, help achieve climate initiatives, but also save lives.

## **Flood Projects Proceeding**

As the remnants of Hurricane Ian continue to cause damage on the eastern seaboard, we again witness the devastation that can be wrought by the impact of heavy rain events. This year, our nation has seen severe



flooding in [Buchanan County, Virginia](#), [Eastern Kentucky](#) and [Puerto Rico](#).

These examples add urgency to the necessity that communities like ours must plan and implement climate-resilient infrastructure to protect the lives and livelihood of our residents.

For us here in Alexandria, our residents have endured 5 storm events in the past 3 years (July 8, 2019, July 23, 2020, September 10, 2020, August 15, 2021 and September 16, 2021) where the intensity and duration of the rain has far-exceeded the design capacity of our storm sewers, resulting in devastating flooding.

Over the last few years particularly, the City Council has worked to accelerate efforts to address chronic flooding issues, this time due to more frequent and more intense rain events. These storms are causing our residents and businesses to suffer significant financial loss due to damage from flooding and sanitary sewer backflow.

Addressing this challenge requires immediate and sustained action in the following areas:

- Infrastructure Investment and Maintenance
- Financial and Technical Assistance to Residents
- Development Policy Reform

Earlier this year, the City Council unanimously adopted [an ordinance to again increase our Stormwater Utility Fee](#), to further increase the resources available for investments in our storm sewer infrastructure. This increase will mean a condo owner will pay \$82.32 annually, a townhouse owner \$123.48 annually, a small single-family homeowner \$294 annually and a large single-family homeowner \$490.98 annually.

The Stormwater Utility Fee revenue, paid by all property owners in the City (including non-taxable properties), will allow for an acceleration of major capacity projects and "spot improvements," an increase in channel maintenance, new "state-of-good repair" investments, property owner grants and new staffing in support of these projects and the system.

[Recently enacted state legislation](#), sponsored by Senator Adam Ebbin at the City's request, gives the City the flexibility to use these resources to address all of the challenges facing our residents.

This increases of the fee over the past two years has allowed the City to quadrupled the planned investment in stormwater mitigation since 2020 and [support a newly accelerated 10-year program of investments](#).

Our new **"Flood Action Alexandria Projects Dashboard"** allows resident to navigate the location and status of the projects funded by these resources.

While these funds will **address many smaller "spot improvement" projects**, this funding will allow the City to undertake 11 of the top priority storm sewer capacity projects over the next decade:

- **Commonwealth & Glebe: \$34 million**
- **Ashby & Glebe: \$16 million**
- **Hooffs Run Culvert Bypass: \$60 million**
- **Edison & Dale: \$13 million**
- **Dewitt Avenue: \$15 million**
- **East Mason Avenue: \$1 million**
- **Notabene & Old Dominion: \$4 million**
- **Mount Vernon, E. Glendale, E. Luray & E. Alexandria: \$10 million**
- **E. Monroe & Wayne: \$3 million**
- **Russell & W. Rosemont: \$6 million**
- **Russell & W. Rosemont (south): \$8 million**

In addition to these locally-funded infrastructure initiatives, **the City Council voted a year ago to allocate \$5.8 million of our American Rescue Plan funding to address maintenance and investment in our Storm Sewers.**

The City launched **our "Flood Mitigation Pilot Grant Program."** This new program has provided over \$558,000 in matching reimbursement grants to property owners making flood resiliency improvements. This is one of the components of our comprehensive approach to addressing the flooding that has impacted our community for decades.

We created the **Ad Hoc Stormwater Utility and Flood Mitigation Advisory Group**, a citizen group to provide advice to Council and our staff as we execute this aggressive investment schedule.

Together, nearly a billion dollars is planned for water investments. This spending dwarfs planned investments in schools, transportation and other major priorities. Only a decade ago, **planned investments in water infrastructure were less than 10% of this total**, but addressing these challenges will require a sustained increase in that investment level of a long period of time.

The investments required in our Sanitary Sewer system are funded by maintenance fees paid by existing customers (on the Alexandria Renew Enterprises bills) and by connection fees paid by developers.

**In 2016, the City conducted a comprehensive Storm Sewer Capacity Analysis.** This exhaustive study



looked at each of the City's eight watersheds (Backlick Run, Cameron Run, Four Mile Run, Holmes Run, Hooff's Run, Holmes Run, Potomac River, Strawberry Run and Taylor Run) and identified problem areas where current capacity does not meet our 10-year storm design standard.

The study identified 90 separate deficiencies in the system, and estimated \$61 million of construction costs required to address those deficiencies (construction costs are approximately half of expected budget costs). Over half of these deficiencies are concentrated in the Hooff's Run and Four Mile Run watersheds. The reports of flooding from our residents during these most recent events align closely to these deficiencies. It is that study that has informed the list of priority capacity projects listed earlier.

For development, whether large-scale, mixed-use development or a small residential addition, [Alexandria's stringent stormwater requirements](#) stipulate that conditions after development to be the same and oftentimes better than they were. As a consequence, the flooding we have experienced in the City is typically in established neighborhoods, areas of our City where we have not seen new development (aside from infill) in decades. Yet, there may be options to further strengthen these existing requirements. We have sought additional authority from the General Assembly for these expanded requirements.

A climate-resilient City requires investments and potentially new policies to ensure that residents of our City do not suffer devastating damage with such frequency.

Putting in place the infrastructure that can support a changing climate will be a significant undertaking for our community. It will involve a large commitment of new resources and possibly private property impacts. I am pleased that the City has made these new investments. Now we must explore every option to accelerate this work.



## Expanding Mass Transit

We are advancing the implementation of resident-driven transit service designed to make it easier to get around our City. We want your opinion to inform this process.

Nearly 15 years ago, the City adopted its latest [Transportation Master Plan](#). At the time, the plan was a significant transition in that it shifted from a plan focused on roads and vehicle traffic, to a plan that prioritized transit.

One of the most significant changes that came from the 2008 Master Plan was the designation of three transit corridors for high-capacity transit. The three corridors are:

- Transit Corridor A, which was nominally north to south on Route 1 on the east end of the City
- Transit Corridor B, which was intended as east to west on Duke Street
- Transit Corridor C, which was north to south on the west end of the City using Van Dorn and Beauregard

After the adoption of the 2008 Master Plan, a community task force was assembled to provide some more details around the vision for each of the transit corridors.

Transit Corridor A began service as "Metroway" eight years ago, and was the region's first bus rapid transit service, providing service to Potomac Yard and Crystal City, with further enhancements planned.

Transit Corridor C, now called the "West End Transitway" will be the next to come to reality. The West End Transitway has now been awarded over \$101 million of State and Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) funds. The NVTA recently awarded an additional \$5 million to bring this project to fruition.

The slower pace of redevelopment in the Beauregard corridor will necessitate multiple phases to implement this project. With funding now in place (although not until 2024-2025), work begins to plan the implementation.

Transit Corridor B, the Duke Street Transitway, will be the final corridor implemented. Two years ago, the City received \$75 million in regional funds from the NVTA to bring this new transit to reality.

Last month, the Duke Street Transitway Advisory Group, a group of residents advising next steps in this project, held their fifth meeting to provide input. We are now seeking your opinion through surveys and community engagement opportunities throughout this month.

Fortunately, as these transit corridors come to reality, Alexandria's efforts are not happening in a vacuum. Our neighboring jurisdictions are also working to advance dedicated transit within their borders and beyond. Metroway was launched in partnership with Arlington County, to bring together a rapidly-growing corridor. When this occurred, Alexandria specifically precluded

connectivity to the south, ending Metroway at Braddock Road Metro.

A decade later, [our friends in Fairfax County are now planning ambitious transit connections from Fort Belvoir to the City border.](#) This potential investment provides a unique opportunity for Alexandria and Fairfax County to explore creating a contiguous transit corridor that would go from Fort Belvoir all the way to the Pentagon. To facilitate this consideration, I have asked our staff to bring forward amendments that would end the existing prohibition.

High capacity transit provides our residents with alternatives to congestion and delay. I am optimistic as we work to bring these projects to reality.



## Climate Action

[On Wednesday evening City Council created a new Office of Climate Action, comprising two current City positions, three budgeted positions and two new positions.](#)

In creating this office, the City Council also allocated \$1.85 million of funding that was set aside for climate initiatives when we approved the FY 2023 budget back in May. These new resource will now fund specific initiatives designed to advance sustainability initiatives in our community. The funded initiatives will be in:

- Incentives
- Environmental Justice
- Education, capacity building and outreach
- Disclosure, monitoring, and recognition
- Demonstration
- Policies, procedures and advocacy

[In February, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change again sounded the alarm.](#) Their report gives the world very little time to take meaningful action to mitigate catastrophic impacts of rising temperatures.

Here in Alexandria, we have already seen the dire impacts of a warming planet, as flooding and other storm damage gives us a preview of the decades to come. The geopolitical events of the past few days remind us of the non-environmental rationales for de-emphasizing fossil-fuel energy.

Earlier this year, [a new study](#) has shown the impacts of climate change on accelerating sea-level rise, [an impact that places our City in significant peril.](#)

While the Federal government was largely disengaged from international efforts to address climate change, that is now changing. With or without Federal

leadership, Alexandria is continuing to take meaningful climate action.

It was over two years ago that the City Council adopted the [latest update of our Environmental Action Plan](#) . This ambitious plan does not commit or appropriate money, but it does set the strategic direction to:

- Reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions
- Expand Open Space
- Reduce water pollution
- Reduce vehicle miles traveled
- Reduce ozone

To be successful, this work necessarily involves the public and private sector and will ultimately require a state government fully committed to the cause.

The [City released a comprehensive report of the accomplishments achieved during 2020](#), including reductions in GHG emissions, new programs to make commercial buildings more sustainable, transportation initiatives, new green building standards, expanded recycling, and more.

In April of last year, [the City Council approved our new Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Readiness Strategy](#). Earlier last year, the Council approved the City's [first Alternative Fuel Fleet Policy to accelerate the City's deployment of these vehicles](#).

[DASH recently added its first electric buses to its fleet](#). They are now serving our City on scheduled routes.

In 2020, the Council [unanimously approved our new Green Building Policy](#). This new policy reflects the collaboration of a [Task Force](#) that met for several months to arrive at this new direction.

While the Green Building Policy will ensure that new development is built in a sustainable manner, to make progress, we must address existing structures.

Two years ago, the City Council voted 5-2 [to create a C-PACE program in Alexandria](#). A C-PACE program will allow commercial property owners to make improvements to reduce energy consumption, greenhouse gas emissions and sustainability, financed by repayments collected as part of the property's real estate tax payment.

The City has again partnered with the [Northern Virginia Regional Commission to bring back Solarize Alexandria](#). This program partners with residential property owners to conduct assessments on the feasibility of solar power installations.

**Buildings account for 39% of total energy use, 68% of electricity consumption and 38% of all carbon dioxide emissions.** When buildings are built efficiently, redevelopment can be a powerful force to reduce our energy demands and improve our environment.

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

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.



## Virginia Tax Rebate

In his outgoing budget proposal presented in late 2021, **former Governor Ralph Northam proposed using surplus state tax revenue to provide one-time \$250 income-tax rebates to Virginia taxpayers.**

That proposal remained in the budget that was approved by the General Assembly during their 2022 session, and ultimately approved by Governor Glenn Youngkin,

These rebates are being issued this month to eligible taxpayers. **To check the status of your rebate, the Virginia Department of Taxation has developed an online application.**

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