

**Transportation Discussion  
SHA Monthly Board Meeting  
July, 2005**

Cindy Gurne moderated the discussion.

**Purpose**

SHA invited representatives from City Council, City adhoc Transportation Committee and the City Transportation and Transit office to discuss Seminary Hill area transportation, transit and pedestrian issues.

Participating in the discussion were:

**Del Pepper-Vice Mayor**

She stated that she is keenly aware that traffic is consuming us based on a survey conducted last year. It is the #1 issue. Pepper noted that the city receives many letters from Fairfax residents complaining about the transportation issue. She lives on Duke Street and has personally seen traffic increase. With regard to the Connector issue, she stated that the new Police Facility will leave no room for a future connector at either Bluestone or Generous Georges. Del reported on a recent discussion to put in a fire station in Eisenhower Valley to remove connector pressure based on demand from the fire station at Duke Street and Quaker Lane.

**RobKrupicka, City Council Member**

Rob praised Del Pepper for her good work. Rob explained that when he ran for City Council he ran stating that we need to update our transportation master plan. Working with George Foote to revise the city's traffic master plan, Rob has worked on to how make our city safer for pedestrians: the Alexandria Community Pathways Program . Krupicka stated that 60-80% of Alexandria traffic is from people who live outside Alexandria. Fairfax County drivers desire North-South movement. He has worked to improve East-West traffic movement for the benefit of Alexandrians. Rob raised the issue of speeding on Seminary Road and his work with Christine Michaelis. He is also concerned about incomplete sidewalks which compromise the safety of pedestrians.

Krupicka noted there are 100,000 registered cars in this city

**George Foote, Member , City's Transportation PlanningTask Force**

George Foote began by reporting on the work of the Task Force making the following points:

- Alexandria is changing from a suburban to an urban community. It is transitioning from a bedroom community to one where people both live and work. He believes that a Connector would fail to address this change.
- Over the next 25 years, the number of jobs and residents in Alexandria will increase by 50%, adding another 2 million residents and 1.6 m jobs Therefore, traffic will never get better than it currently is. What we have going for us is the street space that we control to

get people East-West within Alexandria, rather than North-South through Alexandria, through the use of street cars and dedicated bus lanes. Such a plan would offer through traffic commuters less opportunity to get through the city quickly. Eisenhower, Duke and Potomac Yard and the Northern crescent offer potential transit lines. The Task Force envisions a movement toward an urban transport model.

Bob Gerbeck and Tom Culpepper from Transportation and Environmental Services.

SHA members were invited to submit questions prior to the meeting. Additional questions were asked from those attending.

Responses to questions submitted:

1) How has the issue of speeding on Seminary Road been addressed?

Tom Culpepper says the biggest issue is funding, but potential options are lane narrowing or losing some lanes to transit. Richard Dressner inquired about an HOV ramp from Seminary Road to I-395. City Council requested that such a ramp not be put in, because the primary users would be going to the Pentagon and that a more appropriate location would be at Glebe Road. Del Pepper explained that there was a lot of opposition from people West of I-395 and there is no plan in place. With regard to Seminary Road, Rob Krupicka referenced Christine's Michaelis' petition and explained that money is being retained for slowing down traffic on Seminary Road, not letting these funds dry up. ( I don't understand this) Rob Krupicka recognizes that traffic calming between Quaker and 395 will be expensive. Tom Foote explained that strategies used on side streets cannot be used on Seminary Road, due to emergency vehicle access.

George Foote noted that the sources for transportation funding include:

- the urban systems program
- resurfacing and maintenance (a federal fund generated by the gas tax)source federal from the gas tax)
- regional grants for specific projects

2) How can the Seminary Hill area get broken traffic lights, signs, etc. repaired?

There were specific examples provided by SHA members of lights that don't change, signage not visible, need for new signage, etc. Two examples: the length of time that people turning left from North Pickett Street onto Seminary Road is quite long. The traffic light in front of Hammond Middle School was also discussed.

City representatives noted the importance of calling the city office responsible for these repairs. Also, if the residents of the Seminary Hill area are desirous of making any changes, the city representatives strongly urge the community to get involved in building a consensus for specific changes and promoting their interests to the city.

(note: SHA should strongly urge members to communicate their concerns to their area reps. for action. The SHA Board will prepare a list of member issues and present them to

the appropriate city office. The status of action on these requests will be posted on the web site.)

### 3) What is the future of bicycle trails?

Rob Krupicka replied that this is a priority and it an easy idea is to add a bike lane on Seminary Road. Del Pepper has ridden her bike on Bike to Work Day and she has experienced the problems of biking through Alexandria. There are two biking constituencies: commuters prefer wider lanes for lane sharing, but recreational cyclists prefer off road trails. The interest must be balanced.

Rob Krupicka says that we need to continue to support the open space plan for the green crescent along the perimeter of the city, which would include bike paths. We could invite the Bike and Pedestrian Coordinator to a future meeting.

The new Alexandria Bike and Pedestrian Coordinator starts on August 8th and his primary responsibility is to improve pedestrian and bike safety.

### 4) How is the city addressing pedestrian safety issues?

The panel recognized the importance of this issue, but noted that Alexandria was listed as the second safest city for pedestrians: Arlington was first. If there is a desire to add street signs, etc. these requests need to be presented to the city. (see question #3)

(note: see white paper by Krupicka and Smedberg (Alexandria Community Pathways) on pedestrian issues on SHA web site)

### 5) Parking

There were several questions raised concerning parking in various neighborhoods and in the city. The panel recognized this problem and listed as one of the reasons for this problem is the number of vehicles owned per household.

Pepper states she has been actively involved in addressing these issues including working with residents of Varsity Park to address overflow parking issue from Seminary Forest . They were able to create a new tool for addressing this issue, restricting overnight parking to those cars with city stickers.

Bruce McCarthy believes this situation will continue to get worse and perhaps Alexandria will need to restrict the use of single occupant cars, as has been done London

The panel consensus for addressing many of these issues is to increase community awareness of civic courtesy. Individuals should be considerate of their neighbors and act accordingly. Otherwise there will be a constant effort to create restricted parking regulations that favor one group over another, limit parking to impact everyone involved, etc. Although public streets, there are rules of behavior that should be maintained. Councilmember Pepper will ask the Transportation Office to consider initiating a communications campaign to stress transportation, transit and pedestrian courtesy issues.

Dick Hayes inquired about the possibility of limiting the number of cars which residents may be allowed to park on the street. Rob believes that there are many parking issues in Alexandria, which express themselves in different ways across the city (i.e. the 72 hour rule).

George Foote raised the idea of parking structures on the periphery of the city at the city gateways as has been done in Bethesda.

City Council is beginning to require that a new commercial building make their parking available to non-building occupants.

Joe Fischer asked about city employees taking public transport. George Foote responded that 300 city employees take public transit based on participation in the subsidized transit program

Fischer inquired about public transit use by employees of the Patent and Trademark Office. Tom Culpepper explained that among PTO employees the use of public transportation vs. driving has been consistent. Unfortunately the tunnel is closed during off hours which discourages people from using the tunnel. Coulter suggested re-timing the pedestrian route on Duke to encourage tunnel use.

#### 6) Transportation Task Force ,Timeline and Status.

Bob Coulter asked George Foote for status report of the committee. Foote wants to see the master plan report be presented in the next year.

Foote reported some of the findings and issues of the Task Force

- a. Middle class people less willing to ride buses. However, DC is experimenting with a Circulator bus which has been very successful. This bus runs every five minutes through key neighborhoods to key destinations. Example Georgetown to Union Station. People appear to be willing to ride this bus since it's convenient, frequent and takes people where they want to go for shopping and errands, Pepper states she supports the Circulator bus concept.
- b. Foote explained that DASH facility had exceeded its capacity 10 years ago and could only service one type of bus, but the new facility will accommodate different size vehicles.
- c. George Foot clarified that Alexandria is not trying to move more Fairfax County residents through Alexandria N-S movement. Emphasis on helping Alexandrians by focusing on flow of traffic from E-W.
- d. Foote described what Fairfax is doing, such as the Rex bus system along Route 1 and potentially connecting Rex with another bus line through the city. Krupicka explained that unfortunately all Metro expansion will go for the proposed Reston/Dulles rail line,so our best hope for metro funding is for buses.
- e. The task force recognizes that there is a need to move Alexandria from the suburban model to an urban model where people work in the area in which they live.

- f. emphasis on area referred to as the Green Crescent for bike and pedestrian friendly pathways.
- g. dedicating streets to public transportation is one possibility.

#### 7) Funding sources for Transportation and Transit Improvement

Ginny Hines Parry suggested reallocating the \$15 million allocated for a connector to be reallocated for transit. Councilman Smedberg supports this. Rob wants to see specific plan before we request that state reallocate the funds. Del Pepper believes this will move forward in the fall. The City Council must vote that we do not want a connector and then go to the state to reallocate the funds, but she explained that state will have to forgive the city's commitment on the project.

#### 8) By what measures should City Council and the Transportation Task Force be evaluated in one year?

The following list was compiled from input from SHA board and members.

- The amount of money the city commits to spend on new transit
- city response time to install new stop signs and traffic lights
- reduced speed on Seminary Road
- an education campaign to remind people to be considerate on the road.

(note: we will create a monitoring report on the SHA web site)

#### 9. Questions sent by members (list of questions sent by SHA members prior to the meeting)

The walk signals at Howard and Seminary Road have been broken for at least six months. It would be great if the city could fix them.

2. The T intersection where Jordan meets Seminary Road is dangerous for pedestrians. The walk signal to cross Seminary and the green light for cars to turn from Jordan onto Seminary operate at the same time. The cars do not yield in this intersection. Crossing Jordan St at that intersection is also problematic. The cars do not look for pedestrians and when they do see a pedestrian they don't yield or they roll toward you in an aggressive fashion. I would like to see a No Turn on Red from Jordan onto Seminary and the Walk signal to cross Seminary changed to operate when the light from Jordan is not green. In other words, make all cars stop and no turns on red so pedestrians can cross safely.

3. Cars regularly run through the school bus red lights when the bus stops to pick up my son at Seminary and Ivanhoe. If this doesn't happen every day, it's at least three times a week. When the police patrolled for this last year they caught at least a few people every day. But of course they can't be there every day. Maybe we should have a sign to remind people of the need to stop for busses on four-lane roads. In PG County I understand they have cameras on the busses, but maybe that's illegal in VA.

4. FYI There were two major collisions in the space of three days in mid-June. One a head-on collision at Ivanhoe St and Seminary (don't ask me how this happened -- I guess someone crossed the yellow line) and the other a three-car crash at the intersection at Howard and Seminary. The intersection of Braddock and Howard also seems to have frequent accidents as I have passed by at least three in the past several months.

5. Speaking of Braddock and Howard. The hot right from Braddock onto Howard is a problem because the cars cannot see pedestrians in the crosswalk -- I think it's because of the shrubs on the corner there. It's just about impossible for a pedestrian to see the car as well so it's a leap of faith when crossing.

6. Finally, a complaint about pedestrians crossing in the middle of Seminary Road. The people who get off the bus at the hospital, particularly the West bound busses, regularly cross in the middle of this very wide road. They do it when wearing dark clothes at night. They do it carrying toddlers and pushing strollers. And they do it even if they're old and can't run to get out of the way. It's crazy, but it's the nature of people to take shortcuts. Maybe there is a way to re-position the bus stop so people aren't inclined to make this dangerous choice.

7. Have traffic calming measures for Trinity Drive from Quaker Lane to Princeton Boulevard been considered?

8. Have bus(DASH) and METRO service on Quaker Lane to a Metro train station been considered?

## Conclusion

In the memo dated March 16, 2005 prepared by Councilmembers Smedberg and Krupicka, Central City (the area defined as Seminary Road and Quaker Lane) as one of the top priorities for traffic calming and improved pedestrian friendly initiatives.

The panel spoke of the importance of community and political will required to effect any change. The will comes from the community. SHA looks forward to moving some of these suggestions forward.